

***Towards a Dialogical Theology: An Exploration of Inter-religious
Cooperation between Christianity and African Indigenous Religion
among the Midzi-Chenda People of Coastal Kenya***

By

Tsawe-Munga wa Chidongo

A thesis submitted to
The University of Birmingham
for the Degree of
Doctor of Philosophy

School of Philosophy, Theology and Religions
The College of Arts and Law
The University of Birmingham
February 2010

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ABSTRACT

The ongoing global problems that adversely affect human society require re-dress, not only from a political perspective but also from the view of religions which are daily lived and practised by individuals and communities, seeking positive solutions for a more habitable earth.

Africa, from its colonial legacies, has continually experienced disasters such as wars, droughts, famine, HIV and AIDS. All these have contributed to abject poverty and have affected the well-being of society, reducing the population to despair and hopelessness. Africa, however, is rich: more developed in her religions than in her economy. 'You can not teach an African child about the existence of God' (Dickson 1984). Nevertheless, in communities such as the Midzi-Chenda of Coastal Kenya, religion has become the cause of both religious and social exclusion. From the fear of condemnation, communities are hesitant to meet together as religious people in order to dialogue and address issues that persistently affect their lives.

The aim of this study is to explore the relationship between Christianity and African Indigenous Religion, with the purpose of discovering whether at the height of successive problems in Africa AIR and Christianity can agree to cooperate and together build a healthier society. This research is conducted among the Midzi-Chenda of Coastal Kenya, a community that has had diverse religious experience, whilst living with their multiple problems. Socially excluded by other religions, the Midzi-Chenda have been unable in solidarity to address their problems. The questions asked are firstly: 'what are the historical causes for the religious rift?' Secondly: 'what possibilities can be found for achieving the cooperation which is essential for

the two religious communities to be assisted to progress towards essential dialogue for life and action, and addressing the issue of community health?’

ACKNOWLEDGEMENT

From start to finish, this research has been made possible through the support, guidance and encouragement of friends and other researchers to whom I owe my sincere gratitude. God and my ancestors (*Mulungu na Koma zosi za kuche na kulume*) have been foremost in my thought for enabling my good health throughout the study. Professor Mary Gray of the University of Wales (Lampeter), the late Rev. Dr. Kwame Bediako, Dr. Elizabeth Amoah (Ghana), Dr. Philomena Mwaura (Kenya), Rev. Dr. Michael Chester (UK), and the Wolverhampton Interfaith Council (UK) who all offered their time in discussing my topic for research. Rev. Dr. Adam Hood of Queens Foundation, together with my main supervisor Rev. Dr. Michael Jaggessar with his colleague Rev. Dr. Jonathan Gichaara have all been instrumental in assisting my efforts to achieve quality academic research.

In Coastal Kenya where much of the research was conducted I received a welcome from the Midzi-Chenda *Makaya* elders, and wish to express gratitude for their helpfulness in allowing me to enter their holy shrines, so that I might participate in and observe both their rituals and community meetings (*moonano*). I also wish to thank Methodist, Anglican and Catholic Church leaders, school teachers and their students, the youth and all participating in the focus groups. Profoundly appreciated has been the support offered by library staff at Birmingham University, Queens Foundation, SOAS, Liverpool Hope University, Kenyan universities and colleagues of the Black Theology Forum (The Queen’s Foundation). Additionally I warmly

thank St. Thomas' Methodist Church Wales (Lampeter) for their continuous encouragement. For the great help given by Mrs. Eileen Sawell of Birmingham, editing and correcting language errors.

Most of all, I appreciate the financial and moral support received from Sister Gwen Night of Swindon Methodist Church, Mrs Kathleen Freezer of Stratford-upon-Avon Methodist Church, and Queens Foundation for Ecumenical Theological Education, for jointly financing tuition, living and research expenses on my behalf. Without them, this project could not have become a reality. My mother church, 'The Methodist Church in Kenya', in particular my local church (Kinango Methodist), have unfailingly supported me with their love and prayers together with those of my loving and patient wife, Kabibi, our children, mother Mwenda wa Ngome and grandmother Hawe-Ruwa. They have given me their moral support and accepted the burden of loneliness during times of long absence for research purposes. For all this I owe a great debt of gratitude. *Mulungu amuhatse*

LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

AACC	All African Churches Council
AIR	African Indigenous Religion
AIDS	Acquired Immune Deficiency Syndrome
ACK	Anglican Church of Kenya
BBC	British Broadcasting Corporation
CCEA	Christian Churches Educational Association
CMC	Church Medical Commission
CMS	Church Missionary Society
CSEA	Catholic Secretariat Educational Association
CU	Christian Union
DBTL	Duruma Bible Translation and Literacy
FM	Frequency Media
HIV	Human Immunodeficiency Virus
ICCPI	Inter-faith Clerics Coast Peace Initiative
IRRD	Inter-religious Relations Dialogue
KIE	Kenya Institute of Education
LWF	Lutheran World Federation
MCK	Methodist Church in Kenya
NCCK	National Council of Churches of Kenya
PCCS	Pwani Christian Community Service
PCID	Pontifical Council for Inter-religious Dialogue
PURCPK	Provincial Unit of Research Church of the Province of Kenya
RCC	Roman Catholic Church
RCOMM	Roman Catholic Order of Medical Missionary Sisters

UMFS	United Methodist Free Society
UN	United Nations
WB	World Bank
WCC	World Council of Churches
WHO	World Health Organisation
WIC	Wolverhampton Inter-faith Council
WSA	Witchcraft Suppression Association
YMA	Young Muslim Association
YCA	Young Christian Association
ZNFFID	Zimbabwe National Forum for Inter-religious Dialogue
ZINATHA	Zimbabwe National African Indigenous Healers Association

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Map 1: Shows the entire National Provincial Boundaries; Coastal Kenya is at the South East, Bordering the Indian Ocean.

INTRODUCTION

Locating the Research

The main thrust of missionary Christianity in Africa was the emphasis on the particularity of Christianity as opposed to the indigenous religious heritage, and from the very beginning the lines were clearly drawn. The substance of missionary proclamation was the only God whose nature and character had been revealed in the Bible and all other gods were mere illusions. God's final revelation was Jesus Christ, the son of God, and He was the only saviour of mankind [sic] and the Church, which arose after the earthly mission of Jesus Christ, was the sole dispenser of divine grace, and there was no salvation outside the Church. And, armed with the conviction of possessing the only truth, the church rejected the African experience as non-truth, and saw itself as the rescuer of souls from the grips of error and death. (Opoku, 1982: 152)

Opoku's statement poses a fundamental and critical question which is at the heart of this research: can Christianity (perceived as the 'Light') in Africa agree to relate well, cooperate and engage in dialogue with African Indigenous Religion (AIR) (perceived as 'Darkness') in order to address life-threatening ills affecting the communities? If this can be done, what particular methods can be used to achieve success? If not; what are the reasons behind the failure?

This is a key question because of its relevance to prevailing social and economic problems that seriously affect Africa; struggling with endless poverty, crippling health problems such as HIV and AIDS, droughts and famine (Temple, 2002; Chitando, 2007). For many practitioners of Christianity and AIR life has grown extremely difficult and there is a severe crisis in community health. African community has been calling on all the religions for whatever help they can provide. Yet, both these religions appear to resolutely oppose each other, even though they live intimately with the people. Religions which ought to unite a community in working for better health development seem instead to disunite their communities and create religious boundaries. Even those belonging to the same

community find they cannot religiously discuss the contentious life-issues that affect them all. A religious apartheid exists.

Christianity was initially introduced into North Africa at its beginnings (Fortland, 1990; Isichei, 1995). From the 3rd and 4th centuries it became well established in Libya, Egypt and Ethiopia (Isichei, 1995; Mbiti, 1990; Walls, 2002). Later, especially in the 16th and 19th centuries, European Christians made tremendous efforts to extend Christendom in Africa (Baur, 1990; Mugambi, 2002). During the latter periods (16th and 19th centuries) the African Indigenous Religious world-view was dishonoured; its beliefs and practices were described as 'darkness' and its adherents were condemned (Kenyatta, 1937; Thiong'o, 1970).

Despite continual efforts by those early Christian missions to exclude AIR, research conducted in Africa (Uganda 1974) by the Pontifical Council for Inter-religious Dialogue (PCID), (Zambia 1986) by WCC Inter-religious Dialogue Unit (IRRD) and Africa in general (2000) by Lutheran World federation (LWF), all disclose that AIR is still a living religion, practised by indigenous adherents and, indeed, in secret by some African Christians (Ucko, 2004; Shorter, 1975). In his study, Shorter reveals that AIR has been a submerged religion that has survived threats of extinction. There has been a 'seek and hide' system between the two religions.

AIR is a living and life-giving religion (Arinze, 1988) with its members holding the view that one does not throw away one's old prayer mat just because a new one has been borrowed (*usiache mbachao kwa msaala upitao*). Their long-standing attitude, maintained to the present time, is that whoever abandons his/her religion and culture for the purpose

of joining a 'foreign' religion becomes a slave (*mwacha mila ni mtumwa*). In many ways, indigenous Africans are in agreement with Calvin Shenk: 'No culture is by definition considered superior to another or inferior to another...one culture is not necessarily more right than another' (Shenk, 1997: 3).

The motivation for doing this study has a personal edge to it: the experiencing of individual and community struggles with health problems encompassed by poverty. This has been an ongoing phenomenon during my spiritual pilgrimage with a diverse range of religious experiences (AIR, Islam, and Christianity). Significantly, health problems and abject poverty in the Midzi-Chenda population of Coastal Kenya have persisted. Throughout my youth and the period of preparation for my ordination in the ministry of the Methodist church in Kenya, up to the present, I have noted the tension between Midzi-Chenda religion (*Chikw'ehu*) and Christianity in both thought and action.

Two aspects of the relationship between AIR and Christianity, based on a personal significant decision, are related to this research. Firstly, I am by birth an 'insider' of AIR, and have experienced its practices. As a child, it was necessary to wear charms (*pingu/ngata/mapande*) to protect me from witchcraft; to attend traditional second funerals (*hanga ivu*); to visit the sacred forest (*makaya*) and cemeteries (*vikuta*) and to pay tribute to the departed; all involving indigenous worship. At the same time, I was aware that my Christian peers condemned me. My grandfather, a community indigenous herbalist, assured me that God (*Mulungu*) was good and loving. He was training me (*mwanamadzi*) to become a herbal practitioner (*muganga*) like him to benefit the future community. He died before I was old enough to complete the training. Later at the Methodist High School, I was confirmed as a Christian and given a new name.

Secondly, my exposure to the forms of church doctrines and the history of Christianity in Africa, together with active involvement in its practices, made me ‘an outsider’ from AIR whilst becoming an ‘insider’ in Christianity, by virtue of my training and ordination as a Christian minister. In-depth reading of the works of John Mbiti, Jesse Mugambi, Laurenti Magesa, Kwesi Dickson and Kwame Bediako has challenged me to search for the authenticity of African Theology and a re-examination of the role of AIR in society, and also for understanding of what the Christian missionary gospel brought to the Midzi-Chenda religious world-view.¹

Not only African theologians but anthropologists and sociologists such as Ngugi wa Thiong’o, P’Bitek and Jomo Kenyatta have clarified the existing situation by connecting African ideologies with African spirituality. My focus in this thesis will be on the works of eight African theologians. They are Kwesi Dickson, Jesse Mugambi, Aylward Shorter, Kwame Bediako, Mercy Amba Oduyoye, Elizabeth Amoa, Musa Dube and Musimbi Kanyoro. The direction of this study has also been influenced by the thoughts of both Wesley Ariarajah and Stanley Samartha relative to community dialogue. Writing in an Indian context, Samartha observes:

Dialogue is not a concept; it is a relationship. Community is not a concept; it is people, men and women, sharing the meaning and mystery of human existence, struggling together in suffering, hope and joy. Intellectual reflection is obviously necessary. No one should underestimate this vital function. But it should be done in the context of living relationships. (Samartha, 1977: 10)

Drawing from Samartha, this research considers Community Inter-religious Dialogue as a ministry that primarily deals practically with issues of a community sharing common

¹During the process of this research, I became fully aware of holding the identities of both Truly African and Truly Christian. This motivated me to revert to my indigenous name and abandon that given by an American priest at the time of my baptism.

struggles in life, particularly those of community health. A demand for religious relationship and cooperation to heal society is necessary. Practical religious relationship and cooperation can support and strengthen every aspect of both individual and community health.

The reason why community health (*uzima wa lalo*) has been adopted as an entry point into the relationship between AIR and Christianity is the view that for dialogue to take place between two or more persons there must first be a common interest or subject to be discussed (Swindler, 1978). *Uzima wa lalo* is the most significant concern identified by the Midzi-Chenda and is considered by this research to be the 'space' within the boundaries of which religious communities can meet together, realising that they each have unique roles to play. Health issues affect communities and individuals across different religious backgrounds without discrimination; as crises arise, community members cannot pretend ignorance or fail to theologically consider what should be done (Hastings, 1976: 60).

This research uses both ethnographic and theological methodologies which are recommended to acquire reliable information.² Particularly the engagement of participant observation that provides deeper primary information, enabling understanding of social and theological phenomena of the population which is being researched (Silverman, 2000). As implied, 'social (theological) researchers systematically collect and analyse empirical evidence in order to understand and explain social (religious) life' (Neuman, 2003: 316).

² The adopted methodology has been found helpful and convenient because the research is conducted in an African theological awareness. African understanding is that there is no separation between the two streams of life; sacred and secular (cf definition of African Indigenous Religion p: 14; further clarification is in Chapter 3)

The Midzi-Chenda (research population) is a community in Coastal Kenya that has continued to engage in the indigenous beliefs and practices of their religion (*Chikw'ehu*) despite the presence of Christianity and Islam. As early as the 7th, 16th and 19th centuries the Midzi-Chenda became exposed to people of other religions and cultures, eventually becoming a multi-religious society. Many of the new religious influences related to community health, those of Christianity more so than those of Islam, were contrary to the Midzi-Chenda cultural beliefs and practices.

Christianity created a religious schizophrenia, as well as social exclusion, for a majority of African communities (Kibicho, 1978). 'Christianity as it was presented, represented a clear dis-continuity with the African past, and emphasis was placed on the newness of Christianity, and converts reflected this in their style of life, new names, new form of dress, new languages and new values' (Opoku, 1982: 153). This affected the Midzi-Chenda, as in Kenya generally. Mugambi (1992), citing the thesis of Thiong'o, provides a description of how this exclusion was created:

The Europeans, therefore, divided the African community, by singling out individuals who were to become instruments of colonization and civilization. The missionaries established mission stations in which they indoctrinated selected Africans to denounce their heritage, calling it primitive, heathen and satanic. (Thiong'o, 1970; cited in Mugambi, 1992: 101)

The success of the struggle for independence in 1963 marked a turning point. Significantly, it was during this period that the missionaries handed over their responsibilities for Christian institutions to indigenous church leaders (Mugambi, 2002; Githiga, 2002). Strangely, even though after independence Kenyans felt they were at last free to exercise their cultural practices without opposition or defamation, the process of dissociating Christianity from the indigenous religion continued. Mugambi notes:

(Kenyans) hoped that *Uhuru* would bring back the freedom of cultural expression which they lost with the coming of Christianity and Western civilization, but now they realise that the elite who took over only continued to follow the patterns which had been set by the colonial masters- missionaries, administrators and settlers. (Mugambi, 1992: 90)

Seemingly, the whole package of negative attitudes towards AIR was also handed over. In a study undertaken by Ciekawy (2000) among the Midzi-Chenda, it was established that colonialism (*ukoloni*) still exists; her study shows that this was passed on, 'planted in the ground' and so firmly established that it continues to thrive among the local Midzi-Chenda Christians and administrative leaders. It is reflected in the local saying; 'one who relates with a corrupt person likewise gets corrupted'.

In the long run, this created a damaging attitude. It has also caused dilemmas and confusions among many of the Midzi-Chenda (highly regarded as a community of believers and a plural society), especially when they experience social or health problems. In many instances a crisis finds them at a crossroads, uncertain as to which way should be followed. Not being sure of the strength and effectiveness of the new religion many opt to return to their ancient, familiar indigenous solutions (*kuuya nyuma*), where they can find refuge, comfort and 'salvation'. The Midzi-Chenda are an example of a people divided by faith but who still share common social problems: ill health, poverty and insecurity. Such issues, which erode the well-being of communities, need intervention that is coherently addressed and carried out; if possible unanimously and consistently for the good of all.

This research will identify issues which prevent Christianity and the Midzi-Chenda Indigenous Religion (*Chikw'ehu*) from achieving a living relationship through dialogue. Questions have been raised as to which religion is 'right' for the community. As a result there have been both internal and external conflicts, sometimes concluding badly, when Christians have declined to agree with or support AIR believers. This research hopes to

provide a positive method for discussion of differences. It is anticipated that as a result, community members may discover and accept the potential for good which each religion has and thereby enable everyone to become involved in community health development.

The research will also explore whether the Midzi-Chenda have been guided by (*Chikw'ehu*) to effect dialogue relating to their social and health issues. It is also hoped that Christianity may become aware of how AIR works for community benefit within its own groupings. A new awareness could act as a stepping stone towards Christianity approaching AIR adherents. It is hoped that this study will not only provide greater awareness regarding inter-religious community dialogue, but also provide a means for the Midzi-Chenda to critically see its significance and usefulness.

It is my hypothesis that, given the opportunity, AIR could more readily become the model for dialogue and sharing ideas, especially with Christianity. Openness could modify the negative attitudes of other religions which insist on their own central importance. This would demonstrate that 'every bird flies with its own wings'; this is a local saying, meaning that others are also guided by their religion and qualified to call for dialogue and give primary attention to the well-being of the community. The challenge will be for Christianity to accept and relate to AIR.

The Midzi-Chenda community spreads from the south to the northern hinterland of Coastal Kenya, an area encompassing five large districts. To collect mass data from every individual section would have proved unrealistic. The choice has been to use a population cluster (sampling approach), to identify groups representing the majority of the people whilst ensuring that the groups give information which the larger population would also have given. There has been identification of two main districts; Kinango and Kilifi (see

map on page 109).³ These are easily reached by public transport.⁴ Research will be limited to the missionary planted churches: the Methodist Church in Kenya (Mombasa and Kilifi Synods), the Roman Catholic Church (coast dioceses) and the Anglican Church (coast dioceses). Their histories of residence within the community are longer than those of later arrivals. Indeed, of the churches left out, those of the Pentecostal Charismatic Movement have vigorously denounced any relationship with indigenous believers. For study of a historical durable Christianity, the three main churches would provide valid data.

Coastal Kenya has had a long history of dominance by Islam. The majority of the Midzi-Chenda of Kwale and Msambweni districts are Muslims. In this research, it has been necessary to limit the input of Islam due to the fact that the Midzi-Chenda Muslims and the indigenous religious people have accepted and accommodated each other's beliefs and practices. For example, an indigenous practitioner in local medicine or a diviner may attend the mosque, observe the month of Ramadan and believe in the holy Qur'an, yet being accepted by the local community as both a Muslim and a cultural practitioner⁵. During my youth I had some personal experiences of receiving training from Madrassa classes, at the same time as I was receiving indigenous training from my grandfather. No striking conflict was ever observed between the two practices.⁶

³ The new districts are not included in the map on page 109

⁴ Kwale district would be nearer but it is more about Islam; its influence on and from the Midzi-Chenda culture will be discussed in chapter 2.

⁵ A 'cultural practitioner' refers to elder/s in the village who advise members in cultural life. There is a difference between a 'cultural practitioner' and a religious specialist, but one would hold both titles and responsibilities.

⁶ There are slow changes taking place within the Muslim communities regarding the point of being both a Muslim and practising AIR. This is more in urban cities such as Mombasa rather than in the rural areas where this research has been conducted.

This thesis has seven chapters that are subdivided into themes, as shown in the table of contents. The breakdown of chapters into themes is an arrangement that enables systematic connections between ideas and arguments. Lists of abbreviations have been placed at the front of the table of contents. The bibliography, which has adopted the Harvard style, is after the last chapter. Following the bibliography are the glossary and appendices. Appendix 1 and traditional songs for celebrating good health are recorded on two different CDs' to reduce the size of the primary data material; these are attached in a pocket of this thesis.

Chapter One presents details relating to the researched population. Of particular importance is the geography of the region, its historical religious background and settlement history; this includes the current setting of the community's social-religious life, economy and political circumstances. The chapter also reviews the introduction of Christianity and how the local people responded to this religion.

Chapter Two deals with documentary sources, significantly, literature in a similar area of research. It is evident that in reviewing the literature, this chapter focuses on some omissions, weaknesses and strengths in the resources available. Suggestions are offered as to the extent some particular methodology in literature might be employed in the investigation of Christianity's approach to AIR. The review of literature is arranged into themes, an approach aimed to build up a consistent understanding of dialogue, health and wholeness in the general context of Africa and significantly in Kenya.

Chapter Three discusses the appropriate methodology and tools used for data collection. It provides an in-depth description of steps which have afforded essential guidance in

acquiring necessary primary and secondary information. For this purpose, the ethnographic approach has been identified as being appropriate: sampling of the population, identifying focus groups, and participant observation are the tools used.

Chapter Four, the data analysis, deals with the sorting and arranging of information acquired from research. The process involves re-reading, translating notes into English, rearranging and synthesising the data in order to clarify themes. This is to enable building up meaningful arguments through which a theory or model may be formulated in order to achieve a method of handling the research question.

Chapter Five draws on findings in previous chapters (Four and One) elucidating and arguing the nature of the case by reviewing the history of Jewish religious tradition relating with communities of other faiths, the ministry of historical Jesus, early Christianity and missionaries. This is in order to learn the origins of the exclusivist character; whether that was simply the inherent nature of Jewish tradition, early Christianity or an attitude implanted at a certain time and place, perhaps by ecclesial traditions and church leaders.

Chapter Six offers theological reflections by suggesting the use of a theocentric theology that can achieve inter-religious dialogue. To reach this goal, the chapter recommends an inter-religious education programme to be initiated in schools and for adults. This is to help improve the understanding that dialogue between Christianity and AIR has become an urgent necessity, especially due to the prevailing, deteriorating health conditions. The research draws together the thoughts of key theologians such as Wesley Ariarajah, Geza

Vermes, Stanley Samartha, John Hick and also some findings from WCC (IRRD) and PCID.

Chapter Seven reflects on the researched question drawing together what has been analysed and arguing theologically on the recommendations. The chapter not only gives emphasis to the methodology that can be applied to achieve the goals, but also the challenges that can be experienced during the practical process.

The social influences of AIR and Christianity are confronted by challenging questions which entail cooperation. Inter-religious community dialogue for life and action in Africa has become inevitable. A devout and coherent strategy developed from a better understanding of faiths/religions, is urgently required. Christianity and AIR have to acknowledge each other's existence in community service, and realise that they cannot do without each other: 'not without my neighbour'. Cooperation between these religions is vital in order that there may be a common voice in discussing and finding answers to their social problems.

CHAPTER ONE

Clarification of Terms and Surveying the Midzi-Chenda Heritage

Introduction

In order to have in-depth insight of the research content and meaning, this chapter first offers clarification of terms, by defining them in the context of the research population. Following this is an exploration of the Midzi-Chenda population; their history of settlement; world-view on health; their social, political, religious history and economic activities within their geographic area (Coastal Kenya). It also surveys the history and development of Christianity in the Midzi-Chenda territory (*tsi*) during the 1500s and 1800s and reviews the influence and impact of Christianity on the religious culture of the native people. Detailed narratives about how the Midzi-Chenda community responded to the new religious beliefs are offered in Chapter Five. A critical study about the religious relationship and cooperation which existed, or failed to materialise, and future prospects between Christianity and *Chikw'ehu* is undertaken.

1: Clarification of Terms

The terms clarified are those that will commonly be used in this research. These are: African Indigenous Religion, poverty, community health, inculturation, inter-religious dialogue, Umisheni and Midzi-Chenda. Notably, the terms are explained as understood and used within the African context of the Midzi-Chenda community

1.1: African Indigenous Religion

This term is frequently used in the research. Within the context of the Midzi-Chenda people of Coastal Kenya it refers precisely to the indigenous religious beliefs and practices of the African people excluding foreign beliefs and practices. According to the explanations of many African theologians, Mbiti (1991), Idowu (1973), Dickson (1984) and Oborji (2005), for example, the indigenous⁷ religion of Africans also incorporates the African way of life, so that this combination of religion and daily life is to an extent the African's culture. The intimacies of African culture and indigenous religion are so intertwined that it is difficult to distinguish between the two streams. Indigenous religion and culture can, therefore, be regarded as one and the same thing (Dickson, 1984). This definition is in contrast to previously accepted definitions, where AIR was described in terms such as paganism, ancestor worship, animism and spiritism. Individual African theologians such as Mugambi (2002), Geoffrey Parrinder (1973), and the 'Circle of African Women Theologians 2006' agree with this definition.

1.2: Poverty

A monetary definition of the term poverty has complexities, particularly in the present time when there are global differences of styles and living standards, not least between the developed and developing world. This definition neither explains nor describes the nature of poverty as such (Narayan, 2000: 32).

⁷ Many African and Western scholars of theology have been using the term Traditional instead of Indigenous. However, contemporary African theologians prefer the use of Indigenous which carries more integrity than traditional, because all religions have their traditions and therefore they are traditional. For example, doctrines are traditions per se.

However, this research focuses on the Midzi-Chenda population of Coastal Kenya whose poverty is similar to that of many populations in the developing world. The best definition for this research is that given by the research of Narayan (2000) and Julio (1979) into the feelings and pains of the poor. Poverty, according to their research 'Participatory Poverty Assessment' (PPA) refers to a condition in which a human being is unable to obtain sufficient food, resulting in 'hunger' leading to malnutrition. It is also the loss of a child through illness resulting from unsafe water and malaria; or the loss of a mother dying in labour due to complications resulting from the lack of access to basic infrastructure such as roads – preventing transport to a health facility even were it to be available; and children unable to obtain even basic formal education due to lack of access to a school.

Such circumstances eventually reduce humans to a condition of poverty where they become powerless, voiceless, dependent, and shamefully humiliated. Personal experience over 35 years, from one born and brought up among the poor Midzi-Chenda people on the coast of Kenya, affirms that this definition is appropriate to the present state of the Midzi-Chenda population, as it is to many other of the world's poor populations. 'Poverty is pain; it feels like a disease. It attacks a person not only materially but also morally. It eats away one's dignity and drives one into total despair.' (A poor woman, Moldova 1997; cited in Narayan *et al.*, 2000: 2). More academically, the World Bank defines 'extreme poverty' as that of a situation existing below 'the poverty line' represented by an income of \$2 or \$1 per day; which is inadequate for the purchase of essentials such as food, clothes, shelter, basic health care or medical services. (www.worldbank.org understanding poverty cited on 22/10/2006.)

1.3: Community Health (uzima wa lalo)

Uzima wa lalo is a term which for the purposes of this research is defined as ‘community health’. This term will be examined from a religious perspective (Christianity and AIR). Whilst accepting the understanding of both the World Council of Churches (WCC) and AIR, there is no change to the World Health Organisation (WHO) definition. From the AIR perspective, community health can be understood as the ultimate wholeness of the people: without good physical, mental, social, moral and spiritual health, society suffers, eventually creating a poor and sick community. Thus health is both community-based and personal (Sofoluwe, 1985). The same view is expressed by Dube (2006): health goes beyond the individual to involve the welfare of the whole community. Health needs to be free from social, political, economic and religious oppression as well as from disease.

From the Christian perspective, Billington (1978) defines health as not only being free of diseases that affect the body, but inclusive of every aspect of human well-being. He refers to health as peace, justice and all that is connected with the integrity of creation. Together with his definition this study also accepts the view of the Roman Catholic Order of Medical Missionary Sisters (RCOMM) that health does not only relate to the body, mind and the spirit, but it is also an aspect of each human being’s positive integration with others, the environment and God (Granberg-Michaelson, 1991: 5, 8). It reflects Jesus’ ministry to society of wholeness of life, healing in Galilee and Judea, and in what he said, ‘I am come that you may have life and that you may have it in abundance’. This is a definition that is also given by Michael Wilson. He observes:

Health is a symptomatic relationship between man and his environment; his supernatural environment, the world around him and his fellow man. Health is associated with good, and beauty - all that is positively valued in life. (Wilson, 1975: 3-4)

The above definitions define the general attitude of the Midzi-Chenda. Health is the well-being of the body, the mind and the soul, but it also needs opportunity to deal with societal issues that prevent well-being. The World Health Organisation in 1946 defined health as ‘a state of complete physical, mental, and social well-being and not just the absence of disease or infirmity’ (Melissa and Wilson, 2000: 75) When health is understood in this dimension, it leads to a positive attitude; it means that when people neither suffer pain nor are hindered in the functions of their daily life, despite their prognosis, they lead a ‘healthy life’. Only when humanity is in harmony with body, nature and ‘deities’ is it then empowered to take part in promoting such extraneous programmes as government activities, social activities and development projects for the community (Kosa and Zola, 1969). The understanding is that, of recent time, religious people and scientists have come up with a familiar meaning of health. The importance of this in Africa is that Christianity and AIR are now asked how best can they act to ensure their communities live healthy lives.

1.4: Inter-religious Dialogue

Dialogue as discussed in the research is focused on inter-religious community dialogue – particularly between Christianity and AIR. In this research, dialogue is not an engagement in debate for assessing which religion is good, or better than the other, nor for converting from one to the other. ‘Debate between followers of various religions, no matter how friendly, is not interreligious dialogue. In dialogue encounters, one is not trying to prove oneself right and the other believer wrong’ (Arinze, 1997: 9). Instead it is to be an honest and practical way of discussion that can educate each party in order to reach a mutual understanding of each world-view, resulting in the development of

respect, appreciation, tolerance and cooperation towards corporately working on issues affecting every individual (Temple, 2002).

It also draws on the definitions of Samartha and Ariarajah as will be shown in the literature review, but with a more elaborate definition provided by Kanagu (2007) and located in the African context. According to Hick (1980), the first context is to understand each other's religious values, to accept them and see the possibilities of applying them to daily human salvation/liberation from the constraints of life. The second context is to agree to work together as a community, while respecting each other's faith, for the purpose of developing the relevant society.

The present research also endorses the inter-religious dialogue approach, related to the study and practical observation made by Amoah (1998). The method examines the grass root community, and engages in meaningful discussions towards addressing common issues that affect the society, particularly those of health while living in extreme poverty.

1.5: Mission (Umisheni)

This is a Midzi-Chenda/Kiswahili term derived from the English word 'mission'. According to the Midzi-Chenda, *umisheni* is a movement brought by European Christians. It established a new culture and traditions which the people had not previously been exposed to. The first people indoctrinated into this new culture were the freed slaves, who had already lost much of their culture during the time when slavery had removed them from their cultural roots.⁸ In the research, *umisheni* is not Christianity but

⁸ It is noted that the freed slaves were from different parts of East Africa. A significant loss to their cultures was their indigenous languages. They were taught the language of the missionary, and made to forget

a way of bringing civilization. This goes with the ‘three Cs’ of David Livingstone: Civilization, Commerce and Christianity (Anderson, 1977). The understanding of the term is in a context that includes reading and writing (literacy education), development of agriculture and acquisition of the European way of life as part of the Christianisation process. Amisheni are those people who were taken into the Umisheni system (Kadodo, 2003).

1.6: Inculturation

This term developed relatively recently, in theological discourses, debating whether Christianity should be ‘nurtured in the culture of the people’, or accepted as it comes, together with the culture of ‘other owners’. Inculturation is the rooting of Christianity into the culture of the people in order to have roots in the souls of its new adherents (Walligo, *et al.*, 1986). This allows the adherents to practise freely their cultural rituals whilst remaining in Christianity, enabling the culture to develop Christianity, rather than Christianity ‘developing’ or destroying the culture, as was the earlier situation. Nthamburi (1995) argues that inculturation can be considered as an encounter between cultures, as in the context of Christianity and AIR whereby one influences the other. According to the understanding of Nthamburi’s research, inculturation is dialogue resulting from the encounter of cultures in the context of dialogue for conversion. Considering the views of Nthamburi and those of Shorter, this research considers inculturation to be a tactful method for Christianity as it seeks to convert the religious other. In the African context, it

about their original religion through daily Christian worship and catechism classes at the free-town home. This should not be seen as a contradiction of John Mbiti’s argument that Africans carried their religion wherever they went. In fact sometime later, among freed slaves some had to seek to join membership with the Midzi-Chenda community in order to retain African culture. They accepted having Midzi-Chenda identity and participated in cultural activities. Despite the freed slaves being culturally within the Midzi-Chenda cultural way of life, they were continuously regarded as foreigners (ahendakudza)

is taking back the stone that the builders rejected (culture) to lay a foundation for the Church in Africa.

1.7: The African World-view

In this research, the term ‘African world-view’ is taken to mean how Africans uniquely look at issues relating to health from a holistic perspective: political, social, economic and spiritual, relating them to the past, present and future. The discussion of Harvey J. Sindima, (1995), Connah Graham, ed. (1998), Cheryl B. Mwaria and Silvia Federici, *et al.* eds. (2000) have looked at such issues. This study will in particular concentrate on the world-view in a religious context relating to health issues.

1.8: The Native Midzi-Chenda

The term Midzi-Chenda is used because of the ideas obtained from Willis (1993) in his book *Mombasa, the Swahili and the Making of the Mijikenda*. Firstly from his research, it appears that there are Midzi-Chenda people who went to live in Mombasa, worked for the Arabs, and inter-married but continue to claim they are Midzi-Chenda. Secondly, it appears that there are ex-slaves who lived in mission centres such as Mazeras, Ribe, Rabai and Jomvu, who at the present moment also claim the Midzi-Chenda identity although they do not hold the indigenous identity of the Midzi-Chenda. The native Midzi-Chenda is a community culturally separate from the Arabs, Swahili and ex-slaves. They are those who can still tell of the long traditions relating to their religion and culture continuing to name their children according to lineage, clans and sub-clans.⁹

⁹ Clarification of this point is that, the native Midzi-Chenda people have clans (*mbari/lukolo*) and can trace their ancestors from the history of their lineage. There are those who have a mixed heritage with the

On the other hand, the term Midzi-Chenda, has frequently been wrongly interpreted in existing literature.¹⁰ Names and naming are very important in African culture. When together, community members never refer to themselves as Mijikenda; they use the term Midzi-Chenda when holding their own special meetings (*Midzi-Chenda sumilani*). Tinga (1998) a Midzi-Chenda researcher noted this. For example, the Waswahili¹¹ and those not speaking the Midzi-Chenda language will use the word *Mijikenda*, as do many researchers such as anthropologists, sociologists and historians. However, throughout this study I will use the term Midzi-Chenda as it is the acceptable indigenous and original way of referring to this community.

2: Surveying the Midzi-Chenda Settlement and Heritage

2.1: Settlement and Heritage

The community is a group of nine *Chenda* villages (*Midzi*). According to the study by Zeleza (1995), Waaijenberg (1993), Tinga (1998) Thomas Spear (1978) and from personal experience as a Midzi-Chenda, the community comprises the Adigo, Aduruma, Aravai, Akambe, Akauma, Adzivana, Achonyi, Agiriama and the Arive.¹²

Arabs through intermarriage, and have become (*waswahili* or *wajomba/ adzomba*). There are those who lost their lineage history and settled within the Midzi-Chenda territory and they are called foreigners (*ajakuja*). The two categories are not referred to as the native Midzi-chenda. Willis in his study also established the difference.

¹⁰In this context, the literatures referred to here include those written by Spear (1978, 1982), Mwangudza (1983), Zeleza (1995), Parkin (1972, 1991), and Nyamweru (1996) to mention just a few of the many.

¹¹Waswahili is a community that lives along the coastal areas of Kenya. They are a mixed race of foreigners and native people and sometimes freed slaves. The language they speak is Kiswahili, which is prominently spoken in East Africa and Congo.

¹²I am able to explain these detailed terms as an insider, born and brought up in a rural village that is rich in native and cultural traditions. Secondly, I was involved with the Duruma Bible translation and literacy reviewing committees of New Testament translation into our mother tongue from 1996-1999, until the Duruma New Testament was completed in 2000.

In their own history, they were known by different names. Elliot (1925) and Nthamburi (1985) explain in their work that the early Arabs referred to them as Zinjir. However, Strands (1899) says that the Portuguese used to call them the Musungulos/Moor. Kraft (1873) of the mid- 19th century called them the Wanyika or Wanika meaning ‘people of the bush’. As observed by Willis (1993) and Nthamburi (1985) the term Midzi-Chenda is a recent one which came to exist in the mid-20th century to avoid the use of other seemingly negative names. On the other hand, Parkin (1991) suggests that the name was actually a ‘society’ formed in Mombasa in 1945 for the purpose of contributing money to cover the costs of transporting back to their village those who had died in the city.

Clarifying the history of the Midzi-Chenda has its problems. Researchers such as Spear (1978) observe that this community is a cluster of the well-known Bantu group coming from as far as Southern Somalia in the 16th century to settle in Kenya, in Singwaya; an isolated hinterland north of the Tana-River District, close to southern Somalia.¹³ Willis (1993) criticised Spear’s work as mere ‘historical gossip’ and M.Walsh (n.d) challenged Spear on his Singwaya hypothesis.

Research done by a group of Aduruma people (1995 – 1999), under the auspices of the Duruma Bible Translation team, concluded that a previous Midzi-Chenda settlement was in Singwaya. A higher probability is that the migrants came all the way from the south of Africa, which is where a majority of the Bantus sharing many Midzi-Chenda ancient names are still found. Names such as Zuma, Mangale, Munga, Kaingu, Mulongo, Munyazi, Chiro and Lugo are more prevalent in the south than in the north. The group

¹³ In the year 2000, the Methodist Church in Kenya stationed me in Singwaya Synod ‘Tanariver District’. I had an interest in knowing why the synod bore this name. The Rev. Bishop Elija Shimbira took me to a vast area covered with shrub bushes, and assured me that it was where the Nyika community settled before they dispersed to other areas. The communities that remained included the Pokomo.

went as far as defining the years in which the Midzi-Chenda came to settle in Singwaya. The highest probability is that from the 4th century some had already lived along the Coast of Kenya, and immigration was most likely to have been the result of search for pastoral land. Spears' version of the story was challenged not only by Willis (1993) and Parkin (1991) but also by the Midzi-Chenda themselves.

When settlers reached Singwaya, they met other groups and all became the Nyika. These are the Gikuyu, Ameru, Akamba and Waata (Taita). It was during this period that they were forced out by the Galla community and many settled in the coastal lands of Kenya; the rest went north, following the Tana River which the Ameru call 'Mpwa of Red Waters'.¹⁴

In the process of migrating, the Midzi-Chenda settled along the south and north of coastal Kenya, particularly in Kwale and Msambweni districts (south coast) dominated by the Adigo, the Kinango district (south west coast) dominated by the Aduruma, also Kilifi and Malindi districts (north coast) dominated by the remaining; Achonyi, Akauma, Arive, Akambe, Agiriama, Aravai and Adzivana. As noted by Parkin (1991), Waaijenberg (1993) and Zeleza (1995), this community in their early days lived in indigenous villages called *makaya*, 'frequently written Kayas', that were built on the top of hills. This enabled the observation of two enemies: the Arabs who regularly raided them for slaves and the Galla who attacked and stole their livestock. Gradually, they became friendly with the Arabs, intermarried with and worked for them; also selling them their farm products. This resulted in a new community that had a mixed language called Kiswahili. The Adigo and

¹⁴ Dr. Ngunyura Baikiao who left the Catholic priesthood, narrated to me (in 2007) the history and immigration of the Meru people. He was my lecturer on liberation theology in the African context at the Kenya Methodist University in 1999.

others became influenced by Arab culture and religion even sharing Arab names. This inclusive system was not fully accepted by the Arabs; in fact they have not readily accepted even Midzi-Chenda names, regarding them as primitive and non-religiously oriented.¹⁵

After the British arrival on the coast of Kenya in 1800s, Midzi-Chenda villages (*Makaya*) which had been the centre of the Midzi-Chenda culture, and well fortified were gradually abandoned. Zeleza (1995) and Smith (1973) both explain that abandonment took place as a result of both work and land disagreements between the British and the Agiriama which ended in open revolt in 1914.¹⁶ The Agiriama defeat in that campaign resulted in many men having to find labouring jobs in the town of Mombasa to enable them to pay fines related to both the war, and also the tax which had been imposed by the British¹⁷.

Despite that revolt, modernization became unstoppable for the Midzi-Chenda because increased demands for education, modern methods of farming and self ownership of land had become all-powerful. The circumstances described above increasingly caused the *Makaya* to be vacated and subsequently used only as centres for cultural rituals, religious ceremonies and initiations rather than being features of everyday life (Zeleza, 1995). This meant that the Midzi-Chenda did not forget their tradition of living in villages, but this became less 'concentrated' than previously. What they now have are small family villages of father, children and grandchildren. With a total population of one million

¹⁵ In this point, I can confirm that the majority of Midzi-Chenda will have two names; Arabic to identify as a Muslim and indigenous to identify with the indigenous community lineage.

¹⁶ Further details on how the disagreement was conducted are given in Chapter Five.

¹⁷ I was able to get this information from an ex-chief Yusufu Mwainzi Nyawa who was still a young man during those days of fine payments (*Kodi*). His father, Nyawa wa Chidindyo, was a local judge, called to judge cases of those failing to pay the fine. A former Bishop of the Methodist Church in Kenya 'Pwani Synod' Rev. Ferdinand Mkare also shared with me his experience of his father running away from the British Police who searched for those who did not make any *Kodi* payments.

people, they have spread along the coast and into rural zones, developing agriculture and livestock farming with small sub-*kayas* used for ritual purposes.

In villages where they settled, the Midzi-Chenda did not have a central political government as understood today. Instead they had councils of elders (*Angambi*) who met from time to time to discuss possible action to be taken in order to help communities 'live harmoniously'. These councils of elders were responsible for religious settlement of critical issues and for making right decisions regarding the health of the community (*uzima wa lalo*). They also ensured that community members, and parents in particular, were encouraged to instil moral discipline in young people so that from an early age they should observe the norms of the community.

The Midzi-Chenda land profile varies, partly due to changes of temperature and humidity depending on distance from the sea and height above sea-level (vertical and horizontal distributions). Agriculture for the Midzi-Chenda is affected by the climate: for example, close to the sea there is high humidity whereas inland there is often little rain so soil and vegetation are poor. Regardless of the associated problems of some land being infertile, the Midzi-Chenda have occupied all these areas, constantly attempting to improve their situation by making changes which might bring benefit to the daily tasks of farming and living.

From earliest times their economic activities have included peasant farming, growing indigenous crops such as sorghum, millet and coconut palm trees from which to tap the local wine (*uchi wa mnazi*), hunting elephants for tusks, and animals such as lions for skins. The Midzi-Chenda were involved in trading with the Arabs and Asians exchanging

ivory, hides and skins for fabrics, and ornaments from places such as India. However, their customary economic activities were at a later time much hampered by the Imperial British East Africa Company and increased competition in trade from the Akamba people.

Following Kenyan independence in 1963 the government established agricultural industry within the region. A milk processing plant was started in Mariakani, a sugar factory at Ramisi, a cashew nut factory at Kilifi and the Kenya meat factory located close to the island of Mombasa. The majority of people were involved in animal husbandry and producing cash crops. As noted by Waaijenberg (1993), advanced technical and formal education acquired by many at schools and colleges prepared them for a variety of work. Some obtained professional jobs as teachers, doctors, agricultural officers and business experts. On the other hand, many continued as basic farmers or concentrated on fishing and raising livestock. With these activities the Midzi-Chenda continue to manage their daily lives and earn income for important projects such as the education of their children.

Tourism is a strong source of foreign exchange for the Coast economy but, significantly, this is managed by the Ministry of Tourism. In this sector there are substantial failures. A considerable number of young Midzi-Chenda, both males and females, have ended up in unsatisfactory informal jobs such as those of 'beach boys/girls', or as found in music clubs which entertain tourists in hotels. This is especially the case for those lacking adequate education and so being cheated of the possibility of more satisfactory employment. It is arguable whether even education or ability are the key to progress in a competitive society. Despite good qualifications many cannot find employment due to ethnic discrimination and endemic corruption within the system, affecting the attitudes of

employers. Moreover, the question remains as to how tourism can fit into Midzi-Chenda culture.

In the 1980s the collapse of the region's agriculture industry halted large scale farming resulting in the closure of all prominent agricultural factories. Arguably, this was due to World Bank intervention and the restriction of new structural adjustment policies (free market and privatisation of industries). Nationally there was continued economic decline from the 1980s. Ethnic clashes undermined the tourist industry and by the end of the century problems were worsened by the threat of global terrorism, for example, bombing of the Nairobi American Embassy in 1998 and the Kikambala hotel in 2002.

A result of all this was increased unemployment and poverty greater than could be remembered. Some have ended up in inappropriate trades such as charcoal burning, whilst many young people have been enticed into vices such as prostitution. Sadly, during the 1980s, Kenya had someone from Digo land diagnosed as the first person with HIV and AIDS. The virus is believed to have been brought by foreigners but it spread so fast that by 1999 it had become a national health disaster.

Particularly since 2006–2007, the government has shown noticeably greater interest in reviving agricultural industry in the region, along with other schemes to benefit the local community. These include the provision of free medical services for people living with HIV and AIDS. However, such new interest has yet to be judged by time, keeping in mind the possible effects of politics and government elections. This evidently showed how the government was using its political powers to manipulate the interests of Kenyans. Eventually, the national elections of December 2007 resulted in national

violence, leaving over 1000 people dead, 35,000 people displaced and a massive destruction of private and public property.¹⁸

Against this background, it is remarkable that the culture of the people continued to be welcoming (*ukarimu*) of both known and unknown visitors. Hospitality is shown because it is believed that the arrival of visitors brings blessings from the creator (*mjeni nzoo mwenyezi apha*) (Healey and Sybertz, 1996). The *ukarimu* culture is, therefore, to some extent religious. More so than the other people of Kenya, the community has had a long history of interacting with foreigners, beginning with Greeks and continuing with Arabs, Portuguese, British and Indians up to the present. Many features along the coast illustrate this: the ruins of Gede Mosques and Arab villages along the coastal line, 4th-century Kwale Ware -discovered at Kwale, and even the name of Mombasa City, which is a Midzi-Chenda term for both greeting and questioning (*Mwambadze*). The River Galana is a term derived from the Agiriama question ‘where do the great floods come from?’ (*Galaa nahi?*). The existence of the Swahili community’s use of Kiswahili (derived from Arabs, Portuguese and native people) reflects many negative and positive effects in the creating of divisions and stresses in political, religious and economic life.

¹⁸ Being outside my country with a family left in the heart of Mombasa city, I was keenly watching the news (CNN News channel, BBC 24 News channel, on line Daily Nation Kenya and East African Standard) and making frequent calls to both my wife and friends in Kenya in order to be able to understand the situation. My family had to go to our rural village for safety as did many people. It took three months for leaders both national and international to settle the problem.

2.2: Chikw'ehu and the Concept of Community Health

Chikw'ehu, the religion of the Midzi-Chenda has been a significant component in their daily affairs. They have practised their religion consistently since time immemorial, just as other African communities have done. Mbiti (1975) explains that Africans are religious by being born into and reared in their religion. His point is, to make things quite clear, that the Midzi-Chenda have not been 'converted' to their religion neither do they attempt to find and make converts. Instead, *Chikw'ehu* becomes a sacred culture to individuals and community as they grow up within its culture and influence through practice and experience (Mbiti, 1975; Kalilombe, 1999).

Chikwe'hu is the basis of Midzi-Chenda lives, providing answers to all life's troubles and successes. It informs them about everything, from the cultivation of their lands, the keeping of their herds of domestic animals, the care of the environment, to relations with their neighbours. Oduyoye (1982) and Chepkwony (2006) in their studies observe AIR being an intimate part of African (Midzi-Chenda) culture, used in issues of daily lives such as those of community health and well-being. 'Human experience in the past suggests that religion (AIR) deeply influences society and culture, including the health services of a given society' (Chepkwony, 2006: 9). From this experience they become reluctant to apostate¹⁹ from old beliefs, even when they join another religion. Ucko writes:

And even when followers of AIR convert to Christianity or other religions, they take with them some of the elements of their old religion and culture which they consider to be 'noble', 'beautiful' and representing the highest values of human expression in relation to God or the Supreme Being. (Ucko, 2004: 5)

¹⁹The term apostasy here is used to mean leaving your faith for another faith through being convinced and converted; such as is seen in the missionary religions where people abandon their faith/religion for another religion for various reasons. Mbiti explains that it is hard for Africans to completely abandon their Indigenous Religion even when they become members of other religions.

This continuity makes AIR always the same, even when its adherents migrate to other lands or mix with people of other faiths, language and culture, as is happening more frequently through globalization (Mbiti, 1975).

The Midzi-Chenda religion begins with a common belief in one God (*Mulungu*). The one God (*Mulungu*) is for them the creator of all humanity (*arieumba anadamu osi*) who is known as the giver and moulder of their culture and religion. Its scope widens to involve spirits such as ancestors (*mikoma/koma*); believed to be close to *Mulungu* and occasionally used as mediators when communicating with *Mulungu*. It is corporately believed that other, lesser spirits, work with people to bring either good or evil fortune to the community. As with other African people, what they believe is taken for granted; being their culture as well as their faith (Chidongo, 2002). The form of belief in this community, as in Africa in general is that religion is so entwined in the culture of the people that it becomes difficult for a foreigner to distinguish between culture and religion (Parrinder, 1954; Mbiti, 1986).

Fundamentally, *Chikw'ehu* is practised by the Midzi-Chenda independently (and in some aspects in isolation) from any foreign religious influence.²⁰ Necessary research to enable us to understand its origins has not been done. This is not surprising for scholars such as Idowu (1973) and Mbiti (1986) have shown how complex the study of the origins of African religion is, given that there are no written records.

²⁰ It is accepted that foreign influence and other religions such as Islam and Christianity have survived together with the indigenous religion of the people. Except in the case of Islam, people still usually practise their mother religion without any borrowings from the foreign ones.

As will be seen in the theological reflection (Chapter Five), the Midzi-Chenda indigenous religion has a unique pedagogy and set of practices involving the ethics of health issues. Their common belief is good health for humanity and nature (*peho mbidzo*). They invoke *Mulungu* and spirits (*koma*) for *peho mbidzo*. This is done in association with their immediate healers (*aganga*) and elders (*akare*) who are also mediums able to stand between humanity, God and the spirits.²¹

The way in which the community systematically follows up crucial issues that seem to endanger community health (*uzima wa lalo*) is of importance in this thesis. In his study among the Giriama (Agiriama), whose religious practices are the same as for the rest of the Midzi-Chenda, Parkin (1991) discovered how cultural ritual practices were performed. Essentially, his study indirectly looked into the rituals followed by Agiriama in addressing community health issues. His study shows that the Midzi-Chenda are not exceptional in their beliefs about health and how community health (*uzima wa lalo*) should be protected.

The Midzi-Chenda indigenous belief is that *uzima wa lalo* is a special gift from God (*Mulungu*) and that it is the duty of all Midzi-Chenda and other societies to share in the responsibility for taking care of this gift. God (*Mulungu*) is ultimately dependable (*kuluviro*), as well as being the only giver of life (*moyo*), and is able to closely watch over the health of his creation. This is their understanding of divine responsibility. From the

²¹ I have memories of a time during my research when I was called to conduct the funeral of an elderly man who belonged to the Methodist Church. For the purpose of respecting AIR, I asked one elder to conduct a prayer during the time when the body was placed into the grave for burial. He went into the grave and pierced the piece of cloth that had been wrapped around the head of the body. He then got hold of the ear of the body and prayed asking the dead man to let those he had left behind enjoy good health (*peho mbidzo*) and not allow them any ill health (*peho mbii*).

human perspective, it is understood that when human health (*uzima*) is greatly affected and the probability of survival is low they are powerless; they then accept that there is no possibility of healing without God (*roho kayigulwa sokoni*).

It is from this concept of a Supreme Being that they have developed an articulate religious system addressing community health issues. Such a distinctive indigenous pedagogy is also applied and practised by West Africans, as shown by Sarpong (1989), and by the people of Zimbabwe as shown by Chavunduka (1999). In their extensive studies of African religion, Mbiti (1991), Idowu (1973), Oborji (2005) and Chepkwony (2006), have provided detailed information describing how Africans uniquely follow issues of health in their religious forms.

Living together as a united community of believers, the Midzi-Chenda came into contact with foreign people who later became permanently established on the coast. In the course of the foreigners' co-habitation with the local community, they introduced their culture, language, religion, politics and diverse systems of healthcare. Islam (from Arabs) and Christianity (from Europeans) gradually became established with the native people and have remained.²² Of these two foreign religions, this study is focused on Christianity rather than Islam. The following section thus depicts the core problem of this study which is the establishment of Christianity within the Midzi-Chenda community.

²² For further clarification on the difference classification of Midzi-Chenda, see footnote 9 page 21.

3: A Critical Assessment of Christianity Encountering *Chikw'ehu*

3.1: Christianity's Early Stages in Kenya

Historically, the encounter of Christianity and *Chikw'ehu* as expressed by Baur (1990), Anderson (1977) and Nthamburi (1982) was gradual and extensive. Soon after its introduction and establishment into North Africa (especially in the West and East of North Africa) Christianity reached Coastal Kenya through Ethiopia (Baur, 1990). This perception helps to understand why Walls argues that Christianity should not be misunderstood as being a leftover of colonialism in Africa. On the other hand, Mbiti (1969) suggests that due to its antiquity in the continent Christianity needs to be taken as an indigenous faith in Africa.

Baur's study (1990), shows that Christianity in Coastal Kenya was introduced as early as the fourth century by monks thought to have come from Ethiopia. His observations are that this early mission work never flourished; several campaigns to resist it were created by the hostile Ethiopian Galla 'Oromo' people. The Oromo community is said to have frequently prevented the monks from reaching the coast of Kenya. However, little is known about the Ethiopian monks. Baur does not indicate which people these monks first met or whether they were able to convert them. Also, there is no visible evidence proving these monks ever visited the Coast of Kenya.

Mugambi (2002), on the other hand, concentrates on the European establishment of Christianity in East Africa during the nineteenth century. This succeeded the ineffectual efforts of the fifteenth-century Portuguese. Theoretically, if we are to follow Baur's theory, Christianity came earlier than Islam to Coastal Kenya, but if we accept the ideas of Mugambi (2002) and others such as Nthamburi (1982), Anderson (1977), Oliver

(1952) and Hildebrandt (1981), Christianity was established later than Islam. This research will go by these latter views, as they offer important information which currently exists about Christianity.

In understanding the nature of Christian history in Kenya, it is necessary to first probe the Portuguese efforts to establish Christianity on Coastal Kenya in the 15th century and the later failure of missions. Accepted evidence is that towards the end of the fifteenth century Vasco da Gama, with Roman Catholic Portuguese, explored a way to the East African coast (Nthamburi, 1982, 1991, 1995). They found on arrival that Arabs had already established trading stations on the coast and had introduced Islam as the 'only true religion' (Anderson, 1977; Oliver, 1952). Early cities such as Zanzibar, Pemba and Mombasa had become major centres of Arab trade out of East Africa. Vasco da Gama had from the start realised the importance of trade, and his ultimate aim was to acquire wealth from the East.

In the course of exploring the coast, the Portuguese introduced Christianity to the people. Those who faced this introduction included Muslim Arabs (Nthamburi, 1982). Hildebrandt (1981) and Isichei (1995) show that this process had been started earlier in other parts of Africa and was seen as one way of stamping out Islam, which had become established in Europe (Portugal and Spain) as also in North Africa. Later Portuguese missionaries, including Francis Xavier and the Augustinian Friars, were called to introduce and establish Christianity in Kilwa and Mombasa. Baur writes:

In 1500, two years after da Gama, a second navigator named Cabral called in at Kilwa on his way to India. On board he had eight Franciscans, eight chaplains and one vicar (a parish priest). He had been given the royal instructions that these priests should first use their spiritual sword before any thought of the secular one. But if the Moors and pagans did not accept the Christian faith and refused the offered peace and commerce, he should wage war against them with fire and sword. (Baur, 1994: 87)

Clearly, this early European period on Coastal Kenya was not peaceful; there were frequent intense struggles with the Arabs over the acquiring of trading stations, as well as over forced conversion to Christianity. The newcomers also believed 'Christianity was the 'only true religion' and the struggle continued for two hundred years (Sundkler and Steed, 2000). The highlight of this struggle was the Portuguese success in overcoming Arab power, colonising the coast and establishing trade, much of which consisted of slavery. Subsequently, within two hundred years, the Oman Arabs grew in strength and eventually in 1729 overpowered the Portuguese, marking the end of their Catholic Christianity. The Arabs did their best to erase what had been planted by the Christians (Nthamburi, 1991; Anderson, 1977). In his study, Baur writes of a period of martyrdom during which some Christians accepted death rather than Islam; the names given indicate that a few could have been moors (Midzi-Chenda). At the present time, there is little to show of the planting of Portuguese Catholic Christianity except ruined monasteries in Fort Jesus, and the Pillar of Vasco da Gama in Malindi.

A modern Christian mission movement followed. This is well explained by Oliver (1952) and Anderson (1977). Emerging in the nineteenth century, this was more vigorous than the work of the Portuguese and became marked by the efforts of well-known individuals such as David Livingstone and various Missionary Societies. It is from this phase of the Christian era on Coastal Kenya that the present study offers its evaluation.

For the Midzi-Chenda community, the new wave of Christianity began in 1844 when the Church Missionary Society sent out Johann Ludwig Krapf. He decided to establish himself at Mombasa and was later joined by Johannes Rebman in 1846 and Erhardt in

1849 (Nthamburi, 1982; Oliver, 1952). The trio had to find a suitable place where they could establish a mission centre. Rabai Mpya (a Midzi-Chenda village, just close to Kaya Rahai) positioned about 10 miles from Mombasa at a height of 1000 ft seemed to be a most advantageous location for their beginning. The reason behind this is not known but one can agree with the study done by the Provincial Unit of Research Church of the Province of Kenya 'PURCPK' (1994: 2) that this decision was arrived at in order to avoid tension with the Muslim Arabs. This would certainly contrast with earlier Portuguese missionary methods in relating with the Muslims. (Cole, 1970).

Krapf was a German missionary, and had once worked in Abyssinia (now named Ethiopia). Thereafter he developed an interest in reaching the Galla people (Hildebrandt, 1981; Oliver, 1952; Nthamburi, 1982). Some researchers, such as Oliver (1952) and Nthamburi (1982), support the theory that his establishment of the camp at Rabai was specifically for the purpose of reaching the Galla people from the south. In his subsequent visits to these people, he was disappointed with the negative and obstinate reception afforded by the Galla, especially in comparison to his former stay with them. This brings echoes of Baur's statements concerning the Ethiopian monks who visited Coastal Kenya in the fourth century and were similarly resisted by the Galla community; the same community also frequently raided the Midzi-Chenda.

Kraft's dispiriting reception prompted his decision to return to Europe. However, he returned to Coastal Kenya in 1862 under the auspices of the United Methodist Free Church with a group of pioneering missionaries including Thomas Wakefield and Charles New. These Methodist missionaries decided to camp at Ribe (Rihe), a Midzi-Chenda

Village adjacent to Rabai. Nthamburi (1982, 1991) observes that the Methodist station at Ribe (Rihe) was inaugurated in July 1862.

Christianity on the Coast of Kenya did not at first target the Midzi-Chenda people, despite missionaries establishing their mission centre at the village of Rabai and Ribe. Indeed, the Midzi-Chenda were not part of the missionaries evangelising plan (Chidongo, 2002; Kadodo, 2003). Thomas Wakefield of the United Methodist Free Church revealed that he had been captivated by Krapf's dreams of reaching the Galla with the Gospel. Consequently he did not contemplate concentrating on the local native people (Nthamburi, 1982, 1991; Baur, 1994; Anderson, 1977). One reason for this is given by the missionaries, Wakefield in particular; the Nyika (Midzi-Chenda) were a 'stagnant people' and also of 'sparse population'. This gives an impression that they were in some sense despised by the missionaries. The suggestion of a 'lesser populated, unpromising community' was later contradicted by Wakefield's colleague Charles New, who actually estimated the Ribe to be twenty to thirty thousand in number (Kendal, 1978; Kadodo, 2003).

Subsequently, when the Galla mission had visibly failed, both mission centres at Rabai Mpya under (CMS) and Ribe (UMFS) flourished when a decision was made to develop them into camps for freed slaves (Oliver, 1952). Some time before that, during the period of settling the freed slaves, another development took place. The Roman Catholic Rev. Bishop Ryan of Mauritius asked the Church Mission Society (CMS) missionaries to establish residential homes at Mombasa for the 'outcasts and vulnerable' (Anderson, 1977). The Freetown in Mombasa existed as a result of efforts to free and settle the slaves together in order to rehabilitate them.

In supporting this mission, the community of freed slaves was to get support later from other freed slaves, many of whom were Bombay Africans encamped in Bombay, India. The first group of these arrived in Rabai during 1864 (Sundkler and Steed, 2000). The Bombay African Christians had already acquired teaching, artisan, agricultural and interpreting skills whilst in the Nasik industrial centre of Bombay (Sundkler and Steed, 2000; Cole, 1970; Nthamburi, 1991; Welbourn, 1965). Some of these Bombay African Christians, such as Ishmael Semler, William Jones-1904 and George David-1884, became the immediate teachers and instructors of both freed and runaway slaves, (*watoro*). These people, perhaps more so than the missionaries themselves, became most instrumental in influencing and drawing the Midzi-Chenda people into accepting the new Christian religion.

The problem of the freed slaves did much to attract missions to East Africa, and even more to interest the British Government in Missionary enterprise...in 1864, the first of several Indian-trained Africans were sent to assist Rebmann at Mombasa. 'It was from these training stations' from which the cream of their pupils would one day go out to evangelise the tribes from which they had sprung. (Oliver, 1952: 17-18)

Since the freed slaves 'foreigners' (*ahendakudza*) were camped in mission centres, the natives nicknamed them people belonging to the mission centre (*amisheni*) as they did not belong to a specific community. In his study, Kadodo refers to the lifestyle of these people as *umisheni*, because it has features of the formal missionary style of life. The *umisheni* culture was different from that of the native people; they dressed like the missionaries, reading, writing, and speaking the language of the missionaries. Progressively, *umisheni* extended from village to village, beginning from Rabai (Rahai) and Ribe (Rihe) northwards, reaching Kaloleni and Fuladoyo, which was inhabited by the Giriama (Sundkler and Steed, 2000).

On the South Coast, the Catholic Holy Ghost Fathers encamped at Waa and built a technical school. This place, inhabited by the Adigo, is highly influenced by Islam. Although the Catholic fathers managed to survive for some time and attracted a few locals, continuing the management of the centre apparently became too dispiriting with only poor attendance. It was transferred to Giriama in 1949 (Baur, 2000). Later, due to the local strength of Islam the few remaining Adigo Christian adherents moved to Vyongwani in Kwale. The Ramtu, Zani, Maneno, Mwalonya, Mwaveku and Mr. Lugo's family were among those termed as pagans (*kafir*). Lugo was forced to relocate his family from Digo Land to Rabai (Jimba) where he died and was buried.²³ Importantly, this history influences the research in understanding how Christianity was determined to eradicate the cultural religion and way of life of the Midzi-Chenda.

3.2: The Work of the Missionaries at the Coast of Kenya

In their studies, Leakey (1936), Kenyatta (1938) and Thiong'o (1970) observed that the approach and methods used for converting the Africans (Midzi-Chenda included) to Christianity was through the introduction of schools, hospitals and new agricultural farming methods. This was in line with what Anderson (1977) said about the application of the philosophy of David Livingstone's three C's; 'civilisation, commerce and Christianity'.

There is evidence that missionaries of the 19th century on Coastal Kenya and other parts of the country, as observed by Leakey (1936: 85), imparted new positive ideas, knowledge and skills into all areas of life for Kenyans. This was not only in their efforts

²³ This history remains with the Adigo Christians; a retired Anglican cleric, Canon Ramtu, 'a Mdigo', narrated this firsthand information to me about the Adigo Christians

to establish and develop Christianity among communities but also in looking at the overall welfare of society and handling the multiple problems. Positively, the missionaries felt responsible for the social needs of the people: obliging them to apply the social gospel that was concerned with humanity's general welfare (Sorrenson, 1968: 269; PURCPK, 1994: 11).

In the process of implementing their scheme, the missionaries along Coastal Kenya leased large tracks of land in Rabai, Ribe, Mazeras, Jomvu, Frere town, and on the island of Mombasa (Mvita).²⁴ On these tracks of land, structures of schools and colleges were built and new agricultural techniques were demonstrated. Halls for Christian worship were built at Rabai *Kisulutini*, Ribe, Mazeras *Ganjoni*, Waa, Jomvu and beyond.

So how did this scheme progress within the Midzi-Chenda community? The development of health education and health centres began with Livingstone who was a medical doctor (Andreson, 1977; Oliver, 1952). He had surveyed a large part of East Africa, and initiated an approach of providing an immediate health service for those needing it. Livingstone's example influenced missionary concern in areas where they encountered serious tropical diseases such as malaria, measles, tuberculosis, leprosy, yellow fever and cholera. These had claimed the lives of many missionaries, such as the wife and baby of Kraft. The missionaries found it necessary to start programs for setting up centres for health and for health education within the zones where they were based, in an effort to improve the people's physical well-being (Vaughan, 1991). Many of the major hospitals that exist in Kenya today and those at the Coast such as Kinango hospital,

²⁴ The history of missionary land was narrated to me by the second Presiding Bishop of the Methodist Church in Kenya, Rev. Dr. Lawi Imathiu, and the Bishop of the Anglican Church of Kenya Coast Diocese, Rev. Kalu. This land was meant to be used to settle the former slaves, to build schools, hospitals and enable farming development that would benefit the community.

St Lukes Hospital Kaloleni, Ngao hospital Tana River, Makupa nursing home Mombasa and Light House Mombasa all have a church foundation.²⁵ ‘During this period, medical work was established at Mzizima (the current Coast General Hospital), on the island of Mombasa, and at several dispensaries’ (PURCPK, 1994: 13). Gradually, this provided an opportunity for the missionaries to persuade some local people to be trained to nurse the sick and to practise primary health care.

Nevertheless, it was in the health centres that Christianity was emphasised through preaching, and in addition to ordinary health education, introducing healing of the body, soul and spirit (Roy, 1978; Wilson, 1975; Voughan, 1991; Chavunduka, 1986).

However, Kenyans could not grasp Christianity without first knowing its distinctive details, for they already well understood and possessed details of their own religion. Christian details were found in the Bible, but the Bible was a book that needed literacy skills (Mugambi, 1992: 101; Mutua, 1975: 30-31). The Church, therefore, undertook to initiate programs of literacy; teaching converts how to read, write and translate the Bible into the language of the people.²⁶ These early efforts later developed into schools where education was taught from primary to secondary levels (Mutua, 1975). Schools were extended to other parts of the region such as Kaloleni (St. John’s for girls and St. George’s for boys, Ribe schools for girls and boys). A Teachers’ College was started at Ribe, which is now the present Shanzu Teachers’ College; a Divinity School was started at Freetown but later transferred to the present St. Paul’s United Ecumenical and Theological University, Limuru.

²⁵The hospitals mentioned here are well known to the author as he comes from the Coast province of Kenya. The information is also available in the Ministry of Health Coast regional office. Some of the hospitals, such as Ngao and Kinango, were handed to government management after Independence although the Church remains as a sponsor.

²⁶ John L. Krapf translated the English Bible New Testament into Kiswahili for the people to listen to the gospel in the language they could understand.

The earliest education was not only the skill of using paper and pen, but also the technology of masonry, carpentry and mechanical skills. Furthermore, health education was also emphasised in schools in a way similar to that of the health centres, including methods of cooking food, laundry, bathing, cleaning home compounds, health and safety in the kitchen, personal hygiene such as brushing the mouth, to mention only a few topics (Anderson, 1977; Megan, 1991).

As noted earlier, the scheme was intended, primarily, for the rehabilitation of freed and runaway slaves (*watoro*), rather than promoting Christianity among the Midzi-Chenda. The Midzi-Chenda gradually became absorbed in the process. Anderson prefers calling this type of Christianity literacy (*kusoma*), where the people basically gained education to equip them for life.

Another area the missionaries tried to cover was the improvement of agriculture. This was controversial. It was argued that missionaries were not initially persuaded of a need to give agricultural training. Agricultural development came as a secondary goal after awareness of the needs of the people; particularly those of freed slaves residing at Jomvu, Mazeras, Rabai and Ribe. The motivation for encouraging agriculture came from a non-missionary person, Sir Bartle Frere (Anderson, 1978), who was determined to give this struggling group of people good education for their future economic life. He believed that concentrating on paper, pen, daily prayers and reading the Bible would be a waste of the people's future lives; what was needed was the acquisition of skills and knowledge relating to farming and technology. In fact when he visited some of the camps at the Coast it was observed:

Rabai and Ribe displeased Frere. He spoke to the Methodists of Ribe, saying that their Christian community of fifty needed more practical teaching, to train craftsmen and skilled workers. Frere objected to the purely evangelical mission of the C.M.C and the Methodists. He wanted emphasis put on the civilizing effects of Christianity. 'Christianity must give modern skills'. (Anderson, 1978: 8)

3.3: Missionary Attitudes towards Midzi-Chenda Indigenous Religion

As has already been mentioned, in general the Christianity that was brought to Africa in the 16th and 19th centuries was introduced in an alien form; 'a mixed civilised culture of Romans and Greeks' (P'Bitek, 1973). Its Hellenistic influences those of a former well-established empire, dominated North Africa (Egypt and Libya), amongst other places (Pobee, 1979). Sugitharajah,²⁷ Donaldson and Stuart (1909), Sundkler and Steed, (2000) and Oduyoye, (1996) explaining Christianity's history in Africa, like Asia and other parts of the world, tell how early Christianity was received in Latin, with the Holy Bible read in Greek and restricted to only a few people.

The studies of Mugambi (2002), P'Bitek (1971), Ngugi wa Thiong'o and Kaingu Tinga (1998) reveal that early Christian missionaries in Kenya had a peculiar egocentric exclusive attitude²⁸. They considered: 'community, tradition... understanding of reality... encounter with God... as the one and only truth excluding all others and that all other religions are necessarily wrong and unreal' (Xiao, 2006). Their religion was believed superior to all others and they were satisfied that there was no need to learn from any other (Hick, 1985). They totally depended on their sacred scriptures. Knitter (1985) explains that this exclusive attitude was based on the confident assumption that their own

²⁷ This information was received during lectures conducted by Prof. Sugitharajah, October-November 2005. University of Birmingham.

²⁸ Exclusive Egocentric attitude in this context refers to a self centredness justifying itself as the right, excluding others to be wrong/unworthy

religion contained absolute truth and that there could be no salvation outside their own faith. Given the opportunity, they eagerly converted others, persuading them to abandon their previous cultural traditions.

Christianity's claims to be the locus of salvation (no salvation outside the Church), through the finality and uniqueness of Jesus as the only son, the only truth and the only way to God, necessarily disregarded all others who might also have had experience of the Divine. This was presented to the Midzi-Chenda community and to the rest of Kenya (Mugambi, 2002). Behind this was the attitude of the Church which regarded the African (Midzi-Chenda) religion, as having no value whatsoever.

It was ensured that everyone should know that indigenous religious practices were backward; propaganda used terms such as 'paganism' and 'witchcraft' (Tinga, 1998). With limited knowledge of religious sociology and anthropology, the Christian missionaries failed to understand that other communities had their own 'christs'. Shenk (1997) referring to Panikkar suggests that 'Jesus is the name for Christians, but Christ may have other names in other faiths and cultures' (Shenk, 2008: 60). In Kenya, for example, the Nandi community had their own Christ 'messiah': *Koitalel arap Somei*, while the Midzi-Chenda had *Kabwere, Kajiwe wa Tsuma and Mekatilili wa Menza*.

In his study, Kadodo (2003) observed that the attitude of the 19th-century missionaries towards the Midzi-Chenda world-view is that it was 'wanting' in all spheres of life; their religious, political, economic and social heritage was regarded as 'primitive', meaning 'inferior' and less than human. Probably change was needed to accord with the standards of the existing modern world. Kadodo reveals that it was highly likely that it was the

introduction of modern Christianity which contradicted and confused the Midzi-Chenda religious world-view.

Another attitude was expressed by Kenyatta (1938), the first president of the Republic of Kenya (referring to the Gikuyu community). The missionaries considered Africans as having virgin hearts and minds which were ‘clean slates’, similar to those of young children; anything could be written, planted and nourished there. It was assumed that Kenyans needed to become identical twins of the West in order to be civilised.

It can be argued that exclusivist militant Christianity²⁹ was determined by way of missionaries to persistently undermine AIR and other religions such as Islam and unrelentingly to establish globally its own religious, political and economic powers; to civilise and then to Christianise ‘perishing souls’ (Oduyoye, 1986; Kim and Kim, 2008). Baikiao Ngunyura (1999) and Mpangi (2002) observe that such attitudes created the methods of conversion; such as labouring to remove the indigenous and cultural way of life in order to replace it with the (*umisheni*) way of life — considered to be the only Christian way of living.

3.4: The Response of the People

‘One does not throw away one’s old praying mat just because of a new one that one has borrowed’³⁰

As a result of all these diverse influences the Midzi-Chenda community were in jeopardy, especially from religious change and sudden exposure to a world of religious pluralism.

²⁹ Exclusivist militant Christianity refers to the missionary attitude of excluding AIR and forcefully teaching their religion to be more acceptable in society than any other religion

³⁰ This is a saying commonly used by Midzi-Chenda, to explain that *Chikw’ehu* is a religion that cannot be abandoned because of the presence of a foreign one.

This is similar to my personal youthful experience of religious dichotomy which still exists. Due to the well-established, historical and proven value of their indigenous religion, the Midzi-Chenda community members first approach health issues according to their own beliefs and rituals; only later do they try modern approaches. Christianity continues to dispute and totally condemn this way of life (Tinga, 1998). Ciekawy (2000), similarly observes that the Midzi-Chenda have had their cultural religious way of life oppressed by both political and Christian colonial regimes. They have been reduced to continual lamentation that this approach is against their rights (*tsihaki*).

Following the core area of this study regarding 'community health', it shows that the presence of foreign Christian missionaries, their attitudes and modes of dealing with health issues, has become a significant threat to indigenous healing systems. However, precisely because they had their own systems of addressing issues of community health the Midzi-Chenda were seen as 'fallen' people, demoralized and uncultured, knowing nothing about letters, science, art, philosophy or religion (Kendal, 1978). Oliver asserts that:

At Rabai missionaries were all Lutherans, priests of the old school. For some or all of these reasons, they saw the Negro primarily as 'a fallen man', while Livingstone saw him as 'suffering' (Oliver, 1952: 9).

Many Kenyans adopted a negative attitude towards Christianity. The response to indoctrination, denouncing indigenous culture and religion was one of perplexity amongst the Midzi-Chenda. It was felt that the new religion and all its changes were meant for ex-slaves (*Ahendakudza*) alone. Just as the Christian missionaries considered their religion and culture to be superior to any other, the Midzi-Chenda also regarded their religion (*Chikw'ehu*) to be superior and believed their culture was the only truth to be followed.

Baur explains that from amongst the Midzi-Chenda the 'Agiriama' told Fr. Madigan, a Christian missionary:

We have been in many places and encountered many difficulties, famine and wars, but everywhere our customs (religion) helped us to survive. If we once see that Christianity will help us better than our customs (religion) then we shall accept it the following day. (Baur, 1990: 31-32).

In a way the Midzi-Chenda AIR adherents were as exclusivist as the Christians, but more accommodating, tolerant and absorbent (Zezeza, 1994), in not themselves wanting to interfere with either the foreign or any other religion. In explaining their tolerance and accommodative attitude, the Midzi-Chenda use the term (*Karibu*) to welcome foreigners; that means to welcome them in the social, political and religious activities of life. In this welcome, they would involve visitors in their indigenous practices although they would have to pay tribute (*Mbuzi na Kadzama*) to be fully accepted. Ideally, according to Shorter (1975) and Thorpe (1991), Africans did not see the need to look down on, or interfere with, the foreign religions and their adherents, as they understood this to be their culture and way of worship and in need of respect for its own sake.

Being themselves exclusivist by regarding their religion, culture and traditions as superior, they became reluctant to accept the religious supremacy of the European people (Zezeza, 1994). The Midzi-Chenda did not know how to live without their culture and religion. They held the conviction that he who abandons his culture and tradition is a slave of the other (*mricha chikw'ao ni mtumwa*) (Kadodo, 2003). This was also true of other African societies, as mentioned by Shorter (1975). Baikiayo (1999)³¹ mentions that it was in the name of God that the religious expatriates were given due respect by

³¹ Dr. Baikiayo Ngunyura was a lecturer at the Kenya Methodist University in the school of religion between 1999-2001. He was once a Roman Catholic priest but later defected to form a religious movement that is linked with the Ameru cultural traditions. He taught African Liberation Theology.

Africans, but the former later abused this respect. Sarpong (1988), P'Bitek (1970), Muga (1977) and Mugambi (2002) have the same findings in their studies on Christianity and African culture. As for Africans themselves, they at times felt an urgent need to be left alone to practise their way of life (Iwe, 1979: 205). One of the Ashanti kings had this to say to the missionaries:

The Bible is not a book for us. God at the beginning gave the Bible to the white people, another book to the Cramos (Muhammadans), and the fetish to us... we know God already ourselves... We will never embrace your religion, for it would make our people proud. It is your religion that has ruined that Fanti country, weakened their power, brought down the high man on a low level with the low man. (Findlay, G. G. and Holdsworth, W.W 1922: 175)

Nevertheless, in the course of time, a few Midzi-Chenda became attracted to what was going on in the mission centres. However, the majority, such as the Agiriama, Aduruma and Adigo, were particularly hesitant to allow their children to be educated, due to earlier experiences with other colonisers (PURCPK, 1994; Sundkler and Steed, 2000).

Some of the early Midzi-Chenda Christian adherents were people such as Abe Sidi David Koi, who was killed by the Arabs at Fuladoyo in Giriama 1883 (due to his protecting runaway slaves '*watoro*' from their masters). Others were John Mgomba, Thomas Mazera, Stephen Kireri, and Mringe (first convert baptised by Krapf), Abraham Abegunga and his son Isaac Nyondo (who married an African Bombay lady named Polly), Abe Ngoa and Dena (Nthamburi, 1991).

These, together with the other large 'family' of freed black slaves, that of Samuel Chone and his son Rev. Thomas Wakefield Kombo for example, tried to persuade the Midzi-Chenda of the Coast of Kenya to accept Christianity (PURCPK, 1994; Kadodo, 2003). The Christians often went to extremes in relations with the people. Later in this phase of religious exclusivism, the language of preaching in the Midzi-Chenda territory changed

its form with a different emphasis: those few who were indoctrinated were regarded as always in the light (*watu wa nuru*) and those who rejected Christianity were ‘people of darkness and Satan’ (*watu wa giza na shetani*). The latter were doomed to hell and everlasting fire (Murray, 1986; P’Bitek, 1970).

Eventually, the Midzi-Chenda community those of the Indigenous Religion and Christianity, in many instances became separated. Despite living in the same community, same houses, sometimes eating from the same table (*rome*), they were divided by their religious faith. However, when the crises of life come along, there is a tendency amongst the Christians to revert to the religion of their forefathers (AIR) for refuge and salvation (LWF, 2002). For example, when a Christian member of the family dies, the funeral and burial rites might first be carried out in the Christian way but later this might also be carried out in the indigenous way. This also happens in marriages and in other important health situations of the community or of individuals. The people seem to relate well socially, but when it comes to a life crisis such as that of health, in relation to religious views, each becomes ‘right’ in his/her own way.

The attitude of Christianity, as viewed by western religious philosophers/theologians such as Hick, Alan Race and Knitter, has been judged intolerant and uncompromising, lacking respect towards not only African religious and cultural world-view but towards what was found in Asian countries such as India, China and Korea. The characteristic exclusiveness of Christianity, particularly in Africa, has proved its major weakness; creating a negative attitude towards AIR in whatever the missionary group came.

Chapter Five of this research shows evidence of earlier attempts by the missionaries to convert the Midzi-Chenda people to have been a failure (Anderson, 1978; Sundkler and Steed, 2000). Chapter Five also tracks and discusses further schemes and events revealing how the missionaries, in association with their colonial government, undermined the indigenous religious life of the Midzi-Chenda.

3.5: Conclusion

This chapter has covered the Midzi-Chenda's community history of settlement in Coastal Kenya; their religious, political, and economic world-view and concept of health. There are some common terms that are used throughout the research and these have been clarified. The chapter has offered an assessment of the history of when and how Christianity was introduced and established in Africa, with specific reference to Coastal Kenya and its Midzi-Chenda community.

Methods used to establish Christianity have been explored, especially mentioning the introduction of schools, hospitals and new techniques of agriculture. On the other hand, freed slaves who were settled in different mission stations of Midzi-Chenda territory were 'indoctrinated' into European Christianity and later used as a means of converting the native community. This has been observed by commentators such as (Mugambi, 1992) and (Thiong'o, 1970). The relationship and cooperation of the two religions, *Chikw'ehu* and Christianity, has been found to be grievously lacking due to Christianity's non-acceptance attitude of *Chikw'ehu* as a religion deserving followers; in fact its adherents used demeaning 'language' to undermine *Chikw'ehu*, causing lack of religious cooperation among members belonging to the community.

In view of this problem, I intend to further engage in a critical evaluation of what enlightenment other religious researchers can provide, concerning this problem of severe and deep-seated religious dichotomy.

CHAPTER TWO

Reviewing the Literature

Introduction

In this chapter literature will be reviewed. It will be a survey of ideas articulated by various researchers in the context of inter-religious cooperation and dialogue. The ideas will be evaluated critically and discussed; focusing on researchers' omissions, weaknesses and strengths related to the thesis under development (Rudestam and Newton, 2001). This chapter is also to assess, as to how particular methodology might be employed to enrich this research in order for Christianity to approach dialogue with AIR.

For purposes of clarity, the review of literature has been arranged into four major thematic areas related to the focus of research. This thematic approach aims to represent and explore a relevant and consistent understanding of dialogue, and to learn why dialogue between religions (Christianity and AIR) is so necessary during a period of disturbed, community health crises.

The first theme is to seek an understanding of what dialogue is, and the theology it takes to address problems of health and poverty in a multi-religious community. *Uzima wa lalo* has been considered by the Midzi-Chenda people to be of central and utmost interest in their lives. The second theme is that of appreciating the 'African World-view on Community Health', in particular how AIR communities are involved in establishing meaningful life values and addressing health issues. It will also investigate how Africans normally forge their community dialogue. The third theme is based on the Christian

world-view of health. It will explore the mission of Jesus Christ and that of contemporary churches regarding the health of society.

The fourth theme regards AIR in dialogue with Christianity. There will be an exploration of inter-religious dialogue related to power dynamics. This is by scrutinising the place of Christianity (dominant religion) in society to discern whether, apart from well-trumpeted dialogue with other religions of the world, to consider the role of global life issues, they have actually involved AIR (less dominant). This will be looked at from international to local community levels, where ordinary individuals are involved with both the local church and AIR. If dialogue has been taking place, what methods and theology have been successfully used? If dialogue has not been taking place, what are the reasons, and what theological approach can be used to enable the two religious groups to engage in dialogue and deal with health issues together?

2.1.1: What is Dialogue? Scrutinising the Literature

Dialogue as explained by Kanagu (2007), Marty (2005) and Forward (2001) in ancient Greek understanding meant two or more people talking together. ‘In the ordinary sense, the word “dialogue” means conversation, speech, communication, sharing of thoughts, exchanging of views and ideas, interaction between two people or groups’ (Kanagu, 2007: 195). Talk could either be a serious engagement intended to find a solution for certain social issues, or conversation concerning another’s progress.

Contemporary study reveals that dialogue is understood as communication (Raja, 2007; Ucko, 2006).

Dialogue is about communication. It involves listening and speaking skills. It includes the question of what you mean, why you say this or that, what your motives are and the experiences behind what you say...what we say and how we listen are interrelated. (Ucko, et al 2006: 121)

In this latter perspective, dialogue essentially demands duality: discussion and the sharing of ideas is taken seriously without either participant degrading the other (Shorter, 1975). It therefore implies that dialogue is an intimacy of personal and communal relationships, enjoyment of each other and the sharing of knowledge, experience, problems, suffering and resources (Selvanayagam, 1995). Moltmann (1980) suggests that when dialogue is conducted in a spirit that respects the interests of people's lives, it becomes a tool and a hope for liberation.

Awareness of other researchers, including anthropologists, sociologists and religious philosophers reveals that they have all suggested various forms of dialogue; discursive, interior, life and action, or immediately practical dialogues are examples of the forms and they have particular roles to play in finding solutions to social problems (Taylor, 1967; Hick, 1980; Sharpe, 1974). In this literature review, the form of dialogue to be studied is that concerning life and action in the inter-religious community. Kanagu's ideas on 'inter-faith (religious) dialogue' seem to relate to this:

Here in the context of interfaith-dialogue, it is not sharing of intellectual ideas and thoughts among academicians and intellectuals, but also sharing of life-problems and life resources towards dignity, peace and harmony among ordinary people, groups at the grassroots level who live in the slum areas and villages in the growing context of communalism and religious fanaticism...in our times, dialogue is a style of living in relationship with neighbour. It also demands that, we may work together for the good of all people, especially for those at the grassroots level and to treat them as our fellow humans. (Kanagu, 2007: 195)

Ariarajah (1999) not only considers inter-religious dialogue as discussion or conversation between parties pursuing an end, but also perceives it as a public health programme

fostering the building up of a healthy community. He suggests a community of heart and mind that is willing to understand and accept others in their otherness. With this in view Ariarajah considers inter-religious dialogue to be a tool enabling communities to search for the religious, social, political, and economic issues which divide people with the aim of developing harmony. Dialogue, therefore, is an instrument of healing that a multi-religious community could employ to solve contentious issues.

Ariarajah further expresses his ideas by envisaging dialogue as not only a public health programme 'instrument', but also as a ministry of dialogue for society. The methodology of dialogue considered as a 'ministry' is of significance for this research. The reason Ariarajah considers ministry as a public service is that it can promote and intensify life in the building up of community (Ariarajah, 1999: 83-84). It is using this perception of dialogue as 'community service' that the research will follow as it investigates whether or not the Midzi-Chenda have attempted to satisfy their urgent needs by co-operating. It is by cooperating and participating as a community that it becomes possible to solve common concerns through the process of dialogue. Failing this, it is the researcher's task to discover what helpful methods might be devised to structure an integrated community of believers united in a spirit of service to each other. It is my view, that in the context of ministry, dialogue can be a religious anthropological method of seeking to learn why, when and how community problems should be handled.

Ariarajah finds Christ (Christo-centric) and Christianity as viewed by philosophers of religion such as Hick, Knitter and Cracknell to be a dividing factor in its exclusiveness and affirmation of uniqueness. Instead, he carefully suggests that in a pluralistic society where diverse religious traditions are practised, it is the uniqueness of God (Theocentric)

which is felt by society. The Midzi-Chenda also recognise God as being at the centre of humanity, (*hosi huayiye Mulungu*) binding them into a unity whereby they accept and support one another.

Samartha (1981), on the other hand, considers dialogue as part of a 'living relationship' amongst people sharing community life. His observation of dialogue goes beyond the dimension of ministry or service and focuses on efforts seeking a true community. Though Samartha does not specify what this 'true' community is, his work shows that it is people seeking together to live in wholeness despite cultural and religious differences.

Dialogue is not a concept; it is a relationship. Community is not a concept; it is people, men and women, sharing the meaning and mystery of human existence, struggling together in suffering, hope and joy. Intellectual reflection is obviously necessary. No one should underestimate this vital function. But it should be done in the context of living relationships. (Samartha, 1977: 10)

Samartha has emphasised that Christians need to seek relationships with those of other religions. His ideas derive from WCC assemblies which have been concerned with an ongoing debate about the same issue since the original foundation of a 'separate and distinct subunit...for relations with neighbours of other faiths' (1981: VII). Samartha having been a director of the office on inter-religious relations (IRRD) has involved himself in promoting dialogue between Christianity and other religions. He was probably not only been influenced by the WCC concerning the relations between religions in India but also by the works of Martin Buber. The Catholic Church, which prompted awareness of the need for Christianity to relate to those of other living faiths, could have influenced him too. The emphasis in his writings encourages Christians living in a religiously plural world community to seek community with those of other religions in order to handle the common 'issues of life'. His experience in India as a Methodist minister and the then current wave of global human interaction motivated him. He observed that:

How to live and work together for true community when particular groups are committed to different religions or ideologies is indeed a perplexing question. Yet in the midst of this perplexity, there is also a conviction that there is hope only if some form of dialogue continues in freedom, that is, takes place in such ways that love is not separated from truth in the relationship between people. (Samartha, 1981: 35)

According to Samartha, dialogue does not only bring a community together for discourse but promotes value, love and freedom in pluralistic situations such as those found among the Midzi-Chenda. He points out that communities, such as those of Asia and Africa, have coexisted without seeing any difference between sacred and secular. What has happened to cause people living in the same community to form splinter groups has been the presence of other religions and cultures which claim superiority (Kenyatta, 1931).

The notion of dialogue seeking a true community is helpful to this study. The Midzi-Chenda live in turmoil because of lack of religious cooperation experienced. Samartha observed a similar gap between Christianity and other religions in India. He proposed that dialogue in such cases promotes 'a mood, a spirit, and an attitude of love and respect towards neighbours of other faiths which can close the gap' (1981: 100-101). With this awareness the aim of the research is to discover how the concept of African community living (life wholeness) that has for too long been demeaned can now be reinstated. Community health can be a centre of concern bringing people together. Samartha considers that 'common human concerns for justice, peace, and the survival of humanity prove to be stronger in bringing people together than narrow denominational loyalty or ideological conformity' (1977: 120). It is evident that dialogue helps in opposing chaos, by involving people in participation with all who seek the provisional goals of a better human community (1981: 100).

In the search for a true community, Samartha cautions the Christian community to understand that other religions also have missions, visions, and spiritualities. Religious people are advised to engage in dialogue with a mature and honest spirit building trust in each other. Such a 'Theocentric' view relates to that of Ariarajah, and is of importance to this study.

2.1.2: Dialogue in the African Context

The African world-view does not separate dialogue from community living. The concept of community and personhood; also referred to as 'ubuntu or I-thou', is explained by Amoah (1998), Mbiti (1965) and Dube (2006) referring to 'what it means to be human in Africa' and is evidence that Africans cannot live without one another. Amoah, using a case study of the Akan people of Ghana, explains how their indigenous religion (spirituality) helps them (the community) to work together harmoniously for their total well-being. She mentions that Akan indigenous religion emphasises respect for human life and its environment. Their religion guides them to seek out how the complex problems of suffering and of evil relate to the meaning of life.

For this reason, Amoah views AIR as being based on the practical involvement of people in issues of human and environmental life; and less so on arguments about philosophical aspects. It becomes a tool for survival and for life's enhancement. She argues that AIR's main goal is to help people achieve prosperity, fertility, virility, children, good health, long and peaceful life, and protection from 'malignant spirits'. She later explains how this works at the community level, and tells how people are encouraged by their theology of belonging to the same creator to help each other and to relate well with communities,

such as the Ewe Dome and Krobo. This makes it easier for people to live together and to be committed to supporting each other for the common good. She writes:

In other words, persons in Africa would not wait for councils, intellectuals, or academic forums and conferences to debate whether or not dialogue must occur between African reality...a clear example from this is that the indigenously oriented Africans do not see dialogue as being merely arguments between two parties. Dialogue, for them, is...a process of fruitful exchange of beliefs, concepts, practices, sharing resources, etc., that contribute to the attainment of the enhanced and peaceful life. (Amoah, IIC: 1998)

Amoah looks at common realities; the understanding of belonging to the same God and the struggles of life, which make African communities forge dialogue with each other religiously, without having to concentrate on differences of tribe or clan in order to seek for harmony, peace and well-being for everyone. She claims that other religions which are seeking audience and dialogue can learn a lot from AIR.

In her discussion, Amoah integrates her ideas between inter-religious dialogue and social relations; how family members and neighbours normally relate to each other and their religious divisions, or occasions such as burials, initiations and marriages. She blends the two (theology and anthropology) issues because according to African world view they are one. Nevertheless, she does not clarify how AIR and Christians agree to dialogue. If a community health problem should occur among the Akan and their indigenous leaders decide to meet with indigenous healers to seek religious healing, would the Akan Christians be willing to be involved in the dialogue? In spite of the lack of this clarity, her anthropological and theological approach is acceptable in this research. Her approach to dialogue which she views not as an academic or intellectual matter but as a grass-roots issue that Africans approach has an input in this study. African religion, in order to guide people and forge dialogue for life and action as other world religions do, needs to be accepted by these other world religions such as Christianity in their forums.

In his essays, Ajayi (2000) does not mention the subject of dialogue. However, there are some aspects of his work that enrich this research. He explains that Africans are a people who religiously and keenly look into their community affairs. In discussing their community life, he first views them as a set of human beings, intertwined and living with the virtue of valuing each other as the creation of the 'same' God. He claims Africans value each other by understanding that each individual has dignity, social and moral character deserving respect. This is what builds community at the heart of African indigenous life.

A community is that which speaks the same language, and shares a common culture giving identity to its members. It is from the community that social as well as religious leaders come. Their social-religious leadership cannot work without the support of the community. Ajayi's study reveals that African communities are involved in participating in action for their well-being; such as holding discussions at village level as well as amongst communities. In the meetings, adults have the privilege of sharing their deliberations and reaching decisions by consensus that could help build community life. Ajayi's work in this research affirms that Africans are a people with established community and religious life, and that they utilise local meetings in order to discuss and reach consensus on how to handle their well-being issues.

In his study, Ajayi does not mention whether African Christians are among those who get involved in local meetings with the indigenous to discuss together issues affecting community life. Probably he did not approach his study from a theological perspective. This research will endeavour to discover in detail how organised the Midzi-Chenda communities were in the past and how they live now, in the present. Learning from their

participation in religious community activities will be helpful in understanding their ways of addressing health issues. This knowledge may become a stepping stone towards dialogue with Christianity.

Dube (2006) expresses the same idea of 'I-thou' which has overtly been discussed by Mbiti (1968) 'I am because we are and since we are therefore I am' as a starting point for dialogue in the African context. She considers this African concept of community which binds and guides African communities, to have been adversely affected by colonial misinterpretation and oppression and eventually replaced by individualism by both missionary and anthropologists. Her ideas have been discussed by many others such as P'Bitek (1971), Kenyatta (1931) and Mugambi (2000). It is for this purpose that her critique calls for decolonising through the efforts of studying AIR (intellectually) in its own right. As she notes:

The concept of community...ought and should become the cornerstone of propounding an African indigenous theology of justice and liberation by constantly revisiting "what it means to be community and to live in community" "what violates community" "how can we live in community in our new hybrid twenty-first century community contexts" Being a community is not and cannot be a one-time thing; rather, it is a process that must continually be cultivated by its members. (Dube 2006: 141)

As with Ajayi, she does not mention dialogue, but her ideas which are essential for this research reveal that Africans are 'Homo-dialogical' beings; through dialogue they amicably find out ways of sorting their problems. Dube's ideas, along with those of Amoah and Mbiti regarding the importance of community culture and practice, are of significance to this study. Dube's study has some similarities to and connections with Samartha's views of the need to search for a dialogical community and the views of Ariarajah about dialogue as a ministry for society.

2.2: Literature on African World View of Community Health

2.2.1: Health as Community Based

The interpretation of the African world-view on health is keenly discussed by Fiagbenu, (1996) who associates this with AIR. Fiagbenu describes African community as meaning a peaceful community united in practical ways with the living, and in spiritual ways with the departed, enjoying harmony with the rest of creation. Viewing community health in this way means that people understand health as relating to the context of daily faith and practice. African communities are said to address health issues in unity by observing appropriate religious rituals and ceremonies. In their own indigenous thought, language and philosophy they are fully aware of the active role religion plays in maintaining community health. This understanding is found in the works of Mbiti who regards Africans as exceptionally religious people (Mbiti, 1970).

Fiagbenu views the theology of health in the African perspective as having both a communal base and a religious-orientation. A communal base means that the community has the obligation to protect and improve public health through corporate action within the framework of their religion. This concept of community involvement in activities promoting the well-being of individuals and their community is also discussed by Busia (1962), Parrinder (1949), and Sarpong (1993).

Essentially, Fiagbenu views AIR as a religion not only obliging individuals to participate in promoting community health, but in bringing cohesion so that people can address issues of health with a common voice. The role of AIR in maintaining the community is that it uses the members of the communities to protect themselves from harm, ensure their

happiness and peace and in this way to neutralise both physical and psychological evil forces. Fiagbenu's idea about the role of religion being a tool to unite communities and not to disintegrate them is acceptable in this research.

Nevertheless, there are some gaps in Fiagbenu's contribution that need to be questioned in this study. In particular, he discusses health as a community-based affair, but fails to clarify explicitly the methods used by Africans to bring their communities together in the 'I-thou' or 'I am because we are and since we are therefore I am' context. Secondly, although Fiagbenu mentions religious rituals and ceremonies practised as determinants of health, he fails to mention the people who matter in administering and calling the community to carry these out. This raises a question: what traditions are perpetuated for the community's attention and involvement in matters relating to their health issues? This research seeks to discover such omissions, particularly by viewing *Chikw'ehu* and its role in community life. This is necessary for establishing factors motivating the community's involvement in corporate action for community health, its development and the immediate people who matter in the process.

The study of Mbiti contains many of his opinions concerning AIR in relation to community well-being and wholeness. He refers to the common saying 'I am because we are and since we are therefore I am' and emphasises the Africans' value of community life. He mentions how Africans, using an example of the Akamba community of Kenya, religiously participate in health rituals on behalf of both humans and non-humans. Mbiti considers Africans from the grass-roots level, observing how their customs and daily activities are guided by religion. He notes that African religion is a way of living, which involves every aspect of life. In particular, (with reference to the Kamba people of

Kenya), he discusses community involvement in African ritual health ceremonies as an aspect of essential African religious and cultural activities. According to Mbiti's studies, such rituals are meant to promote Africans' well-being. Rituals and other religious functions, which are community based, involve the participation of the community and take place to promote community health and wholeness. With regard to African indigenous religious dialogue, Mbiti (2000) suggests that the value of rituals and rites of passage such as death are rich in human spiritual life activities that could influence Christians to initiate inter-religious dialogue.

In agreement with Mbiti, Parkin's study (1991), among the Agiriama community (whose religious practices are similar to those of other Midzi-Chenda), reveals how cultural and religious ritual practices are performed. His work was essentially based on cultural studies rather than on the religious meaning of cultural rituals related to health and wholeness. However, he was unable to give any theological interpretation of the validity of the Agiriama rituals; neither did he seek to understand action taken before ritual ceremonies were performed. The essence of Mbiti and Parkin's study, which remain meaningful to this research, rests on the fact that Africans (Akamba and Agiriama) perform their rituals communally and not as individuals. This emphasises that the Midzi-Chenda religion (*Chikw'ehu*), through its religious leaders, brings people together (*udugu*).

Celia Nyamweru (1995), in her research among the Midzi-Chenda, perceived that their world-view on health is founded on natural resources; the *Makaya/kaya* forests in particular. The land and forests are religiously considered important for the health of the Midzi-Chenda community because they are the homes of the totality of the cosmic sphere – spirits, wild animals and birds. Her views support those of Parkins (1991) and Sindima,

(1995). Nyamweru understood that for the Midzi-Chenda land and forests are sacred places of worship, providing their basic food needs, materials for building homes and herbal medicines (Sindima, 1995; Parkin, 1991). They also help to conserve water sources needed for domestic purposes, agriculture and the survival of wildlife. In the majority of cases, health rituals are conducted in the *Kaya* forests under big trees, or in caves, serving as sacred places because they are believed to be the dwelling places of spirits.

Nyamweru's research, and resulting realisation of the reason why the forests were preserved by the community, enabled her to understand the Midzi-Chenda efforts to maintain their forests and resist intruders' interference with their religious traditions. She drew conclusions that emphasised preserving nature (ecology), despite a failure to understand why or how the community's cultural religious regulations were meant to preserve the forests. However, her research was intended to discover whether the community held moral values in relation to their ecosystem and she learnt that the *Kaya* forests were not accidentally preserved; there was a religious meaning involving health issues.

In agreement with her methodology, which anthropologically understood the cultural life of this community, this research will further seek to learn theologically how nature is used to promote community well-being and how customary law regarding nature is formulated and maintained.

2.2.2: Liberation

On the other hand, Dube (2006) views health for the African person as a diverse issue; far broader than simply focusing on sickness and prevention of diseases it also includes

justice, peace and wealth within the community. Further, health and AIR are intertwined for the purpose of shaping and creating cohesion in communities. Dube endorses the words of Mmualefe (2004): ‘without others one cannot be’, a concept similar to that of Fiagbenu. In her discourse, she goes beyond the health of body, spirit and mind, acknowledging that it transcends itself to become a public factor affecting society’s economic, political and social matters. Ill-health, according to Dube, is often due to oppression of the factors (stated above) resulting in poverty, unequal exchanges, marginalisation and social exclusion. This argument is also supported by Sarpong (1975).

Dube’s view on AIR is that it is a means of liberation, a divine tool to combat all oppression and all that attacks people’s well-being. It can empower communities by aiding them in solving minor, as well as critical, health issues of both community and individuals: disease, childlessness, death, poverty, political oppression, corruption, insecurity and social injustice; all of which are the great enemies of community well-being.

Dube’s ideas are essential to this research, even if she fails to explain how, in practice, AIR liberates individuals and communities from oppression. The study will explore how Dube’s views related to *Chik’wehu* are able to liberate communities; freeing them not only from illness but from any oppression suppressing community well-being.

In his work ‘My faith as an African’, Ēla (1988) has a chapter entitled ‘the health of those without dignity’ which critically looks at community health as being the freedom of communities; culturally, politically, socially and economically. His views are in line with those of Dube. He refers to the way in which African communities were interwoven by

AIR, when they were able to satisfactorily address health issues in their own terms; lamenting how they became disintegrated by colonial and missionary powers reducing their communal involvement in health as in other issues. Ēla's view of AIR faith is that it has been working at ground level with its communities. For this reason it should be looked at from a similar aspect so that we can recapture its tradition and paths taken in the structures of daily life and meaning. He does not object to Dube, but he looks at AIR and community health issues at ground level rather than from 'above'. He maintains that the community needs to understand faith as a force touching the totality of the people and all the problems they encounter. He writes:

When faith (religion) seeks to understand itself...to verify itself and to account for itself, it must begin with the people's struggle to escape from the hellish circle in which they risk being permanently imprisoned. We must look at faith, then, at the ground level and clarify the paths faith can take in the structures of daily life. (Ēla, 1989: 67)

While Ēla understands AIR as a faith which has been integrating communities at a grass-roots level, he fails to mention how these communities become integrated in order to address their community health issues in a common way. He leaves out ways of finding the concept of dialogue within AIR, but goes ahead in mentioning that AIR allows communities to be involved in daily liberation struggles.

Although in agreement with Ēla's idea, this research seeks to explore his suggestions by evaluating *Chik'wehu*, and its components; to determine whether in fact it involves the local communities in dialogue about issues of health spiritually, from a liberation perspective. It is an attempt to answer the question as to how community liberation can be effected by means of dialogue.

Essential ideas relating to health and AIR are found in essays of African feminist theologians in honour of Oduyoye (2006), 'The Circle of Concerned African Women Theologians'. African women theologians view health, in the African context, as the absence of physical, psychological, spiritual, economic, gender and political well-being, which rejects abuse or torture. In this context, they regard some cultural African rituals and rites of passage such as clitoridectomy (female genital mutilation) as having ill-effects which are life lasting for the recipients: the cause of trauma in their future lives. Secondly, they are of the opinion that patriarchal culture causes ill-health for many rural African women. The rape of young girls and women, 'wife-punishing' and 'burdening', is assessed as a major cause of ill-health. Their view on health in the African perspective is that health is wealth, peace and justice; and AIR has a role to play as a life-giving religion, healing individual wounded souls and bodies in the community.

Nevertheless, some oversights are found, in particular those relating to the way they view health, which seems to be limited to the interests of African women only rather than to those of the community itself. There are significant and critical ideas from these African women theologians, offering insight to this research by mentioning both understanding of health problems in the indigenous way and the need to combat them in both the indigenous and the foreign methods. It takes time for people to learn this. Dube gives an example of the HIV/AIDS scourge and how it has been addressed in a foreign way rather than in the indigenous way. This has for too long made it difficult for western scientists and Africans to compromise on issues of HIV prevention. Views of concerned African women on approaching and addressing health issues in the African perspective are helpful to this research.

In agreeing with their views without any gender, age or class bias, this research will apply part of their methodology by participant observation, to investigate how the Midzi-Chenda community addresses health issues indigenously. Whether there is provision for permitting every community member to fully participate in the process of healing. By participant observation, this research will seek to discover how the Midzi-Chenda community, without any gender, age or class bias, addresses health issues: how 'all' theologically participate in addressing together their real life situation questions. That means an exploration of the Midzi-Chenda religion for the purpose of seeking a role in community health, and discussing how the healing of wounded people is done; also to discover more of why and how it is regarded as a life-giving religion.

2.2.3: Relationship

Kubi (1981), Sarpong (1989), and Dube (2006), looking at Community health from an AIR perspective, all agree that it essentially means having a sound relationship within oneself, with the other and with the deity. Their views are that to cause a breach or to offend any relationship that harmoniously exists (or should exist) is to create alienation within an individual, the other and the deity. Rather than just being a result of social, political, economic and religious oppression, their perception is that ill-health can be the result of not relating well with ancestors, lesser spirits, or with those who matter such as parents, grandparents, children, neighbours and God. Dube claims:

Unhealthy relationships, in other words, are held to be an integral part of one's ill-health... Physical healing of the body is thus accompanied by the healing of relationships. Consequently, healing is regarded as healing of relationships. Health is therefore closely tied to healthy relationships and ill-health is closely tied to unhealthy relationships. (Dube, 2006: 143)

Sarpong (1989), by using the Asante model, suggests that community health in the African context cannot be separated from religion, which seems to cover every aspect of life. Sarpong further understands health of the community to mean religiously participating in exercises; sharing sorrows and joys, taking part in community beliefs, ceremonies and rituals. Agreeing with the others above, this is facilitated by being a participant in the ups and downs of the community. All suggest that in Africa one needs to have good relationships in order to be considered as a human being. Considering peace to be health for example, Sarpong gives a real, standard explanation as to how peace negotiations have been conducted in relation to AIR, through dialogue. The practice of rituals conveys the idea of what African wholeness means. The justification for this thought is as that of Dube, that bad community health can be the result of damaging existing relationships. He writes:

Broken relationships may result in sickness, or even death of an individual. Natural misfortunes such as droughts, epidemics, or locusts raids may also be attributed to broken relationships and only when good relations are restored do things return to normal. (Sarpong, in PCID 84, 1993: 275 XX VIII/3)

Mbiti (1969), in the context of relationships, explains what Africans are like. Similar to some other societies of the world, Africans still engage in enmity. However, as he explains, they are not more particularly predisposed towards conflict. He writes:

By nature Africans are neither angels nor demons; they possess and exercise the potentialities of both angels and demons. They can be as kind as the Germans, but they can be as murderous as the Germans...can be as generous as the Americans, but they can be greedy as the Americans...in their human nature Africans are Germans, Swiss, Chinese, Indians or English – they are men. Africans are men, and there are many occasions when their feelings of hatred, strain, fear, jealousy and suspicion also become readily externalized. This makes them just as brutal, cruel, destructive and unkind as any other human beings in the world. (Mbiti, 1969: 210)

This reveals how humans have hatred, dislike of others and the capacity to create enmity and cause unhealthy situations. This leads to witchcraft, violence and terrorism.

Nevertheless, all agree that AIR can be a bridge, restoring broken relationships through African ritual health ceremonies. Kubi, for example, views African religion as a divine reconciliatory agent for restoring unhealthy relationships:

Everywhere and at all times, religion has taken healing as one of its principal objectives. Religion is described as the healing of alienation between man and his creator, the world and his fellow man. (Kubi, 1981: 125)

In asserting AIR as a reconciliation agent, all seem to agree that African health rituals are carried out for the purpose of family and community reconciliation. Many AIR rituals may have different meanings for life situations, but all aim at the well-being of community life.

The ideas of Sarpong, Kubi and Dube are an essential contribution to this study; fundamentally, their explanations are about communities, families and individuals bridging relationships and being reconciled through dialogue. AIR among the Asante people acts in the role of restoring breached relationships and bringing people together to form order and a healing community, ‘an organ’ that can actively be involved in everyone’s well-being. This Asante model that leads to agreement or peace explains how positive relationships are a result of religious initiative. It suggests that ‘relationship’ as a concept of community health in the African context cannot be separated from religion. Community dialogue of life and action often brings about forgiveness and the re-establishing of relationships in situations where Africans do not know how to live without each other. The present research adopts these views as essential in community health affairs, especially when there is recognition that AIR plays an important role in drawing together religious leaders and the adherents in order to dialogue and seek solutions.

2.3: Literature on Christian World-view of Health

The Christian world-view of health is founded on the principal mission³² of the Galilean Jesus; described by Luke as being that Jesus came to offer life in its fullness (wholeness). This means that Jesus came to fill what has always been felt by humankind as the emptiness and inadequacy of life. The Christian health perspective is to ensure that people are free from the evils which Jesus came to defeat. Elsewhere Jesus explains his goals (John 10: 10); to set captives free, to make the blind see and to heal the sick. His mission for health was that of offering wholeness; physical, mental and spiritual healing with liberation from oppression by tackling the sources of evil and bringing them to justice:

Here is my servant whom I have chosen, the one I love, in whom I delight: I will put my spirit on him, and he will proclaim justice to the nations. He will not quarrel or cry out; no-one will hear his voice in the streets. A bruised reed he will not break, and a smouldering wick he will not snuff out, till he leads justice to victory. (NIV: Matthew 12: 18-20, Isaiah 42: 1-4)

With the above understanding in mind, Wilson (1975) shows how contemporary Christianity has observed aspects of health, different from the understanding of its early years.³³ The prior concern of Christian medical missionaries in earlier years was to look into medical issues such as hygiene and the treatment of diseases rather than to be concerned for total human well-being. Wilson observes this as a weakness of the approach which for too long was maintained by missionaries. It did not meet the whole needs of human health. Wilson's views are that the contemporary western concept of health, in places such as Great Britain, has usually been based solely on modern medical

³²The interpretation of the 'principal mission' of Jesus of Nazareth is taken from his expressed purpose of coming to give humans life in fullness, as found in the gospels cf. John 10: 10 and Luke 4:18.

³³ 'Early years' is designed to mean the early period when missionaries understood that health meant being free of diseases.

knowledge of illness. Health in the West has meant getting rid of infections and diseases.

He writes:

Traditionally, doctors have been trained to treat diseases, and only comparatively recently has the understanding of causation become sufficient for thoughts to be drawn positively towards prevention and in turn towards the desire for positive health. (Wilson, 1975: 1)

Wilson notes that as missionaries travelled to different parts of the world, with their mission of health, they had to establish health facilities such as hospitals to meet different physical needs. This did not meet the human needs encountered. Arguably, this limited approach cannot be fully adopted as appropriate for the purpose of this research; the Midzi-Chenda people perceive health differently.

Wilson's idea is that the Christian perception of health should focus on community well-being; for rich, poor, developed, undeveloped and developing communities of the world. He argues that health touches issues of peace, justice, poverty, and global degradation. Ideally, Wilson's conclusion on the methodology of approaching health as community well-being and wholeness is more acceptable for this research than the approach used by early missionaries who considered health only as freedom from disease. As has already been made clear the Midzi-Chenda perception of health cannot be separated from community well-being and wholeness. Wilson suggested deeper insights into what health means today by relating this understanding to Maslow's hierarchy of human needs:

1. Physiological, e.g. Food and water
 2. Safety, e.g. Protection from harm
 3. Social, e.g. Affection, sense of worth
 4. Esteem, e.g. Self-respect, success
 5. Need for self-actualisation
- (Wilson, 1975: 59)

In support of this, Granberg-Michaelson (1991) displays how inadequate medical health has been for the community. She explains that the World Council of Churches (WCC) had to endow a programme, to research and learn more about how other communities of the world understood health:

The Christian Medical Commission (CMC) of the World Churches was established in 1968 to promote innovative approaches to health care and the eradication of diseases in developing countries, and to assist the church in the search for a Christian understanding of healing and health care... CMC was charged to address more fully the needs of the whole person through engaging in theological reflection on the Christian understanding of life, death, suffering and health. (Granberg-Michaelson, 1991: 5)

Granberg-Michaelson's view on health is influenced by the findings of CMC. She explains that health is peace, justice, the integrity of creation and also spiritual life. The discoveries by CMC explain that 'in Africa, the issues of traditional healing and African spirituality were central to the discussion of health, healing and wholeness'. Further to this, Granberg-Michaelson proposes that the Church should be a healing community and a life-giving organism by placing its talents at the service of others. This methodology follows the community pattern of life that is lived by the Midzi-Chenda. It is that when one suffers, all suffer; when part of the community is in pain, the whole body groans; when one part is healed, the whole body is renewed. The concept of community life and the creation of a healing community as viewed by Granberg-Michaelson becomes the core aspect of this thesis. Her views relate to those of Samartha and Ariaraja as already evaluated.

Roy (1978) also extensively discusses the diversity of the meanings of health. He defines health as having sufficient food, a safe and clean water supply, proper drainage, fighting poverty, illiteracy, and self reliance. He writes, 'Health is a condition of complete physical, mental and social well-being and not merely the absence of disease or infirmity'

(1978: 10). Roy's experience in Africa helped and influenced him to understand why Africans have dual health practices, modern and traditional:

I knew that nearly every patient except the most consistent Christians, would use traditional remedies in times of sickness. But I understood so little about African concept of health, disease, and healing to my shame. In our medical work we wanted to put Jesus first. Every day the good news of his love was explained in wards and outpatient: patients were prayed with before operations and at their bedsides: and we asked God to guide us in what we did. But did our western scientific medical approach fit in adequately to a comprehensive view of health as a whole being? (Ibid: 3-4)

Roy's views, similar to those of Granberg-Michaelson, and Wilson, reveal that health is wholeness and that Africans, as exemplified by Fiedbenu, Dube, Mbiti and Ēla live it the same way. His views are further elaborated by Kubi in his work by showing how Christianity has failed to understand the African concept of health:

It could be argued that the church, through her various mission hospitals, has achieved a great deal in alleviating the physical sickness of the African Christian. But unfortunately this was done without any consideration of the people's own conception of the world in which they live and of the forces operating in it, a conception which undoubtedly influences or determines their understanding of health and disease. (Kubi, 1975; cited in Roy, 1978: 3)

Other views of Roy's, which seem to be of value to this research, relate to his concern for those living in poverty; such as experienced by the Midzi-Chenda and other African communities. Christianity, he claims, is viewed as a faith that can act as a light for providing health in its real sense to these communities. It is seen as able to provide services more than official bodies can; that is by engaging better, non-political ways of helping communities, by directly fighting poverty and corruption, by encouraging communities to work together, by providing physical facilities for improving everything from the water supply to education and the ending of illiteracy. The good news of the gospel is that which embraces all human needs. A gospel which does not engage in real care for humans misses the religious point, ending up as unable to convince people and

ultimately seen to be merely another ‘worldly faith’, or even ‘pie in the sky’. Christianity should be armed with both spiritual and physical weapons in the fight to achieve and enjoy acceptable health conditions. That is why Roy ends up saying health is ‘community’ happiness.

With regard to this positive attitude of viewing health as wholeness, my methodology views health with the same understanding but offers a deeper profile, asking how in practice this wholeness is lived by both Christians and the religious other. This will be assessed by looking at different Christian societies that have felt the obligation to address health in its diversity and questioning them on how they have used their services for society. For example, the ‘Roman Catholic Order of Medical Missionary Sisters’ discuss health not only on the basis of its true integration of body, mind and spirit, but also as an aspect of human beings integrating positively with others, with the environment and with God (Granberg-Michaelson, 1991: 5, 8; Wilson, 1975). Wilson writes:

Health is a symptomatic relationship between man and his environment; his supernatural environment, the world around him and his fellow man. Health is associated with good, and beauty-all that is positively valued in life. (Wilson: 3-4)

Roy (1978) and others challenge Christian faith by viewing the way in which Jesus actually dealt with humanity, in particular with those whose lives were empty; the suffering, the hungry, the neglected, and those who were despised and marginalised. Here we find that Christ’s view of what constitutes health did not interfere in peoples’ way of life, culture or even religion. It did not cause disharmony, or threaten life,³⁴ but gave people hope by combating the source of suffering, healing the wounds of sickness and offering salvation for those suffering from oppression and oppressors. Human well-being,

³⁴Jesus did not come to condemn, nor to destroy the law, but to fulfil it. The law in reference here is applicable to all races of the world, and to their traditional way of living.

therefore, rests on the foundation laid by Jesus: healing the sick and speaking out against all kinds of causes of oppression, including that of Jewish law whereby religion itself sometimes caused oppression. Christianity, with its adherents, as viewed by Roy and supporting my own view in this research, needs to faithfully seek the creation of a true community and enter into a mission serving humanity through dialogue with other religions such as *Chikw'ehu*.

This methodology is adopted because its view is supporting the African way of looking at health, as a relationship. According to Africans, it is from this perspective that one attains curative healing of the body, spirit (soul) and mind. The Roman Catholic Order of Medical Missionary Sisters, as cited in Granberg-Michaelson in particular, puts emphasis on individuals in participatory community health activities being likely to perpetuate healing and promote healthcare for the community (CMC contact, no. 119 April 1991: 4). The fact here is that people need to relate well in order to successfully handle their societal issues. Christianity becomes a 'faith' that brings people together in order to live peacefully with themselves in both their natural and supernatural environment. The concept of forgiveness and reconciliation is claimed to be an absolute necessity within the Christian framework. Just as Jesus accepted being an instrument for reconciliation, so should Christianity attempt to act as an enabler for achieving reconciliation.

This research is interested in the related views existing between Christianity and AIR. Both are considered to be religions looking for the wholeness of humanity; as liberating faiths for those confronted by both world and locally inspired social injustice, promoting peace for those societies facing violence, and acting as a healing agent for the mind, soul

and body of those experiencing wounds of sickness, poverty and injustice (Granberg-Michaelson, 1991: 4).

In explaining wholeness, Atkinson (1993) observes that the Hebrew term 'Shalom', has a wider meaning than just peace. In the Hebrew context, it 'means wholeness, well-being, vigour and vitality in all the dimensions of life' (1993: 25). It is this which brings together the welfare, health and prosperity of both the individual and the community (Moreau, 2000: 425). 'Shalom' understood or translated as 'peace' differs from the ordinary context of peace. In the Hebrew context Shalom is healthy living. It means more than the absence of conflict. The biblical concept of Shalom transcends that of the WHO definition of health because it encompasses the welfare, health and prosperity of each individual and all others in the community.

Atkinson's focus is for man to be a steward of God's creation, of himself and his neighbour as an 'Imago Dei'. Christianity for this purpose has a high responsibility to urge all to accept, love, forgive and give hope to communities that are undergoing critical social, spiritual and physical problems. This is in support of Akoto's study (2006) suggesting that Christianity as a religion needs to offer wholeness 'health', which is life in fullness. Atkinson maintains:

When the lord brings shalom, there is prosperity, there is healthy relationship with God, there is conciliation between people, there is contentedness. When the peace of the lord is present, there are good relationships between nations and men and women. (Atkinson, 1993:26)

Observations made by Atkinson on health are of significance to this research. They highlight what is at the heart of the mission of Jesus Christ, 'Prince of Peace'; a mission of community healing through dialogue; to look into the issues of human welfare and to

give liberation, conciliation, forgiveness and encouragement to communities to live in harmony with each other (love your neighbour as you love yourself), and with their natural and supernatural surroundings.

2.4: Literature on African Indigenous Religion in Dialogue with Christianity

As mentioned by both Hick (1980) and Race (1993) Christianity has for decades lived in self-imposed isolation from other religious communities, such as the indigenous religions of Africa and Asia. However, of recent period, study shows that there has developed a gradual turnabout as asserted by Ariarajah (2002), Knitter (1985) and Failletaz (1978) in W. Richard Rousseau ed. (1981). Christianity began to take the initiative in attempting to understand by studying the history, beliefs and values of other cultures. Christianity now accepts itself to be one among other world religions (Oborji, 2002; Emefie, Ikenga-Metuh n.d).

Present study, as observed by Singh (1967), Selvanayagam (1995) and Cracknell (1986) shows that ‘dialogue for life and action’ among religions has been an ongoing movement and a current preoccupation:

Inter-religious dialogue is now recognised as one of the most pressing needs of our time. Religion has become an increasingly significant component in inter-communal relations. Faith can make things better, or it can make them a deal worse. (Mark Woods www.wcc-assembly.ifo/eu/nwe-media 20/06 2006)

In the case of Africa, it has taken a long time for Christianity to accept and regard AIR as an existing and valid African religion which has a living spirituality; giving life and empowering men and women, young and old, rich and poor, to participate in life-giving activities (Amoah, 1992 in Abraham *et al.*, 1992; Abimbola, 2006; Isizoh, 1998).

The inspiration of effecting dialogue between AIR and Christianity has been widely discussed by Shorter (1975). He first gives the history of inter-religious dialogue: showing how Roman Catholic Christianity began to have a positive attitude towards AIR. In recognition of the spiritual values found in AIR, Shorter explains that Pope Paul VI, in 1967, published his historic document in favour of AIR (*Africae Terrarum*, 1968). Roman Catholic Christianity decided to abandon the differences and conflicts with AIR in order to seek and establish a new relationship, previously considered to be weak, and to investigate ways of addressing common life issues together. The initiative of Pope Paul VI was subsequently adopted by Vatican Council II and was later followed by a series of inter-religious dialogue forums taking place throughout the time of Pope John Paul II. This evidently shows that the Roman Catholic Church graced and praised the values of AIR and its culture, encouraging Africans to hold firm to their rich spiritual heritage. This development, together with that of the WCC (Protestants), sparked the beginning of Christianity's acceptance of engagement in dialogue with AIR. In 1986, the WCC sub-unit on dialogue with people of living faith published a book 'Towards a Dialogue between Christians and Traditionalists in Africa' (Ucko, 2004: 22-28). The Roman Catholic Church and the WCC have since been working side-by-side to promote this programme.

In his discussions, [which are also parallel to reports from the Pontifical Council for Inter-religious Dialogue (PCID)] Shorter questions whether AIR and Christianity are in fact two religions existing side by side (Shorter, 1978). If this is the case, then dialogue is a way of each reconciling, agreeing with, understanding and learning from the other (1975). Shorter argues that AIR has experienced and suffered from a long period of prejudice and exclusion since the presence of the early Christian missionaries. As a result, he sees his

idea of dialogue as a process of bridging the gap between broken relationships. He mentions the need for a process by which the two sides can develop courage and humility in relating to each other.

Shorter's views of the need for reconciliation between 'AIR and Christianity' cause him to suggest that both have to accept change. For example, as a gesture of change Pope Paul VI, on behalf of the Catholic Church, expressed regret to the African people for former attempts of the early missionaries to suppress AIR and its culture. This was a new approach toward recognition and respect for AIR; an important move towards a good relationship between Christianity and AIR, which had never before been experienced. The example of church efforts to establish a reconciliation dialogue lies in the efforts of the Vatican II Council (1962–1965) and the fourth Assembly of the WCC at Uppsala (1968). This is when a new emphasis was placed on humans and their culture; the local church and the local community (Shorter, 1978).

Shorter notes that the Pope's concern, according to the letter from the president of the Secretariat for religious other to the presidents of all Episcopal in Africa was not to convert the other but to treat every religion as having a right to exist (Arinze, 1988-XXIII/268). Shorter's work is remarkable due to its acknowledgment of AIR as crucial in unifying the two communities, and acceptance of the value Africans attach to their indigenous community religious life.

Despite finding agreement with Shorter and the (PCID) project on AIR dialogue with Christianity, the argument seems to be that dialogue should not be taken to Africans as a project of Christian society for the purpose of reconciling the two religious parties; rather

to engage them in discussing matters affecting their community life. Reports from the PCID conferences, as mentioned by Shorter, reveal that the inter-religious dialogue project was being imposed on Africans. Shorter's (1975, 1988) explanation of the organised consultation on AIR at Gaba Pastoral Institute, Kampala Uganda in August 1974 (1975) and of the September 1986 WCC consultation in Mindolo Zambia is evidence of the said project.

That is why Shorter (1975) mentions that AIR values need to be looked at and accepted by 'the other'. He has struggled with terms such as Africanisation, incarnation, contextualisation, indigenisation and inculturation, employed as part of the process of dialogue attempting reconciliation and the creation of relationship. He argues that this is not honest dialogue, for it only says 'how like you are to me! We can be friends because you look like me' (ibid: 16). This is an approach only of benefit to 'the other'.

Shorter did not try to discover whether Africans within their communities engage in dialogue under the guidance of their indigenous religion to address life issues, such as those of health. This gap in research will be filled through practical investigation (participant observation) in an attempt to learn whether or not AIR guides Midzi-Chenda people into dialogue in order to be involved in addressing life issues such as those of health, poverty, peace, reconciliation and building of relationships. If Africans, through their religion, undertake a process of dialogue in order to find a solution for their life problems, could Christianity join with AIR so that they might together dialogue for the success of society?

The PCID and WCC should have used researchers not to go and hold dialogue, but to ethnographically learn how African communities conduct religious dialogue for life and action. In this way they might directly observe whether they are willing to be joined by others in their dialogue. That would help Christians discover the role of AIR in the community, and would be a stepping stone for Christianity to join the process. It could assist Christianity to become involved in sharing, listening, and either agreeing, or disagreeing with AIR.

Denis Isizoh's views about AIR being in dialogue with Christianity are similar to those of Shorter. In his discussion, Isizoh bases his ideas on the history of efforts made by the Roman Catholic Christians to dialogue with Africans holding onto their indigenous religion. He goes further to explain how Pope John Paul II valued and recognised the existence of AIR when he welcomed the priests of AIR on the World Day of Prayer in 1986 (Togbui Assenou from Congo; Amegawi Attiwoto Klousse of Togo; Okomfo Kodwo Akom of Ghana) and also on the World Peace Day of Prayer 24th January 2002. For Isizoh this appears to have been a step ahead in dialogue. It was, in a sense, both an invitation and recognition of AIR to be a religion whose deity is mindful of human well-being and health and wholeness.

Earlier Isizoh argued that inculturation was dialogue, but he later came to understand this to be dialogue for converting 'the other' together with his culture. Eventually, he discussed dialogue as being for life itself. This related to the views of Pope John Paul II regarding what he said about the 'dialogue of life', something which Hick has discussed as being the same as practical dialogue. Isizoh, in later articles, favouring this research, considered inter-religious dialogue to be faith (religious) communities working together,

in sharing daily life whilst recognising the hard life which most Africans experience. He writes:

There is so much injustice in our world today. Different religions in Africa are often expected to speak against the oppression of the poor, exploitation of the weak in society, and act as arbiters in case of disputes. (Isizoh, 1999: 202)

Isizoh's views go beyond those of Shorter in that he sees inter-religious dialogue between AIR and Christianity as a process of the two religions walking together in unity, seeking social justice and peace; addressing together the issues affecting humanity in society. Isizoh has unique ideas but does not inform us how this 'walking in unity' can be achieved from the grassroots level. He does not even mention any example of African communities that have been involved in dialogue with Christianity concerning issues of life. In his discussion, he does not refer to the methods and approaches employed by Africans as they react in faith to their life crises. The question raised is: if there is injustice, poverty, and oppression, how do both AIR adherents and Christians living in the same community respond to and address these crises? Isizoh intellectualises his ideas on inter-religious dialogue rather than seeking a practical grassroots process of it. Lawrence Freeman asserts:

Dialogue is not primarily an academic enterprise. It is the result of the interaction of ordinary people as they go about their daily lives...the ideas of religion are shared and form new compounds at the levels on which religion matters most to most people, that is a way of helping to cope with the difficulties and enigmas of life. (Freeman, Lawrence OSB 17th Sep 2002.
<http://www.wccm.org/images>)

The significance of such a grassroots approach is what this research is attempting to explore; especially as it exists among the Midzi-Chenda people. We will see how their religion has guided them in situations such as those affecting health, and learn whether Christianity can be of any significance in associating with them in inter-religious community dialogue.

Abimbola (2006) presented a paper during the World Council of Churches Conference (7th June 2005) on AIR Dialogue with Christianity. The Yoruba priest in his arguments expressed the following:

Dialogue between the religions of humankind is necessary to solve pressing problems of the world. To compare notes, take a common stand, and have a powerful voice for the religious communities of the world. Dialogue to empower women, and provide the best education, and the best environment for the children and young people of the world. Dialogue, to eradicate hunger, thirst and needless suffering in the world. Dialogue to end wars, terrorism, greed, hatred, religious conflict, ethnic cleansing and racial bigotry. But dialogue on equal basis, in an atmosphere of respect and equality. (2006; in Ucko, 2006: 16-21)

Abimbola did not mention whether people of the Yoruba religion participate in addressing issues of life after dialogue, but he reveals that AIR values both humanity and the environment. In his presentation, he explains that the inter-religious dialogue which has been practised by Christians and other world religions has been one-sided. It is ‘just to the (official) world religions’, but leaves out AIR and instead its adherents are hunted for conversion to Christianity. Therefore such dialogue is not ‘felt from below’. It is intellectual, academic and exclusive, ignoring the local, ordinary person. He states that those who have been involved in AIR dialogue with Christianity are African Christian theologians who in one way or another do not have enough exposure to Indigenous Religion. This may involve prejudice. True dialogue, therefore, needs honesty, and should be carried out by true custodians of the religions, willing and able to express the role of their own true spirituality for the well-being of humanity.

The ideas of Abimbola relating to AIR being excluded from dialogue at its grass roots are essential in this research. Although Abimbola’s statements, referred to above, are silent on the issue of community dialogue, they show that Africans value all that relates to health. However, they need the religions of the world to come together and dialogue with them so

that life issues (health), which may be harmed by different situations, can be handled in a truly spiritual, holistic way. This for Abimbola, and also in my own view, is a potential gateway for Christianity to engage in genuine and sincere dialogue from the grassroots, community level; not from the above previous norm. It is the view of this research that Abimbola makes evident that AIR is an accommodative and welcoming religion, ready to host people who come to talk about the well-being of society; but not to debate on which religion is more meaningful, or more truthful, than the other. This remains essential to the research.

Temple (2002) and Mwaura (2005), whose articles have been published in 'Voices from the Third World (2002, 2005 respectively), mention problems facing Africa and seriously affecting health: disease, debt, poverty, corruption, poor governance and conflict. They discuss Africans' struggle for existence and are aware that Africa can achieve better ways of living with the hope of attaining a better way of life as experienced in the developed world. However, such an achievement can only be realised if religion becomes a source of cohesion, so that faith communities can dialogue together to agree to reconstruct life. Temple, in particular, proposes that dialogue among the two religions (Christianity and AIR) needs to be real and practical as Abimbola proposed. Temple asserts that dialogue in Africa:

...should answer the questions that the African people are asking together - 'why is Africa experiencing poverty, conflicts, disease (HIV/AIDS, Malaria etc) indebtedness, bad and unjust governance, declining economies etc? What is God saying to us concerning our conditions through our religions?' (Temple, 2002; in Voices of the Third World, 2002: 53)

It is evident that Temple is suggesting dialogue for life and action. He sees that when conducted honestly, inter-religious dialogue between AIR and Christianity should be able to answer and address many questions touching health. Mwaura suggests it is necessary to

do this since Africans value life and see its origin as divine. It should therefore be divinely protected. Thus, inter-religious dialogue according to Africans is to search for and promote health, love, justice, peace, freedom and truth. The research accepts these ideas and proposals for dialogue. Temple suggests four key factors: problem identification; social analysis of the problem (why it is happening); theological reflection on how it can be solved (what is God saying about the situation); practical involvement in solving the problem.

Firstly, although many of these ideas sound positive, they lack clarification as to whether AIR adherents, in their spiritual journey and challenges, have moments of effecting dialogue among themselves and asking questions related to life issues. Secondly, they do not observe whether African Christians living in the same community as their indigenous neighbours and relatives would be willing to become involved in indigenous dialogue if asked. This research will look into questions and ideas similar to those raised by Temple and Mwaura. The first focus will be on these from an AIR perspective before applying them to both AIR and Christianity.

The Lutheran World Federation (2002) has been doing research into how AIR can be in dialogue with Christianity. It has focused on the periods of various lifecrisis among Africans and published its findings and proposals for this kind of inter-religious dialogue. In their findings they have found that AIR is still practised by a majority of Africans; a fact which opposes the ideas of Shorter (1975). Lutheran findings show that Africans value their indigenous religion; this is similar to the findings of PCID and WCC. For Africans, AIR is believed to be essential for their 'salvation' when there is a crisis. Some of those claiming to be Christian will nevertheless return to AIR for the 'salvation' it offers when they are in difficulty; a fact which Abimbola explained for the WCC 2005

conference. They learnt that this 'salvation' is for both the community and individuals but only achieved through practising Indigenous Religious rituals. Lutherans realised, as did Abimbola, the difficulties Christianity would face in achieving dialogue with AIR due to the former's historical prejudice and exclusivism.

A similar consultation by the World Council of Churches was held in Mindolo, Zambia during September 1986 and a statement of the findings was issued, revealing similarities with those of LWF (*Secretariatus pro non Christianis Bulletin* 1988-XXIII/3 69). The WCC findings reveal that Christianity learned how strong AIR still is in Mindolo, Zambia, and that the AIR adherents still hold firmly to their faith. However, in their report of the epilogue they expressed the need for religions to dialogue together, due to the pressing needs of humanity, particularly poverty, diseases, corrupt governments and injustice. Their assessment of the possibility of dialogue between AIR and Christianity found that difficulties were not from AIR adherents who were ready to dialogue with Christians but from African Christians who seemed unready for dialogue with the people of AIR. The WCC observed that exclusivism, prejudice and poor attitudes towards AIR were a major problem.

This is apparently a project taken to Mindolo in Zambia by Christians and similar to that formerly organised by PCID (as noted by Shorter). Christians abroad organised it without participating in and observing the community's religious dialogue activities. The method would help them to understand African Christians and ascertain whether they themselves found in AIR any meaningful structures which played a unique role in the society. The Mindolo project's final analysis was that dialogue needed to be carried out at grassroots level involving ordinary community persons, so that they would be understood by those at

the intellectual level. These proposals sound valuable, but they need both African Christians and AIR adherents to be honest, open, and able to respect each other's beliefs for the benefit of the community well-being.

The question they failed to consider is the same as the research is asking - whether Africans themselves, in their different communities, have any real dialogue for addressing issues of life. Instead their research dwelt on the value of religious rituals conducted when life's crises arise, such as those to revoke evil; recommending that these should be used as stepping stones towards inter-religious dialogue.

Apart from looking at religious values which makes possible investigation into whether religion can dialogue in order to address urgent life concerns, the primary need for this research is to discover whether, in their religious lifestyle, AIR adherents can in their own right sit and discuss issues when life problems arise. Would they accept other people's ideas in such circumstances, despite the prejudices established by early Christian missionaries and others?

Mbiti in his writing in the same LWF publication (2002) identified the area of death, as viewed by Africans, to be an example of a fertile subject which can be used to enrich dialogue between AIR and Christianity. Although Africans take death positively, as he argues, they regard it negatively, as an enemy robbing them of life. To understand better the thoughts of Mbiti in relation to this research, other than death, the purpose of the investigation will be to discover more aspects that prompt dialogue among the Midzi-Chenda people, and to ascertain whether or not joining with Christians in their discussions for wholeness of life is applicable.

Kalilombe (1999), on the other hand, looks at inter-religious dialogue as the theology of the community (communitarian theology), and views it as another form of ecumenism. He claims that ecumenism from the community level should not be taken as a dialogue of one religion arising from the existence of other, different denominations, but acceptable as dialogue between a community of believers from the same locality. Such a dialogue, argues Kalilombe, does not benefit one religion but the whole community of believers.

Kalilombe's views are acceptable to this research for they are potent, but he also holds the opinion that Christianity needs to head this dialogue. This raises a question: is this not a sign of religious imperialism, and exclusivist against the other, though not in isolation from the other believers? There is also a second question: does AIR still remain active, or is it an ancient religion not requiring official recognition? Kalilombe seems to recognise the presence of a genuine African society but regards its religion as belonging to the past, just as Shorter (1975) does. His suggestions mean that inter-religious dialogue exists to engage Africans as a society, not as a religious people. He feels that the presence of Western religions and culture, together with modernisation, has interfered with AIR and that it has become powerless in the presence of Christianity. Kalilombe's ideas cannot be generalised, as his work was written from the Malawian context. This research will investigate the strength of AIR in Kenya among Midzi-Chenda, in order to learn whether they still hold to their indigenous religion, and whether dialogue between them and Christianity can be effective.

Martey (1993) explains AIR as an African cultural reality; meaning that the religion is highly integrated in the culture of the people permeating every aspect of African life. This is a thought that is widely discussed by John Mbiti. In this regard, Martey looks at AIR as

a religion offering a special theology which can be a helpful source for other theologies such as dialogical theology, an idea which Amoah (1998) also established. This is related to the important concept held by African people that in their religion there is no dichotomy between the sacred and the secular.

Martey (2005) looks at inter-religious dialogue in the context of 'Oikos', the Greek understanding of the word meaning household or home. According to Martey, dialogue, which he specifies as OIKOS, embraces world peace economics and ecology. He explains that these three issues are among the factors affecting the lives of ordinary people, those of Africa in particular, as also in other developing continents.

His ideas are based on the Jerusalem World Missionary Conference (1928) which saw the problems of the troubled world and questioned what solutions religions could offer to such problems. The answer to this was given during the Conference at Kandy (Sri Lanka) in 1967. The conference discussed ideas that inter-religious dialogue was the appropriate approach. Like others discussed earlier, Martey argued that dialogue between AIR and Christianity should foster solutions for the oppression and exploitation endured by African people. Therefore, if the two religions were to effect a dialogue, then it would need to act in a true and just manner showing genuine concern for human well-being. He expressed the view that this type of dialogue should be given priority in order to promote and protect the life which was shared among a community of believers of different faiths, at all levels. These ideas are similar to those expressed by Abimbola, Amoah, Mwaura and Temple, showing that AIR in Africa is still actively practised.

Martey gives good histories of the development of inter-religious dialogue initiated by WCC and the Catholic Secretariat, although ideas do not consider whether Africans, either in the past, or in the present, engage in dialogue religiously during life problems, seeking for their solutions. Secondly, although Martey refers to dialogue as affecting all levels among believers, he does not highlight which levels these are. The question is, should dialogue be seen as important only at intellectual and academic levels rather than at the grassroots level where the ordinary person faces life's dilemmas? Nevertheless, Martey's ideas on inter-religious dialogue fostering 'OIKOS' pressing needs, such as those proposed by the Kandy conference (in Sri Lanka 1967), are of importance to this research because they relate to the Midzi-Chenda cultural life.

Cardinal Francis Arinze (PCID1988-XXIII/ 2 68), in his pastoral letter dated 25th June 1988 to the presidents of all Episcopal conferences in Africa and Madagascar, mentions the reasons why Christianity should engage in dialogue with AIR. According to Arinze, AIR is not a religion of the past but one which is still alive and dynamic and from this come those who are converted to Christianity. His ideas about AIR being alive go along with those of Dube, Mbiti and the findings of WCC in Zambia, as mentioned earlier. Despite being baptised, African Christians who continue as Christians will nevertheless turn back to their indigenous religion when afflicted by life's crises (WCC, 1988; 2001). Arinze views AIR, like other Indigenous Religions, as a religion permeating all parts of African human life. It strives to offer solutions for health, poverty, social living and economy for its adherents, in an holistic synthesis. He also sees the believers of AIR as people giving great attention to the earth, seasons and the whole creation. This means that AIR involves its people in being stewards for the well-being of society, from the family to

the community level (PCID 80 1992 XXVII/2). Since the indigenous religion is still alive and dynamic, Arinze calls for it to receive 'attention' in dialogue:

Attention has to be paid to the attitude of people of indigenous religions towards well-being, healing and suffering. These people generally view the whole human being as a whole. In various ways they seek well-being, healing from sickness, whether physical or psychical, security from mechanisation of evil spirits, or from witchcraft, or people of secret societies, deliverance from infertility, or accidents and success in trade or other undertakings. (Arinze, PCID 80 1992 XXVII/2; 161)

This is a call towards a dialogue of relationship in which each religion, Christianity in particular, should respect other religions, cultures and values. In doing this, he has the view that Christianity could and should have a better way of evangelism in Africa (Arinze, 1998; 2001).

What has been found in Arinze, and the PCID in general, is that dialogue has the aim of evangelism. Arinze mentioned that respect be given to other religions but the note on evangelism raises suspicious questions. Why this evangelism in the midst of suffering communities? What has it to do with inter-religious dialogue? This poses questions for the *Africae Terrarum* document, which might need further scrutiny. Arinze needs to clarify a methodology excluding evangelism which Christians ought to employ in order to dialogue with the people of AIR. The research will seek to find a suitable methodology of religious cooperation which leads not to conversion but to community inter-religious dialogue on life issues. What is required is a grassroots proposal from the community, driven by the community and not by decisions coming from above.

Diane Ciekawy (2000), in her research among the African 'Midzi-Chenda', did not write about dialogue between AIR and Christianity, but presented substantial thoughts about what she had been able to discover concerning AIR's culture and indigenous practices.

She realised that they hold onto their cultural ideas and practices in relation to community life, and understand them to be ‘similar to Ajayi’s observation in Nigeria’, where they still held their local assemblies under their social-religious leaders and discussed matters that touched the well-being of the community. Ciekawy discovered that the Midzi-Chenda were unable to exercise their cultural religious practises as they wanted to, due to laws made during the colonial era. If they wished to conduct religious and social assemblies in order to address life issues, such as those of health, they had to request written permits from the government chiefs. They termed this injustice (*si haki*) and were still compelled to observe colonial laws (*ukoloni*). This is because it is in their assemblies that they discuss and come to a consensus on how to address issues of life for the well-being of the community.

Their major question, as expressed by Ciekawy, was why other religious communities did not need written permits when they went to worship on Sundays or Fridays. Only the indigenous religious Midzi-Chenda community was denied the opportunity to exercise their religious rights for community well-being. This appeared to be an extreme injustice (*tsi haki*).

As an anthropologist, Ciekawy’s concern was not about the theology of this community. She learnt the importance of Midzi-Chenda communitarian culture and in particular of the assemblies during which they discussed crucial issues related to settling conflicts (*malau*), and learning who was at fault, so that justice could be carried out. The Midzi-Chenda are guided by their religious doctrines during dialogue. Ciekawy learnt from elders about their feelings and that it was their right to hold community ‘assemblies’ without being interfered with. This research will explore more deeply by using both anthropological and

theological methods to seek understanding of the way in which the Midzi-Chenda find solutions to their community problems; whether it is through religious specialists, or local elders, for the benefit of every member of the community.

The other area Ciekawy did not investigate was that of the Midzi-Chenda traditions and religion suffering from the prejudice and discrimination of the government. Why does the government still have colonial attitudes towards the peoples' religion and culture? Apart from this, Ciekawy should also have attempted to learn whether Christianity had either the same attitude, or a more positive relationship with the indigenous religion, its culture and its people. According to the community this was a serious matter. It was affirmed that it was their right to practise their culture (*chimila*) without being discriminated against. It is likely that Ciekawy had not intended to question their views about having dialogue with other religious people, such as Christians. Her methodology shows that she did not attempt to question whether or not Christians accepted involvement in the assemblies for discussions intended for community well-being. Participant observation and discussions with focus groups (a methodology employed in this research) will seek to investigate the Midzi-Chenda community on whether inter-religious dialogue has been an ongoing phenomenon.

Paul Gundani (2005), from the Zimbabwe context, discusses at length the inter-religious dialogue between AIR and Christianity. He views interfaith dialogue as a community effort seeking meaning, in order to agree to change life for the common good. He suggests that by working together on issues touching community well-being, religious prejudice might be removed. Using a Zimbabwe model, Gundani explains that inter-religious dialogue was not seriously taken into account until recent times, when things had to

change due to social political problems. He reveals that Christianity, as also mentioned by Abimbola and Amoah, has continued to maintain its imperialist bias in Zimbabwe.

Inter-religious dialogue in Zimbabwe seeks to encourage different religious communities to work together, towards solving the practical problems of health, peace and poverty. Gundani describes the formation of the Zimbabwe National Forum for Inter-faith Dialogue (ZNFFID) and shows how it has been working. Gundani does not tell us whether the Zimbabwe AIR calls its people together for dialogue, or if the adherents are ready to forge dialogue with Christians. Nevertheless, his mention of the Zimbabwe National African Indigenous Healers Association (ZINATHA) affirms that Africans can hold indigenous dialogue among their own communities to address life issues.

The point of strength is that AIR can form an ecumenical movement similar to that of Christianity and demand its rights from the government in order to serve society. It was 'ZINATHA' that petitioned the government to abolish the Witchcraft Suppression Act (WSA) of 1899 because it derogated indigenous healing practices. However, it should be observed that this needs to be done not from the national level, but from the grassroots level. Gundani also mentioned witchdoctors (*Tsikamutanda*) in the lives of rural Zimbabwe people, and explained their threat to society and the way in which AIR tries to eliminate this practice for the well-being of the people at village and national level. The idea of indigenous ecumenical organisation as presented by Gundani seems to enrich this research because it is a sign that AIR is in a position to accept others.

This is similar to the observations of Chavunduka who argued for the role of AIR in Zimbabwe and how it empowers indigenous healers to observe the well-being of the

communities. The use of the media is mentioned as a means of creating community awareness of the indigenous religion. The need for dialogue at the national level is an important factor, though Chavunduka omitted to clarify whether local people, who are the majority, are the true custodians of AIR. These were unable to contact the media and express their view as members of the indigenous religion with concern for the well-being of both the community and of the entire society. In respect of this methodology, the approach of the thesis will be to explore possible sources of inter-religious education; in schools, other learning institutions and the local community. Media is one of the sources that may be used to convey the message, but other possibilities will be clarified in the recommendations chapter.

Oborji (2002, 2004) presented a good historical overview of the second approach of the Catholic Church relating to, and dialoguing with AIR. This agrees with information expressed by Shorter, Isizoh and Ikenga. However, the approach of Oborji towards the subject of inter-religious dialogue is different from that of others. He first questions whether AIR is a God-revealed religion, and if so with what indigenous community it belongs. Christianity is regarded as having had a general revelation from God and this leads Oborji to question whether AIR can be viewed from the same platform as other religions, in discussing issues of revelation, redemption and salvation. Oborji goes further to question the understanding of God; whether the African God is the same as the Christian God. This to him is a mystery, as was discussed with different opinions from African theologians in the Ibadan conference in (1965). Other African theologians, such as Kibicho (1965) and Sarpong (1981), suggest the continuity of Christianity in the African God. Nevertheless, it is doubted by P'Bitek (1971) that the African God is the same as the God of Christians.

For the reason that health and well-being are central for Africans, they have been in the mainstream of the struggle to search for ultimate reality and meaning. According to Oborji, they question the One who is the source of life, and seek out how he helps humanity to preserve this life so that it becomes meaningful. Eventually, Oborji produces the idea that through such thoughts, there emerge bonds of relationships that search for peace, harmony, unity, value for life (health), participation in dynamic relations and communion with both the visible and the invisible. Once this is achieved, they are then close to the Creator. Although Anekwe Oborji does not mention this specifically, as dialogue among African communities it appears to be indirectly implied.

At the end of his suggestions, Oborji (2004) emphasises that AIR is still very much alive and that it has not been ‘stifled’ by the forces of modernisation, as Kalilombe and Shorter assume. This observation is mostly useful in research, relating it to the *Chikw’ehu* religious impact and influence to the Midzi-Chenda. He suggests that AIR can offer contributions towards inter-religious dialogue. What he does not investigate is how indigenous Africans become united in searching for the ultimate truth about their religion, or for the life and the ways in which they participate in preservation of life.

This research will endeavour to advance Oborji’s views, by asking whether God is a racist in that God only reveals Godself to specific people and not to Africans; in this event AIR would not be a revealed religion. What competence is required for AIR to effect dialogue with members of Christianity on the same platform; is it intellectual, academic, or religious? These questions create another: if dialogue is to be effected, where does it

begin and what type of dialogue should be forged between Christianity and members of AIR?

2.7 Conclusion

In this chapter, extensive literature on dialogue in the African world-view and the role for indigenous religion on community health has been reviewed. It has been established that the African world-view on health is community based and intensively integrated with the religion of the people. On the other hand, community health has been seen by Africans as peace, wealth, justice, and a community which includes its animals and natural environment being all free from disease. This is what encourages people to live harmoniously with each other, their spiritual world, nature and animals. The role of AIR as well as Christianity is to inspire community members to take full responsibility for preserving their health by religiously participating in reconciling, liberating and healing the community. One major weakness identified from most of the literature is the lack of evidence illustrating whether dialogue has been an ongoing traditional process among African communities in their endeavours towards addressing community issues such as those of health. Secondly, Christianity and AIR have been understood to have rival attitudes towards each other since their first encounter. This is according to evidence from projects carried out by Christian organisations such as the Pontifical Council for Inter-religious dialogue (Catholics), the Lutheran World Federation and the World Council of Churches (Interfaith Dialogue unit Protestants).

The methodology used in this research is developed in Chapter 3. It will seek to establish whether the religion of the Midzi-Chenda people of Coastal Kenya in its light has been guiding the community to participate in dialogue for life and action. Secondly, it will seek

to discover whether *Chikw'ehu* and Christianity have had a tradition of dialoguing together in order to address together the issues of health which erode the well-being of the community. The literature reviewed will help to build up an argument and reasoning that supposedly will develop a suitable theology that could be employed to create harmony and cooperation between the two religions

CHAPTER THREE

Methodology

Introduction

The aim of this research is to explore two religions, AIR (*Chikw'ehu*) and Christianity as actually being practised in the Midzi-Chenda community, with the intention of deducing whether or not believers of both religions (can engage) engage in dialogue with each other for the purpose of providing sustainable solutions for community well-being and wholeness. Tracing back to the research question, it has been necessary to devise a dependable methodology for the purpose of securing consistent and reliable information (Clough and Nutbrown, 2001). A methodology with a well designed system, appropriate for engaging with the research population, would help in the gathering of reliable and valid data (Hammersley and Atkinson, 1995).

In view of these ideas, this chapter provides an in-depth description of the stages which have given essential guidance in acquiring the necessary information for answering questions prompted by the research. A systematic and thoughtful explanation of methods and stages – background, approach, techniques and sources – has been set out in detail, making it evident how all data and research has been obtained (Rudestam and Newton, 2001; Clough and Nutbrown, 2002; Nahidi, 2003). This is presented in stages with explanations as to why the methodology has been adopted.

3.1: Ethnographic and Theological Approach

The research is anthropological as well as theological, in that it explores people's life histories and everyday health behaviour "which is part of social life" in the context of their religion. The present exploration is conducted with an awareness of the African theological world view understanding, showing no distinction between the secular and the sacred (ethnography and theology go hand in-hand). It seemed evident that the approach of ethnographic research methods in alliance with those of theology would be appropriate and meaningful in obtaining dependable primary data (Rudestam and Newton, 2001; Maykut and Morehouse, 1994).

The emphasis of ethnographic and theological approach relies on the method used and the significance of the social or religious nature of reality constructed. This creates room for close engagement between the researcher and the topic of the research, including factors influencing inquiry (Hammersley and Atkinson, 1995; Fetterman, 1998). Such an approach, linking both researcher (observer) and researched (observed), is recommended by Black and Champion (1976) and Lincoln and Denzin (1998), cited in Silverman (2000).

The basic strength of ethnographic approach as described by Patton (2001) and Fetterman (1998) is that it is naturalistic³⁵, enabling the researcher to seek to understand and discover people's phenomena. That is, routine ways in which people make sense of the world in everyday life in a natural context, such as real religious world-view settings, 'what actually people do and how they do it' (Geertz, 1973). Fetterman writes:

³⁵ This word is used by social researchers to mean obtaining valid information from the informants in their ordinary way of life (their system of living).

Working with people for long period of time in their natural setting, the ethnographer conducts research in the native environment to see people and their behaviour given all the real-world incentives and constraints. (Fetterman, 1998, in Backman, 1998: 497)

Similarly, from a theological aspect, the researcher is enabled to acquire some new knowledge and understanding of people's religious experience. The researcher has the privilege of taking time to engage with and become immersed in the religious cultural setting of the people, enabling in-depth interviews and also the opportunity to observe and participate in their religious routine activities (Moschella, 2008, Glesne and Peshkin, 1992; Reddie, 2006, 2007). Moschella argues that:

Ethnographic is a way of immersing yourself in the life of a people in order to learn something from them. Ethnographic as a pastoral (theological) practice involves opening your eyes and ears to understand the ways in which people practice their faith. (2008: 4)

dialogical theology is used as a tool for obtaining primary information between Midzi-Chenda Christians and members of AIR; getting awareness and acknowledgment of their feelings in order to provide a full account of their opinion, especially views on Christian willingness to cooperate and dialogue with members of the indigenous religion relevant to the well-being of society.

It is recognised that this approach has been seen as a weakness in research as expressed by Hammersley and Atkinson (1995). In general terms, it is argued that the meanings obtained are not stable, nor are they the accurate information of population studied. Nevertheless, I adopted this approach following the positive side, noting that research is an active process.

In tandem with the positive ideas implied in this approach, Strauss and Corbin (1990), Patton (2001) and Herzog (1996) explain that the use of numbers, statistical procedures, or quantification for analysis of data are not required. The rigour of the approach is through the dependability of information obtained from the normal world settings of the population. This appeared to be the appropriate approach as there was no intention of using large numbers and statistics but rather the provision of valid, authentic information from reliable sources.

On the other hand, the quality of an ethnographic and theological research project is influenced by the competence of the researcher's careful planning (Reddie, 2006, 2007). For example, in participant observation the researcher needs to have a defined purpose, a systematic plan, organised recording and checks for reliability and validity. Such planning helps with the process of interaction with the ongoing life experiences of both the population context and of significant others within the specific milieu; it also enables examination and questioning of events as they happen (Peil, Mitchel, *et al.*, 1992). Bearing in mind the above technique of approaching an ethnographic and theological methodology, a careful style of engaging into researching a big population was adopted.

3.1.1: Sampling

Following the explanation given in Chapter One, respective to the Midzi-Chenda heritage and settlement, it is evident that covering the whole population (over one million people within six districts) would be unfeasible and impractical (Mashall, 1997). Instead the option to observe and study a subset of the population was adopted. Sampling has been an approach used in this research to represent the whole population (Kumar, 1999; Clough and Nutbrown, 2002). 'A sample is defined as a model of the population or subset of the

population that is used to gain information about the entire population' (Henry, 1998 in Bickman and Rog, 1998: 102).

Basically, this is recommended when the population is too large for the researcher to attempt to survey all of its members (as with the Midzi-Chenda). It is essential for the small carefully selected sample to reflect the characteristics of the population from which it is drawn (Tight, 1996; Kane, 1990). It can then be inferred that the response obtained should reflect that of the larger population. Blaxter notes:

If your research involves observation, you will not be able to observe everybody of interest all of the time. If you are carrying a case study, you will need to select the cases which you are going to focus on. (Blaxter, *et al.*, 1996: 79)

The defining characteristic of the Midzi-Chenda is that they share a common way of life, language (possessing only slight regional differences due to accent), culture and religion *Chikw'ehu* (see Chapter One). They are also familiar with Christianity. These two religions are practised by the community while sharing experience of problems related to health and poverty. With this understanding, it would be possible to generalise about the rest of the Midzi-Chenda using the information received.

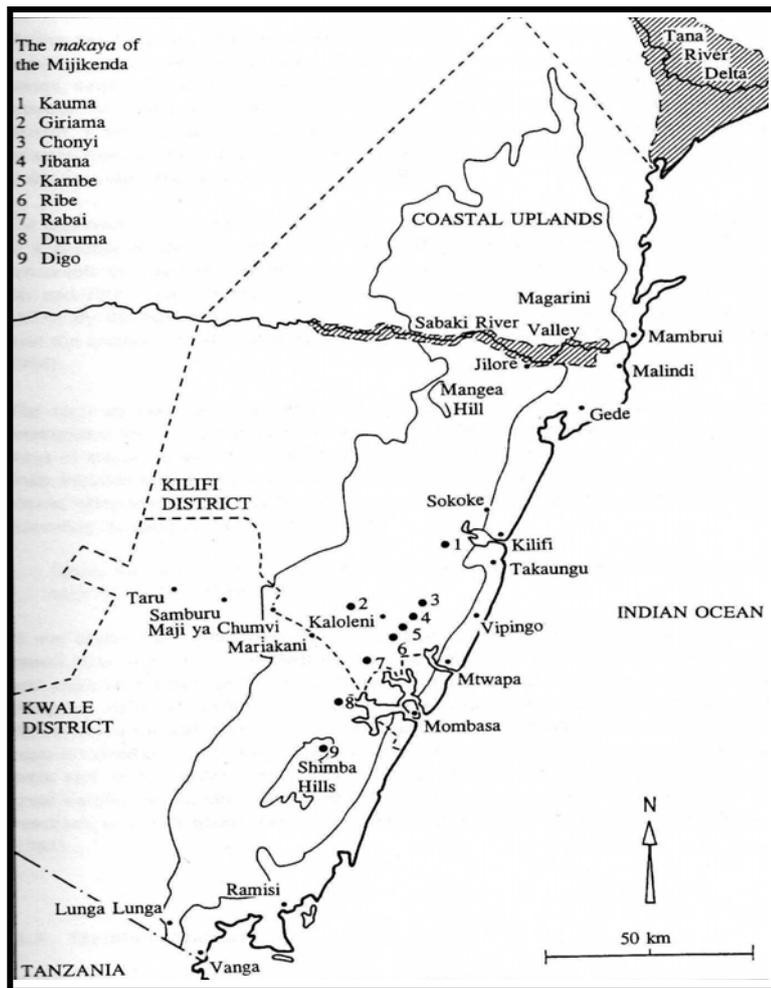
Kumar elaborates on some sampling methods to be followed during the process, classifying them into two categories: probability and non-probability. In this research I decided to opt for non-probability, embarking on purposeful sampling. The reason for selecting this was that it would prove to be a cheaper option in terms of time limitations and financial outlay. Firstly, the time required could be reduced by concentrating on a smaller group of people from a specific village thereby avoiding time expended in travelling from one village to another. Secondly, it would provide an opportunity for judging who among the population could provide the best information essential for the

achieving of study objectives. In this case it was necessary to agree with Kumar's observation:

The researcher goes to those people who in her/his opinion are likely to have the required information and will be willing to share it. This type of sampling is extremely useful when you want to construct a historical reality, describe a phenomenon or develop something about which only a little is known. (Kumar, 1999: 162)

For the success of the exercise, sampling had to be of such accuracy that it authentically represented the population. Before proceeding, it was essential to understand the administrative structure of the people and their cultural calendar; weekly, monthly and annual seasonal periods. This was in order to avoid being misunderstood by the government administration as among those who were campaigning for politics. It was also to make sure that research was done at the appropriate season, not to interfere with particular cultivation activities such as sowing, weeding and harvesting.

Normally, the coast of Kenya has two yearly seasons (*virimo viri*), the long rainy season which is in April-July (*chirimo cha mwaka*) and the short rain season which is in October-December (*chirimo cha vuri*). During these seasons the people are involved in cultivating their respective gardens and it is difficult to locate them in their villages. This explains why most of the research had to be done in the months of January and February when there was less rain and fewer cultivation activities.



Map 2: Shows the Midzi-Chenda districts before they were sub-divided in 2007

It was decided to concentrate on only three villages (*Midzi*): Aduruma of Dumbule village, which is in Kinango district; Arive of Chauringo village, which is in Ribe in Kilifi district; and Aravai of Bengo village, which is in Kilifi district. The Arive and Aravai (see Chapter One) were the first Midzi-Chenda to host the early Anglican and Methodist missionaries; so involving them, especially since 1842, in a long experience of Christianity in their region (Anderson, 1977; Nthamburi, 1984; Oliver, 1952). The Aduruma also have had a long experience of mission work carried out by clansmen such as John Mugomba and Thomas Mazera (Nthamburi, 1985). There are reasons why the rest were omitted. The Adigo, for example, have accepted and adopted Islam, and could not

have enough information about Christianity. The rest were left out due to distance factors and poor transport.

For the three villages, the target was to meet with specific people, namely two elders (male and female), two religious specialists (male and female), two lay people (male and female) and one village chairman. There was awareness of the need to include other knowledgeable people from the community, so an allowance was made for accommodating others. To secure assistance, it was necessary to visit specific sub-locations in order to receive permission from assistant chiefs to village elders in identifying the resourceful people targeted. An aim in the sample was to discover what this group of people knew of historical and contemporary customs and religious performances.

Involvement with them was chosen for two reasons. Firstly, even in this modern time, they continue to be the custodians of indigenous practices and beliefs. They possess intimate knowledge and skills concerning the Midzi-Chenda religion and its theological concepts of health. They also understand the role of their religion in community health. Religiously, they are aware of the background of both bad and good health, and have knowledge concerning the causes of ill health and what they do in order to promote good health. Additionally, they hold their own theological views on the role religion plays in individual and community health. They also have essential knowledge of the past and present, with information as to whether or not they accept other religions in their health practices, providing benefits to both individuals and community.

Another group targeted was that of youth, both Christian and *Chekw'ehu*. This was important as those in the group live at a time of mixed feelings about religious pluralism, especially if members are taught religion at school rather than at home. It was noted that there were young people who had dropped out of school and yet had firm ideas about religion and its role in relation to the health of the community. Aiming at the same goal as above, there was an arrangement to meet with young people who had dropped out of school, and were 'jobless'. A decision to visit Likoni *Matatu* station on the Island part of Mombasa made it possible to contact ten young people who were Christians and ten who were *Chikw'ehu* adherents. This was an attempt to discover and understand their ideas about the role of religion in respect of community health and whether the two religions (AIR and Christianity) would be willing to meet and effect a dialogue for promoting social well-being. To find someone associating with unemployed young people it was essential to get a permit from the local District Commissioner, so as to avoid being mistaken by Kenyan Police for a drug dealer.

To explore this matter further, visits to three secondary Schools and three Primary Schools were proposed: Kinango High School Kinango district, Mariakani High School Kilifi District and Kraft Memorial High school Kilifi district. For primary schools, there were visits to: Mazola Primary School Kinango District, Mkapuni Primary School Kilifi District and Ribe Primary School Kilifi district. With the support of the religious teachers and the debating club masters of the schools, a motion style inquiry took place. Students debated the topic 'Can Midzi-Chenda Christians and followers of Indigenous Religion discuss together on how to improve their community health?'

This was chiefly done in order to learn whether AIR has any future for younger generations. Students had to propose secretaries from the opposition and proposing sides and take short notes as the motion was debated. Those who participated in the motion debate in Primary School numbered 70 (per school); classes 7-8 and 13-15 years of age. Those in Secondary School numbered 40 (per school); 10 from each level up to Form 4 with an equal distribution of gender comprising '20 girls and 20 boys of 16 up to 19 years of age.'³⁶

Christianity among the Midzi-Chenda today is composed of many denominations: Roman Catholic; Methodist Church in Kenya; Anglican Church of Kenya; and the more recent Charismatic Pentecostal churches, e.g., Gospel Redeemed Church, Miracle Church, Pentecostal Evangelical Fellowship of Africa, Deliverance Church, East Africa Pentecostal Church, to mention but a few. It was necessary to make a choice of just a few of the denominations, as it was not possible to cover every denomination. The ones selected were: the Roman Catholic Church (RCC) Mombasa diocese, Kinango; Methodist Church in Kenya (MCK) Pwani Synod 'Ribe and Mazeras church'; Anglican Church of Kenya (ACK) Mombasa diocese Kinango and Kilifi church; and the National Council of Churches of Kenya (NCCCK) Coast Regional office. The target for every church was to meet with church councils; the number varied depending on the setting of the church constitution. An allowance to accept information from church community based organisations dealing with the issues of social well-being was made available supposing the researcher was introduced to them.

³⁶Clarifying the figures indicated here, I note that, three primary schools were involved in the interviews. Each primary school had 70 participants totaling 210. Three secondary schools were involved. Each had 40 participants totaling 120.

Awareness of charismatic and evangelical conservative denominations was borne in mind. However, these were ruled out in the research due to their recent age in the community.³⁷ The denominations named above were chosen because they were the first to plant Christianity in the Midzi-Chenda spiritual soil. In order to get a proper understanding of early, originally-taught doctrines of health and wholeness, they appeared to represent correct and helpful sources as their councils were composed of ‘health and wholeness’ committees. The NCKK being a unifying body of the Protestant denominations would be in a better position to describe and explain its experiences of ecumenical dialogue with others. To have access to churches in the local areas it was necessary to go through their Bishops’ offices.

Time was spent in council meetings with ‘leaders’ and ‘health and wholeness’ committees, especially when there was discussion of issues relating to church and development, involving health. This was in order to discover the churches’ stand on addressing issues of health, and their views about engaging in dialogue with other religions for the purpose of dealing with well-being.

At the NCKK regional office, the director introduced me to the Interfaith Clerics’ Coast Peace Initiative Movement. I was invited to attend one of their meetings discussing the issues of the Coast social and economic problems. This is an ‘interfaith’ movement comprised of Muslim, Hindu and Christian clerics and their laity leaders. The members of *Chikw’ehu* were not among this group.

³⁷ The Midzi-Chenda community unlike other communities in Kenya, such as the Kikuyu was not keen to establish AICs. The recent Pentecostal Churches (Pentecostal Evangelical Fellowship of Africa [PEFA], East African Pentecostal Church [EAPC]) were planted by American and German Evangelists; T. L. Osborn, Reinhard Bonkey and Billy Granham. These churches have a limited history in terms of the introduction of Christianity and its influence on AIR.

The last group targeted was the sick and their carers. It was necessary to identify the sick who were being nursed at home, in particular those living with HIV and AIDS, leprosy and malaria. The aim was to discover the feelings and attitudes of the sick towards the power of religion, and which religion they felt was beneficial for society's well-being. Similar views were also discovered from those nursing the sick, especially the immediate relatives. The number of sick was thirty: five Christians and five *Chikw'ehu* members from three villages; Kinango, Ribe, Rabai. The number of the people nursing the sick ranged from two to three for every sick person. With reference to the detailed information offered, this research embarked to use three main tools; focus groups, participant observation, and interviews. Details of the process are as explained below.

3.1.2: Focus Groups

For ethnographic and theological research to provide valid data, the researcher has to depend on reliable information from those who, presumably, know their past history, and the community's continuing concepts of religion and health. From this point of view, there was personal conviction that it would be possible to acquire comprehensive understanding of the Midzi-Chenda social and religious phenomena by identifying and forming focus groups of reliable and knowledgeable people. Such an approach helps to achieve answers to the research questions. This anthropological-theological schedule lasted for a period of seven months.

As already explained in the sampling section, experienced religious specialists, village elders and ordinary members of the community were grouped. From these identified people, seven focus groups were formed. Of the seven groups (see sampling section) three were Christian, three *Chikw'ehu* (from the three targeted villages) and had

separately different sessions with the researcher. Only one represented a mix of both Christian and *Chikw'ehu* young people. Each focus group lasted for four weeks (one month), sometimes more, depending also on the occasions when I did participant observation. These groups were intended to have in-depth discussions about 'what people actually do, why and how they do it?'

It was a concern that while discussion and activities were in progress observation had to be maintained in silence. Questions arising from participant observation would be tabled in the focus groups and enable a discussion of these in relationship to their religious experiences. The style used in questioning both *Chikw'ehu* and Christians was done without using a questionnaire. There were specific reasons leading to the use of open-ended approach. Following the ideas of Black and Champion (1976), it was sensed that the response of people in interviews, by questionnaires with closed questions, would be less effective than when they were left to a free atmosphere of discussion. Obtaining well informed data from those who were to produce their religious cultural knowledge freely meant creating an atmosphere of informality between the researcher and the focus group, especially in discussion and explanation concerning religious rites and the process of calling meetings.

This system of open-ended questioning made possible lengthy discussion and probing in-depth explanation of the past and the present. However, it kept in mind that open-ended questions have a weakness in research; that of obtaining massive and unstructured data as argued by Mason (2002). For my study, I opted for this approach in order to probe for further clarifications in the information given rather than making assumptions.

In the discussions, for example, the question, ‘why do you do this?’ (*kwadze munahenda vino?*) was commonly used. The recipients usually responded by saying, ‘the reason for doing this is that, according to our religion, long time ago our forefathers did it’. (*sababu ni kw’amba chichi ndo Chikw’ehu na pho pindi akare ehu...*). For discussions with indigenous adherents focus groups it was necessary to order five litres of local wine (*uchi wa muzi*) for almost every session. (The custom is to pour a libation as a sign of unity between the living and the dead.) For Christian focus groups meetings, I participated in contributing money for lunch expenses, as did other members of the meetings. This was greatly appreciated.

The other focus group was comprised of young people who had either completed school or who had dropped out due to lack of fees. Many were jobless. Discussion with the youth focused on their understanding of community health and how each religion dealt with its problems within the contemporary Midzi-Chenda community.

Most of the elderly Midzi-Chenda have little or no knowledge of reading and writing, a fact also observed by Tengeza (2003). She explained that many of the groups’ officials engaged with during her research lacked formal education and only understood the local language. This situation has been given attention in the ‘nature of the problem’ section within this research. Instead of employing either a foreign language or Kiswahili, I used my mother tongue (*Chiduruma*) as an insider. Their confidence and trust had to be gained and this was done by making extra copies of recorded audio cassettes (which were given to participants as a token of thanks).

This approach was also used in observing and studying Christian adherents within the same community. The intention was to clarify their world-view on community health and well-being, and their attitudes towards those who were not Christian but living in the same community.

3.1.3: Participant Observation

Another method used to collect primary data was that of participant observation. The works of Margaret *et al.* (1982), Geertz (1973, 2000), Reddie (2006), Black and Champion (1976), gave confidence in engaging with beneficial ideas and practical aspects suggested in this approach; particularly those explaining the means of learning about community issues. Firstly, in the process of participant observation it can be understood that people's settings constitute reality: their natural 'social/religious' world-view, their philosophy and their outlook on health. Max asserts:

Participant observer can get a fuller understanding of the society...the rules of interaction, the way relationships are structured, and the effects of this on behaviour, the way members receive and experience their culture, the standard of living and quality of life. (Max, 1971: 4)

The second relevance of participant observation has been understood as essential in that it creates the possibility of discovering the needs, as well as the interests, of the Midzi-Chenda community, for long said to have suffered marginalisation and deprivation in their cultural religious settings (Tiyambe, 1995; Ciekway, 2000). This approach has therefore aided the community by motivating it to grow in confidence and pride and also enabling them to provide truthful facts regarding needs and interests. In this way, it has been possible to understand their social relationships, values and beliefs, together with

their meanings for whatever they do (Peil, 1982). This practical relevance has added to data reliability.

As suggested by Ron McQueen and Christina Knussen (2002), and as mentioned earlier, in order to explore their religious practices it was necessary to become part of the setting as an 'insider' (Reddie, 2006; Moschella, 2008). The decision was made to attempt an entry into Midzi-Chenda lives and spend time with them in prolonged engagement, in order to explore their religious experiences in detail and create a close relationship with both Christians and AIR adherents. This, in fact, made possible comprehensive study, observation and personal experience of their religious and health traditions. This participant observation schedule lasted for a period of two months.

All this involved attendance at ten activities: Dumbule village, Kinango district; Ribe Chauringo village, Kilifi district; and Bengo village, Kilifi district. Five of which were from the Christian and five from the *Chikw'ehu* religion. From the Christian side, two were burials; one was a meeting with Methodist synod committees 'Health and Wholeness'; a fourth was visiting the sick; a fifth was an HIV and AIDS awareness Health promotion program. From the *Chikw'ehu* side, there were four dialogue meetings. One was preparation for the second funeral of an elder who had died two years before (*moonano wa hanga ivu*), another was about worshipping God at the Kaya (*kulomba Mulungu*), the third was to discuss a relative who would be responsible for the family of a departed husband (*muroromi wa mudzi*), the fourth was to make a judgement on a land dispute (*Malau ga Munda*). The fifth and last was not a meeting but a village health ritual. It was for blessing a family affected by issues concerning the same family members having sex (*vitiyo/makushekushe/maphingane*).

The intention was to respectfully, and confidently, seek to preserve peoples' normal social behaviour. The data collected from the participants reflected the health and religious meaning applicable to the research (Koning and Martin, 1996). This helped to build richer data than would have been obtainable from documentary sources. As Champion writes:

Literature could not have enough material to support your theory, but observation encourages new directions for social research by obtaining important information from which to build more rigorous instruments of data collection. (Block and Champion, 1976: 332)

3.1.4: Interviews

Those interviewed were the sick, carers of the sick, and students. The sick expressed their thoughts about the reasons why people get sick and what immediate religious support is given to those in ill health, enabling them to live a hopeful life. For the sick and those serving them, interviews were conducted in the form of open-ended questions which were in line with research objectives. The administration of questions from prepared questionnaires, as already explained, seemed not to be helpful because they hindered further probing for information.

For schoolchildren and students, a motion was proposed and put on their school notice boards, for a period of two weeks, requesting them to prepare themselves for debate. It was thought that students would gain primary information from their parents, grandparents and peers. On the day of the debate, they were able to give their ideas and reasons why Christianity and AIR should have a good relationship and work together for community well-being.³⁸

³⁸ The debating in schools is classified as interviews and also a form of workshop, in that students argued their opinions about cooperation between Christianity and AIR. The hope in using this approach was to get

At one point, it was thought essential to use the media. An appointment was booked with the recently launched Kaya FM (12th October 2007) in Kwale district, Kwale town. This was to assess the views of the general Midzi-Chenda public alongside what had been gathered from the focus groups, church councils, youth and the sick. In this half-hour session, the public were able to make calls and put forward their suggestions concerning the Midzi-Chenda religion and its relations with Christianity. Fifteen calls were received: nine who called and expressed their views concerning the cooperation of the two religions were members of the *Chikw'ehu*; four were Christians; one was a Muslim; two did not want to be identified. The public were able to ask questions by mobile phone texts whilst in the studio. Answers were given by the public and studio staff probed for more information from the public. Their arguments were similar to those of the secondary and primary school students. Apart from the tools described above, the need to secure primary and secondary documentation was identified.

more information from students than one to one interview, as to whether AIR is still valued by the younger generation and able to cooperate with Christianity for society's well-being. The notes are compared with those in FGD and analysed. Points favouring the motion and against are critically analysed. Also at the end of the motion, those in favour and against showed by hand and were counted. FGD were meant to highlight the in-depth meaning of information obtained during participant observation.

3.1.5: Documentary Sources

To enrich the research quality, it was decided that with regard to sources other qualitative research methods should be applied, relating to the ideas of McQueen and Knussen (2002), and Atkinson and Coffey (1997). The research question was reconsidered to judge whether texts or documents could be obtained to provide further information and shed light on the discussion. Eventually, a decision was made to use the documentary or textual method as a source of information. This method, as distinct from some others, is highly recommended for any researcher: ‘essentially for social research’ (Miller and Brewer, 2003).

The purpose of using primary documentary sources was to gain access to extensive, first-hand (original) information on the topic of research (Mann, 1985). This would help gain critical knowledge to go alongside the experiences of the population in the field work to be conducted. Much of the primary information was secured from historical documents such as church archives of the Methodist Church in Kenya, the Anglican Church of Kenya, Roman Catholic Church written reports, conference papers and minutes. Other unpublished articles such as theses were obtained from colleges and universities.

Secondary documentary sources provide second-hand information, derived from general knowledge and insight into the area of research (Burns, 2000). These include published materials such as books, journals and newsletters relating to the focus of the research question. Libraries in Kenya’s universities such as Kenyatta University, Kenya Methodist University, Nairobi University, Catholic University, St. Paul’s Limuru University have been useful. International Universities such as University of Wales Lampeter UK, University of Birmingham, Selly Oak Centre for Mission Studies in the Queen’s

Foundation, University of London ‘School of African Oriental Studies’ have all also been helpful.

Other published secondary sources have included: journals; newsletters, such as those from the Pontifical Council for Inter-religious Dialogue (PCID), especially from the unit on Dialogue with African Religions; others of the same category are Current Dialogue from the World Council of Churches (W.C.C.), All African Churches Council (AACC); National Council of Churches in Kenya (NCCCK); Interfaith Clerics Coast Peace Initiative (ICCPI) Kenya ‘Mombasa’; Lutheran World Federation (LWF); World Health Organisation (WHO); World Bank (WB) and Voices from the Third World journals.

For further research, knowledge and experiences were gained by attendance at national and international inter-religious dialogue conferences, AIR dialogue with Christianity conferences held in Kenya, University of Birmingham, Edinburgh University, Liverpool Hope University, Oxford Centre for Mission Studies, Selly Oak Centre for Mission Studies in the Queen’s Foundation, and the University of London. The conferences attended provided much input for the research by providing a better understanding of what inter-religious dialogue means, as well as enabling comparison of inter-religious dialogue between religions other than that between Christianity and AIR. Discussions with other researchers and established scholars on interfaith studies posing scholarly arguments relating to the research question were also invaluable.

Explanation of how data is analysed has been necessary in this chapter. It is the method used to organise primary findings in order to offer theological reflections on inter-religious dialogue. Initially the data appeared to be bulky, due to the approach used in the

research. However, as Boulton and Hammersley (1996) explain, this does not imply a weakness in producing quality research; in fact, they go further in stating that qualitative and bulky data are by and large treated as synonyms.

The data required reorganisation; involving re-reading, translating notes into English, rearranging and synthesising them while reflecting (theologically) on the questions and objectives of the research (Rudestam and Newton, 2001). Essentially, this approach helped in building up meaningful categories of themes hoped to offer reliable answers. I chose to adopt Thomas Herzog's (1996) and Creswell's (1998) ideas; to reduce bulkiness of material, by recording some information on two different CDs as noted in the introduction of this thesis.

3.1.6: Research Challenges

In the course of this research, challenges were encountered: one being the political boundaries created on the eve of political campaigns (2006–2007). The Government of Kenya in attempts to decentralise the coast province, divided Kwale district into three: which meant that the South Coast was made up of Kwale, Msambweni and Kinango districts. The total districts occupied by the Midzi- Chenda in Coastal Kenya became six instead of four. This presented a problem in mapping the revised district geographically as new boundaries had not been surveyed at the time of the ongoing research. The researcher was therefore unable to obtain up-to-date maps. Nevertheless, this did not hinder the progress of research.

The second challenge came from the AIR who appeared to be suspicious with what I was researching on. Mainly, their reasons were that many foreigners had been going to get indigenous information for business purposes. On my side, I had to offer a lengthy explanation about the reasons and benefits of researching the Midzi-Chenda religious phenomenon as an insider. Despite being accepted and given support, there were no written records such as minutes and offices to compare with those of the Christian administrative bureaucracy. The AIR meetings in which I participated had only three-legged stools reserved for and used by senior elders. Everyone else sat on the ground, but participants accepted this. The appointed secretary usually took notes 'by memory' and sticks were used for agreed resolutions because they were illiterate. Nonetheless, the information received from elders and local leaders had many similarities. On my side, I used a tape record for the purpose of saving authentic information from indigenous believers but Christians in their meetings provided copies of minutes.

The final challenge came from the Christians. Some of the council members were uneasy about contributing ideas, fearing that they would offend God, the Holy Spirit and Jesus their Lord and Saviour. It took longer for the Christians to understand and to be reassured about the validity of the research than for *Chikw'ehu* followers. Further explanations were given by church ministers concerning the importance of religious relationships in contemporary society, which is full of many life challenges. It was essential to be careful in questioning which probed into further discussion; this was to avoid any possible feeling that the 'peculiarity' of their faith was being questioned.

3.1.7: Conclusion

This chapter has explained in detail the methodology used and the main available sources providing information for data collection in support of the research. Together with supporting views from other researchers, the chapter has clarified reasons for validity and reasons why a decision was reached in utilising this methodology. There have been categories of tools or methods used for research, which were carefully selected and which have been mentioned. The chapter has also discussed some of the challenges faced during the research but which did not deter its progress. The information/data obtained in this chapter will be analysed in the following chapter. It will be arranged into themes, headings and subheadings devoted to providing answers to the research question and some of the questions that arose in the literature review.

CHAPTER FOUR

Analysing the Data

Introduction

This chapter offers a detailed report of the information obtained in Chapter Three during research. The analysis is based on reflecting the anthropological and theological views of informants, engaging them with the research questions, as well as those thoughts brought into question in the literature review. As a result, the data was arranged into themes, with an attempt to answer those questions³⁹: generating three themes altogether.

The first theme drawn from participant observation and focus groups responds to questions about whether the Midzi-Chenda as a religious community have a theology that prompts them to conduct dialogue for life and action; if so, what is this theology and the factors that necessitate dialogue. Both of the religions (Christianity and *Chikw'ehu*) practised by the community are analysed as also is their process of dialogue and action after dialogue. The data analysed here is drawn from participant observation, as well as from focus groups

Analysis of each religion's (Christianity and *Chikw'ehu*) attitude towards the other has been necessary in both historical and contemporary society. This analysis has considered whether or not these two 'community religions' can agree to unite in effecting a dialogue for life and action which might benefit the community as a whole. Significantly, the question relating to factors which have continued to fail community inter-religious dialogue between the two religions is answered.

³⁹ The questions noted in this chapter are those posed in the introduction of the thesis page one paragraph one and those raised in literature review.

The second theme has been a series of discussions with focus groups and interviews; it analyses the world-view on health held by both Christianity and *Chikw'ehu*. Their views are displayed by showing how these religions have influenced the community in ways of attempting to handle issues of health in practice.

The third theme is a reflection on the culture that holds the Midzi-Chenda population together, living a united community though divided by religious beliefs and practices. It then explores the history of missionary influences on the communitarian culture.

4.1: Does the Midzi-Chenda Community Engage in Dialogue?

One major weakness observed in the literature review was the fact that many researchers failed to give evidence on whether African indigenous communities have a theology leading to engagement of dialogue for life and action. It is the work of Amoah (1998) and Ajayi (2000) that confirm Africans to be a people of dialogue: 'in other words, persons in Africa would not wait for councils, intellectuals, or academic forums and conferences to debate whether or not dialogue must occur between African reality' (Amoah, 1998). The other weakness noted in the literature review was a lack of evidence as to whether AIR and Christian adherents meet together to have dialogue and agree on what has to be done for community well-being.

Data obtained through participant observation and from focus groups revealed that the Midzi-Chenda custom in addressing important community issues, such as those of community health (*uzima wa lalo*), is through a course of dialogue. In the context of dialogue among people belonging to religions other than Christianity, such as the Midzi-Chenda, Samartha writes:

People of other faiths have their own approaches to dialogue. Some tend to enter into it on the basis of common human concerns which they feel need urgent cooperative attention. Others participate in it on the assumption of an acknowledged 'religious' dimension in life which, according to them, needs to be given priority. (Samartha, 1981: 8)

As already noted in the literature review, Ariarajah (1999) has given a weighty emphasis to dialogue being a ministry, or service, to society. As a service, community religious dialogue among the Midzi-Chenda serves to answer vital questions such as why do they experience poverty, famine, droughts, diseases and what does *Mulungu* say to them about the prevailing conditions? (Temple, 2002).

4.1.1: Theology and Factors Occasioning Community Dialogue

Evidence from the focus groups is that there is a theology and factors occasioning dialogue among the Midzi-Chenda community. The theology they expressed which causes them to unite and call for dialogue is based on the belief of belonging to the same creator (see Chapter Six) who has the responsibility for caring and providing for the creation. Following this (theocentric) theological understanding, the Midzi-Chenda practice has been to try to approach God in a united way through religious specialists when life crises arise.

Reflecting on the aftermath of the issues confronting the Midzi-Chenda, the observation is that they discover in a theological way the real sources of the problems that from time to time afflict them. They particularly question what their religion directs them to do and ponder how the community is supposed to do so 'divinely'. The greatest values found in their theocentric theology (*Mulungu mumwenga*) are unity, salvation and community liberation. Members have expressed that there is true salvation in their religion (*Chik'wehu chinativya*), which is why they enthusiastically unite and engage in dialogue: it is in order to seek salvation for both individuals and their community.

This research noted long life problems among the Midzi-Chenda. These encompass the crucial uncertainties of life in the region, which are worsened by five major factors. The first of these is the problem of persistent seasons of famine (*nzala*) increasing in extent from year to year. Lack of adequate food as a result of poor harvests or no harvest at all, has been due to the lack of rains. However, heavy rains have sometimes caused floods which have washed away both crops and soil. Long droughts and extreme rains in the Midzi-Chenda country have been prevalent in recent years. They have not only affected humanity but also the livestock. In the discourse, it was passionately explained how *nzala* contributed to ill health, especially in young children, women and the aged. The compound results of this are that the health of the community has faced the prospect of further deterioration. Therefore, calls for addressing the problems grow in urgency.

Secondly, the Midzi-Chenda community has now encountered rampant and previously unknown diseases (*makongo/manyonge*), among which is the killer HIV/AIDS (*baya dzana*). It has become a major obstacle towards achieving and maintaining community health, economic progress and social development within the region. Other diseases such as malaria (*nyuni*) have become resistant to both indigenous and Western medicine. It now claims many lives, especially those of the under-fives who have an increasingly weakened immunity. These, together with other commonly known ailments, have caused the community to live in deepening anxiety and fear of what will happen in the future. Diseases have become a great threat to the community (*lalo*); to humanity, livestock and crops. Intervention is called for.

Thirdly, abject poverty (*kutsowa or uchiya*) has in recent years become a major cause of deterioration in community health. *Kutsowa* for the Midzi-Chenda is a loss of family and

lack of property such as land, and livestock; or indeed, of any other necessity. Land has hitherto been the chief determinant in all economic dilemmas. The people have always faced negative historical events, especially 'land grabbing'. Insecurity has existed since the time of the Arabs, Portuguese and British.

For those living in the hinterland, there is poor infrastructure; inadequate housing, poor roads, lack of schools and hospitals, and infertile land. This type of poverty (*uchiya*) has for generations spread from individual to individual and now encompasses the entire community. In many ways it has deprived the people of their basic rights, making them desperate as they live in want and dependence.

Fourthly, the practice of witchcraft and its beliefs (*matsai/utsai*) was explained as another major menace to community health. *Matsai/utsai* is a harmful, mystical, African 'science' using techniques that are believed to enable evil spirits to harm others. This is all very negative and weakens the fabric of the community's society and social relations. Jealousy, rivalry, or oppression causes people within the community to seek to destroy the good life and fortunes of others. During the focus group discussions, the Midzi-Chenda expressed that *matsai/utsai* has for ages been a major hindrance to development. People fear that when they try to develop their business, or improve their lives, they face hidden dangers caused by witchcraft, resulting in the failure of their income-generating business, loss of their job, their own death, or that of a family member. All this corrodes progress. Those who practise witchcraft (*atsai*) are enemies of the community; destroyers of both individual health and that of the community.

The fifth cause of the community's deteriorating quality of life was named as the variety of conflicts (*kondo*) experienced: viewed at both family and community level. In most cases it extended to neighbouring communities. It was explained that such conflicts result in people, women and children in particular, becoming unable to manage their personal situations. Conflicts inevitably occur, so it is vital to settle them as quickly as possible. Some claim that *kondo* has been instigated by politicians, through injustices perpetrated by the government and its corrupt civil servants.

The *Kaya Bombo* clash in 1998 claimed the lives of many young people and was due to corruption in land dealing. This particular problem has had no adequate redress from the government and has received a disappointing lack of attention from some religious institutions which were thought to speak for the people. The losers have been ordinary people, not least the women. Some have even been 'punished' and their protests suppressed by attacks (including rape), made by government security representatives.

It appears that the uncertainties of life as mentioned above have been considered as threats to the well-being of the Midzi-Chenda community necessitating meetings of the elders engaging in dialogue for life and action. Citing an example from Kenya's Midzi-Chenda, during the political crises of 27th Dec 2007 to March 2008 (resulting in more than 1200 people dead and more than 350,000 displaced), an elders' meeting *moonano* was immediately convened. After dialogue it was seen how their *Mulungu* and *Koma* were extremely unhappy about the killings. They called a press conference and told the presidential candidates to address the problems immediately, so that peace could prevail quickly.

To maintain a healthy community the Midzi-Chenda usually give priority to matters of well-being so that they receive immediate attention. Research reveals evidence that community dialogue (needing the neighbour) is essential for the purpose of healing a community. In solidarity, the community encourages everyone to call on each other for a God-talk. No attempt is made to deny or cancel out problems; rather it is the custom for earnest efforts to be devoted through dialogue *kudzigidzya* to finding ways by which problems can be controlled and dealt with. Hastings observes:

Faced with illness of one sort and another, human beings need both something practical to do and a wider philosophy of explanation which renders ill-health, bereavement and every form of misfortune somehow tolerable by establishing it within a wider frame of reference. (Hastings, 1976: 60)

4.1.2: Conducting Dialogue in Chikw'ehu and in the Christian Way

From their memories of old stories the elders could explain that before colonialism councils of male and sometimes female elders⁴⁰ (*ngambi/kambi*) administered the Midzi-Chenda's communal government. Specific elders were experienced in overseeing the carrying out of religious rules in the community, ensuring that they were always correctly and respectfully kept. As part of their culture, it was the elders' responsibility to promote the ability of the community to live in harmony with the earth, deities and each other, and so not to interfere harmfully with other living or non-living things. In this way they could avoid health problems in the community. This pattern of life is constantly instilled in young people by their parents, as part of their orientation in indigenous ethics.

⁴⁰ Female elders and leaders among the Midzi-Chenda have always had recognition and respect equal to what is given the male. An example is the woman leader Mekatilili wa Menza, who used her leadership skills to call for the Giriama Midzi-Chenda to resist British imperialism in their land. This resulted in the historical Giriama-British revolt in 1914.

It is the inculcators of community welfare and administration (*angambi/atumia/akare a lalo*), who from time to time summon meetings of elders (*moonano*) in cases of health crises, to engage in dialogue (*kudzigidzya*).⁴¹ They regularly deal with both common and uncommon community problems. This political, administrative and religious structure was a stumbling block to governments such as that of the British, who fought it mercilessly. Nevertheless, the structure still operates more effectively than any contemporary political governance, especially in terms of religious practices.

During the participant observation, on an occasion when a *moonano* was to be held it was observed that a particular site was set aside and prepared. Usually a small bush area (*ndala*) is appropriate, where interference from outside events or noise can be limited. When those invited had made a forum, the chairman (the oldest man present) called for the attention of those present with the words *kambi sumilani*, they responded by saying *ghai* and then remained silent. The chairman then asked for absentees, and whether there were substantial reasons for their absence. Apologies were given and explained.

To show the community's commitment to their religious tradition, a local cup (*chiparya/mboko/vung'we*) full of wine was poured as a libation to the ancestors and to God (*komatsi Mulungu dzulu*) inviting them to be present in the meeting, and to approve of whatever took place. As this was done, the rest remained silent. They responded only when appropriate and finally, in unison, all said words agreeing together to whatever was decided through their dialogue. This was a form of petitionary prayer such as: 'Lord in your mercy – hear our prayer'. A secretary, (*muwumukizi*) was chosen by the people, to take mental notes of what transpired, relying only on his good memory. The meeting

⁴¹ *Kudzigidzya* is a term used by the Midzi-Chenda people. This term means a talk held by a group of people - in most cases elders of the villages - in order to address certain issues of life.

commenced. The agenda was tabled and people were then able to engage in thoughtful debate (*kudzigidzya/kubita vitswa/kuryana vitswa*) without anyone feeling slighted or discriminated against.

These discussions were in the context of their religion *Chik'wehu*. In essence they went back to the religious traditions and history of their forefathers, and to what procedures were followed when that community was undergoing similar life-threats. This is what Mwaura (2002) and Temple (2002) reinforce in their ideas of dialogue in the African context and AIR being a source of unity. 'Dialogue in Africa should answer the questions that the African people are asking together...what is God saying to us concerning our conditions through our religion' (Temple, 2002: 53). From their beliefs the elders were able to establish the causes of problems, and to come to an agreement by deliberating and using customary rituals appropriate to a broken relationship between the community and God (*Mulungu*): with the ancestors' (*mikoma*) and with neighbours (*ayawehu*); or improper behaviour with nature itself, such as desecration of the sacred forests (*makaya*); or disregard of sacred days, (*majuma ga Mulungu*); or some encounter with witchcraft (*matsai/utsai*).

In cases where they were unable to discover the root cause of a problem, an alternative course of action was used. The elders would, for example, agree to instruct one or two amongst them to go and seek religious information from diviners (*aganga a mburuga/chitswa/mulamulo*). These were usually from a distant region, consulted to learn the source of the problem and to receive advice on how to deal with it. This included finding out different measures for treating it and possible ways of avoiding future

community calamities. Those journeying elders would bring advice to the waiting elders (*angambi*), who would then hold a talk so that decisions could be made.

After agreements, applying to all members of the community (*lalo*) Christians and Indigenous adherents alike, the meeting came to a climax of celebration in the drinking and taking of food. Then the elders departed with the meeting's message, which had to be conveyed to the rest of the villagers, along with details of the actions to be taken after whatever necessary arrangements had been put in place. Commonly, they would let every adult village member participate in this process; possibly by inviting them to make contributions, (*mutsango*) such as buying an animal that could be used as a sacrifice to pacify the deities involved.

On the church side, when the community encountered a health crisis, Christian church leaders organised meetings by giving notices in the church during Sunday services. It was noticed that this was done without inviting those of the indigenous religion, for they asked: 'what relationship is there between light and darkness?' A meeting was usually held in church buildings. Before the meeting proceeded, the Christian leader would begin with a prayer, followed by a reading from Scripture and some elaboration of this, emphasising the will of God towards problems facing society. The meeting and its discussion had to be directed by Holy Scriptures, indicating that understanding the root causes of all health problems was sought in relation to biblical history.

Decisions would be made favouring the Christian community rather than the entire body. This implied that those who did not belong to Christianity, regardless of also being part of the community, were excluded from any share in God's blessings of good health and

seasonal rains. Members of AIR were to receive these as part of grace (undeserved favour) from God.

Some noticed that issues related to HIV and AIDS prevention were sensitive; in particular, the promotion of condom use was condemned as encouraging pre-marital and extra-marital sex, which opposed church doctrine. The church seemed to agree to teach the community two main ways of preventing HIV and AIDS: being faithful to the spouse and abstinence from sex for those who were not married. Other pressing health issues, depending on the nature of the problem, were given different attention; they considered calling leaders or specialists who taught community health development. Seminars were held on church premises and most of those who participated were church members. Some denominational, or ecumenical gatherings, were organised, setting days for special petitionary prayers for the community. They also arranged to preach to the community at ‘open air meetings’ encouraging people to abandon their indigenous religion and turn to Jesus as ‘the way, the truth and the life’.

4.1.3: Steps Taken (Action) after Dialogue

For the purpose of sorting out community problems the dialogue aimed to employ Christian and indigenous means differently. For AIR, this was categorised by rituals following varied formats (Mbiti, 1969; Abimbola, 2006). Rituals held in order to reconcile humanity with deities, (*kulomba Mulungu*) were administered by priests. A black and physically perfect bull could be slaughtered; blood with its meat and indigenous food (*wari wa matsere*) were then placed at the indigenous altar and prayers offered. The address was specifically posed to God as a question: ‘who deserves worship?’ (*alombwaye ni ani?*). The answer from the celebrants was ‘it is God’ (*ni Mulungu*). After the prayers and eating a meal (normally prepared by elderly women), ‘as

a sign of communion with *Mulungu*', the celebrants demonstrated their love for and veneration of God by hosting an exceptional dance (*Ngoma ya Mulungu*) praising God's great works of creation.

In the case of 'consulting with ancestors' (*kuhatsa koma*), this was conducted by village elders (*atumia a mudzi*) at a cemetery. A libation was poured and the promise of a special banquet was made (*sadaka*), to be fulfilled (*kuusa sadaka*) at a later time when what had been asked for had been fulfilled. The day of the ceremony would be similar in many ways to that devoted to *Mulungu*, but there was no restriction on who was to prepare the food. Young women were preferred, unless they were menstruating. It was noted that in this ritual the mode of address was different from the former one. This latter ritual began with words proclaiming 'ancestors need to be "low", humble, and aware that God is always above them' (*Koma tsi, Mulungu Dzulu*).

Meetings of elders were not only intended as engagement in dialogue on issues of natural disasters but were also concerned with 'peace' (*reri*), for to them this was also part of community health. It was when misunderstandings arose between members of the community and outsiders, that violence and bloodshed could be foreseen.

In such circumstances, elders from the various sides met and engaged in dialogue, in order to understand the cause of the conflict and hopefully to come up with resolutions for achieving peace. If bloodshed and death were already involved, special reputable religious specialists (*aganga a kuzizimisa lalo*) were called in to administer a ritual healing ceremony, to reduce conflict and restore health to the warring communities. It was necessary for them to agree to put their reconciliation into practice and settle their

differences by means of reparation (*kuriva kore*). This restored peace. A special oath (*chiravo*) was also administered to both communities, for all ages and both sexes in the groups, to prevent future conflicts. The communities would then continually remind their children to keep the peace because the oath was irrevocable.

In handling the issue of poverty (*kutsowa/uchiya*), dialogue carried out by elders and leaders was the key to promoting 'wealth' amongst the villagers. Poverty (*uchiya/kutsowa*) was considered a curse (*mufundo*), either coming from parents, or from marrying into a cursed clan (*mbari mbii*). It could also be the result of laziness or caused by a neighbour (*bako*), perhaps even through witchcraft. Poverty was also caused by oppression or unjust and corrupt leadership where wealth was reserved for the privileged few whilst many went without basic needs. In instances of unfairness, the elders called upon people in their own villages to sit with their members and discuss how to overcome *uchiya*. They were encouraged by the rich, such as those who had big herds, being asked to give part of their herd to the poor as carer's (*aroromi*). It came as a surprise to learn that the Maraikani Milk Scheme had done well because of this system. In fact it was only after its collapse that *uchiya* amongst the Midzi-Chenda greatly reduced their standard of living. The *aroromi* had been allowed to make use of the milk, selling it and saving the money as capital that would help them to buy their own animals.

Community members were always reminded by the elders to participate in communal work (*mweria*) such as tilling the land, building shelters, digging sand dams (*mitsara*), erecting schools, and repairing local roads so necessary in the rural areas. After independence, the late first president of Kenya, Kenyatta, adopted the *mweria* system as a philosophy for Kenyans working together for development (*Harambee*). This was both a

cultural and a religious phenomenon, encouraging the whole community to be participants in reducing poverty, which was seen as the greatest enemy of community health.

On the issue of witchcraft (*matsai/utsai*), the elders were careful not to directly accuse any particular individuals of being practitioners of this outlawed practice. Instead, they would call for a *moonano*, an engagement in dialogue, to seek out ways of reducing witchcraft 'witch-hunting'. In the dialogue, they would give permission for villagers to contribute towards the expenses of a 'witch-hunter', who would be invited to visit the villages. These people were seen as having the ability to restore 'health' to the community, or prevent disaster befalling the people. The names of some great 'witch-hunters' known in the region included Kajiwe wa Tsuma, Kabwere, Bogi and Majuto. They helped to wipe out the practice of witchcraft. It was believed that God (*Mulungu*) provided approved 'witch-hunters' from time to time to allow the community to live in peace; without the fear of witchcraft undermining community spirit and health, particularly mental health.

It works in the following way: in a case where a villager seeks to know the cause of his personal problems, and having been informed by a 'medium' that somebody within the village has 'be-witched' him/her, there would be a visit to the elders to inform them of these 'findings'. To solve a problem, which could actually be a dispute, the elders would go to the assistant chief for a written permit enabling them to take the suspected person for an indigenous oath (*chiravo*). The most famous of the indigenous oaths in the Kinango district is *chiravo cha Mwasamani*. This would either prove or disprove the diviner's claim. If the suspect was discovered the entire story of the causes of the

problem/dispute and so on had to be confessed and the offender would probably be fined by the villagers.

During those periods when they face life disasters the Midzi-Chenda meet regularly. In the process, individuals not only have the sense of belonging but have an obligation to contribute to the overall well-being. That means everybody has a role and a stake in the solidarity of the community. Dzobo, writing in general terms of Africans, explains that:

The divine life becomes full as God shares it with us and our lives become full as we in turn share the life that God has shared with us, with others and with the whole world. The full life then is realised in relationship, in community (and) in living together as a human family in which we share our resources with our sisters and brothers. (1983: 127)

For Christians, the actions taken after dialogue seemed not to embrace the whole society. Two things were learnt about them. The first is that a special day, or a series of days, were devoted to prayers for the problem affecting the community. Those who were not converted Christians did not have the opportunity to join in the prayers. Prayers were held in the church premises during the evening, after work. During prayer time, the Holy Scriptures would be read with time to reflect on the Scriptures relating to the issue being prayed about. Prayers followed the singing of a hymn.

The second observation was that Christians visited the sick in hospitals and preached to them about the will of God for their health. They asked permission from the hospital administration to hold prayers before going into the wards. They then talked to the patients, trying to persuade them to turn to Christianity where they would have the hope of eternal life and good health. Apart from visiting hospitals, they visited the sick in their own homes, trying to convert them to Christianity in order that they might receive divine healing. Both the sick at home and in hospital accepted being prayed for, but many were

hesitant to accept becoming Christians. The policy of converting the sick to Christianity has its history from the period when missionaries initiated hospitals for the communities in Africa:

In our medical work we wanted to put Jesus first. Every day the good news of his love was explained in wards and outpatient: patients were prayed with before operations and at their bedsides: and we asked God to guide us in what we did. But did our western scientific medical approach fit in adequately to a comprehensive view of health as a whole being? (Roy, 1978: 10)

4.1.4: Dialogue with People of Other Religions

Among weaknesses noted in the literature was lack of evidence to show whether members of AIR and Christianity participated in inter-religious dialogue. The Midzi-Chenda people, for many generations, have encountered and had long experience of people with other religions and cultures. Among the most familiar to them are Arab Muslims and European Christians (Tiyambe, 1995). From the arrival of the original 'pioneers' in Midzi-Chenda country, these two religions were tireless in their efforts to convert the people and to build numerous mosques and chapels where the converted were encouraged, or sometimes even compelled, to go for worship (Tinga, 1998). Sometimes converts included the whole family of children, husbands and wives. These two religions (Islam and Christianity), being different from each other and also from the indigenous religion, needed a variety of approaches for handling issues of community health.

The study of Ties Boerma and John Bennett (2000), which accords with this research, affirms that the Midzi-Chenda are a religiously mixed community, approaching issues of health differently. 'Health services, just as educational services, have to consider the admixture of three strands of influence: traditional African, Islamic and Western' (Boerma and Bennett, 2000: 262). There are those who address it in the ancient

indigenous mode, and others who have adopted new religious thought forms. Everyone faces and shares common problems. Some believers claim that their religion possesses deeper insight than that of others and consider that it alone provides answers to the many questions facing humanity.

For AIR adherents, identifying themselves with other religions such as Christianity, in the mutual search for durable solutions to issues disturbing the community has raised some problems and opportunities for cooperation have been lost. When their community encounters threatening and life-disturbing situations, indigenous elders have usually followed their old, original traditions, as described above. In their custom they show no bias but strive to be fair and just.⁴² Customarily, from time to time local elders have informed specific elders, from other communities in contact with them, of the issues under discussion. The Akamba, in particular, were among those who were often invited to participate in dialogue. This was so because a majority of them had culturally joined the Midzi-Chenda community (*kuvenya mbarini*), a relationship symbolised by the giving of a goat and wine (*mbuzi na kadzama*) as a symbol of unity. This ceremony was necessary before they could be accepted by the elders (*angambi*) (Tinga, 1998).

Christians from within the Midzi-Chenda community, though invited, often scorned participation in any form of dialogue that was indigenously organised. They usually showed no interest in attending the *moonano*, and rarely indicated any willingness to participate in agreed resolutions. Refusal implied unwillingness to make contributions for the purpose of religious rituals for the well-being of the community. For this reason, among others, the Midzi-Chenda Christians have often been referred to as ‘perpetrators’

⁴²It was noted that there would be cases of severity where someone did not want to be reconciled with the community, and went against the norms of the society, and these would be dealt with more severely, being excommunicated from the community *kulaviwa mbarini*, for example, until reconciliation was forged

of health problems, since they persistently resist community decisions, despising the indigenous religious obligations of the community.

Sharing a community with members who choose to abandon the traditions of their indigenous religion and instead follow those of another religion, has not only become a bone of contention but also a challenge and a cause of anxiety for the community. The Midzi-Chenda *Chikw'ehu* adherents have said that this is a form of social and religious exclusion. Opinions expressed by those of indigenous faith reveal that the Midzi-Chenda Christians are considered to have a negative attitude towards both the religion and the traditions of their own people. Religious prejudice is said to be a result of the styles of church teaching which have spoken out against the indigenous religion: as manifested in testimonies, songs and open-air preaching services where this is overtly demonstrated.

Those said to participate more cooperatively in dialogue are the Midzi-Chenda Muslims. It is held that Muslims have not looked down on the traditions and native religion of the people. The only place where Christian and *Chik'wehu* adherents actually meet is when they are called to a public meeting (*baraza*) by a government representative; an assistant chief, area chief, or divisional officer. Such meetings chaired by government representatives have not always valued social-religious views contributed by community elders. They are, in fact, generally treated as only having a status equivalent to that of other members. Government officers impose the community decisions which they have made and which cannot be questioned. There is never opportunity given for engagement in dialogue relating to decisions already made! This is seen by many to be part of *ukoloni*, because it does not foster their culture of dialogue. It always means that the chief has to

go and tell the assistant chief what the people have been instructed to do to avoid facing the law (Ciekawy, 2000).

As observed by Ciekawy and in this research, religious prejudice has for a long time appeared to be an attitude adopted by government officers. In most cases, the government warns the locals against holding *moonano*. They must first obtain a written permit from a local official. This is biased towards the churches and mosques, which receive favours and are not restricted as are the indigenous adherents. For example, in public meetings held by the government, Christians and Muslims have the privilege of leading public prayers during such gatherings, whilst the indigenous religion is apparently considered a religion of the 'lost'.

Elders who have been school teachers claim that the Ministry of Education curriculum is severely biased on matters of religious education. The two official religions in the country are Christianity and Islam, and these receive support whilst AIR is merely taught as a 'topic' within the Christian/Muslim religious syllabus. A special program for pastoral instruction developed by the Christian Churches Educational Association, CCEA, under the auspices of the Ministry of Education for primary school children, appears to be highly discriminatory. On special school days, school children are separated and given pastoral instruction according to whether their religion is Islam or Christian (see Chapter Six).

However, the idea of engaging in a dialogue for life or action with people of other religions seems to earn favour from the Midzi-Chenda indigenous adherents. Their willingness to dialogue with adherents of other religions has been because they hope that

with one common voice they might overcome issues affecting their health and well-being. Their religious philosophy is that one finger cannot kill lice (*chala chimwenga kachivunza Tsaha*). Unity (*umwenga/udugu*) is needed. This phrase is repeatedly used, meaning that a community can only remain a community if people are united. The Kiswahili saying for this understanding is *umoja ni nguvu na kutengana ni udhaifu*. They also employ the saying that one piece of wood cannot make a fire for cooking. This means that they want and need both Midzi-Chenda who have become Christians, and those who have not, to engage with them in serious talk about how best to tackle community health issues, with the understanding that respect for all religious practices and beliefs should be observed. This applies to the results of the study conducted in Mondolo Zambia by the WCC (see literature review).

Respect for the religious beliefs of others has been argued on the basis that all human beings were created by one God (*Mulungu mumwenga*): colour, language and religious differences are no more than human divisions. It is believed that in the beginning *Mulungu* was manifested to humanity in different ways, and humanity responded by paying homage in ways depending on their geographical locations. It was argued that salvation is offered in all religions; that is why both Christianity and *Chikw'ehu* have always been reluctant to accept conversion to the other.

Nevertheless, the disinclination of Christians to associate with indigenous dialogues involving issues of life is something thought to require intervention. More often than not, Christians were thought to sin against indigenous religious laws when they disregarded whatever dialogue resolutions were passed. Christians held them to be wicked, evil and backward ideas unfit for them to associate with. Christianity considers itself to be a religion of light, and *Chik'wehu* to be a religion of darkness. As observed by LWF, PCID

and WCC, African Christians have engaged in indigenous rituals when encountering health problems. A surprising development has been noted among the Midzi-Chenda when some Christians undergoing certain harsh circumstances in their life, have secretly consulted faithful *Chik'wehu* for indigenous attention; or when trapped in critical health situations have even completely withdrawn from the Christian approach to seek salvation from the religion of their ancestors. At such stressful times they have revalued as meaningful, the power and role of indigenous religion and the importance of unity, *udugu*, in the community.

4.1.5: Attitude of Christianity Dialoguing with Chik'wehu

For the Christian Church engagement in dialogue for life and action with believers of the indigenous religion of the Midzi-Chenda community appeared to be a practice that in earlier times had not been carried out. The claim was that from the introduction of Christianity to the Midzi-Chenda world, it was emphasised that the people were sinners for whom Christ had died. Christianity could transform their lives, so that they could become a people accepted into the kingdom of God, as God's children. However, for acceptance, they had to lose everything.

I realised the dichotomy this belief caused for those who wanted to believe in Jesus and become God's children and receive special attention denied those who failed to believe in Jesus. For the 'Children of God' to engage with outsiders in a dialogue for life is viewed as controversial, especially by the church in rural regions. Christian reasons for this were that they did not find any spiritual value in exchanging ideas between 'those of the light' and 'those of the darkness', as these two were on different journeys. It was also argued that such 'dialogue' would diminish the strength of the gospel. 'The great commission'

was quoted as the task given by their Lord Jesus Christ. If they were effectively to bring the lost to the kingdom of God, they were not to allow concessions to their world-view. They felt 'called' to pursue all non-Christians, urging them to repent and believe in Jesus who alone restores life and heals the sick. Clearly, there can be no compromise with indigenous beliefs and no engagement in dialogue on a basis of equality. These ideas seem to concur with the thoughts of Karl Barth as well as with those of Hendrik Kraemer (1938).

Another reason given was that the indigenous religion had neither sacred writings nor formal structure, therefore its members having nothing to which they could refer for aid in solving problems relied instead on magicians, diviners and dead 'ancestors'. Christians also explained that those of the indigenous religion possessed no clear hierarchy of bureaucracy such as the Christian Church possesses. Christians seem to believe it would be difficult to have formal links with people whose leadership lacks offices storing historical records and policies. In general, followers of *Chik'wehu* are judged poorly educated, illiterate people, lacking contemporary knowledge relating to life and health. Sensitive issues affecting the community, the intricacies of poverty, infrastructure, diseases and sanitation require professional assistance from those with the capacity to advance the community.

In response to enquiries concerning reasons why many Christians returned to their indigenous religion during health crises, despite having been warned against its limitations, it was affirmed that it was due to lack of faith. For Christian faith is believed to be based on hope and trust in God through Jesus Christ and patience to wait for God's help. By opting to revert to their former practices there was the risk of condemnation

when they died. Nevertheless, one central factor that needs to be looked at is indigenous religion's concept of health; this compels followers to search for durable solutions through dialogue enabling them to live a better life, though in a different direction.

4.2: Midzi-Chenda Perception and Responsibility for Health

Chapter One has given a detailed definition on community health in the context of the Midzi-Chenda. This section analyses in depth the way in which the Midzi-Chenda perceive health and their responsibility towards maintaining health and well-being⁴³.

The Midzi-Chenda perception of health relates to their daily lives; economic activities, the politics of the day, governance, social and spiritual contexts, all woven together.⁴⁴

Their concept of health confirms the ideas of Dube (2006) and Lyon: Lyon writes;

Health is wholeness. It is related to every part of man [sic] and to all his activities, and human relationships. Health in its ultimate sense is the meaning of life. It affects the whole community of man. Until every man is whole, no one man can be whole. Health of society depends on the health of every individual. (Lyon, 1966: 24)

It encompasses issues not only for humanity (*adamu*)⁴⁵ but also for animals (*anyama*), both domestic and wild. Additionally, it touches upon land (*tsi/minda*) which produces trees and forests (*weru*), grass (*nyasi*) and crops (*mimera*), all of which are consumables for both animals and human beings: *uzima wa lalo* is that which affects every living creature, and people's relations between the living, the departed and God (*Mulungu*).

⁴³ The information was obtained through conversation with focus groups, as explained in Chapter Three (Methodology).

⁴⁴ This information was part of my discussion with the focus groups, of elders, in Kilifi and Kinango districts. The elders gave an in-depth explanation of *uzima wa lalo* which concurs with the recent definition of WHO. That is why they firstly prefer indigenous healing treatment (*gachikwehu*) and only secondly go to hospital when they get sick.

⁴⁵ *Adamu* is the common word used by the Midzi-Chenda to refer to humanity. It has some roots from the Arab language and Jewish. An explanation has been offered regarding the origin of Kiswahili language as a mixture of local and foreign languages. The Midzi-Chenda original term for humanity is *Atu*

Intangibly, community health in the concept of the Midzi-Chenda is wholistic. Their understanding of health is similar to that elaborated by Oduyoye and Busia; perceiving it from both a cultural and religious perspective, they claim:

For us Midzi-Chenda, *uzima wa lalo* is all inclusive; it is individual as well as corporate. It concerns our crops (cash crops and food crops), our animals (wild and domesticated), our sacred forests (*makaya*) and our rivers. It concerns being in harmony with divine spirits and with our neighbours. Thus, health for us is justice (*haki*) and peace (*reri*) with nature, humanity, and divinities. By practising these religious basics, the community stays out of diseases (*makongo*) and its leaders practise good governance (*ulongozi udzo*) which promotes and cares for nature (*uroromi wa tsi*). (Muduruma woman elder, Jan. 2006)

These cyclical aspects have an overall goal aimed at achieving good health (*peho mbidzo*). The factors accredited here have a pedestal in their religion *Chikw'ehu*, which according to their world-view is the concept of delivering harmony and good living for humanity and nature. *Chikw'ehu*, therefore, has an undisputable role in maintaining community well-being.

4.2.1: Health of Human Beings (Adamu)

Health begins with individuals who are members of the community. A person is understood to be a body, mind and soul. It is reasoned that personal health must be given precedence over all else because everyone is a unique individual possessing the ability to accept the challenges of making this a better world. Therefore every person has to be protected from attack (*mudamu be ni uzima*). Mbiti writes:

African peoples have many rituals directed and ensuring good health, healing, preventing danger to health, curing barrenness, removing impurities in people and homesteads, and protecting people, animals and crops. (Mbiti, 1975: 134)

The first category relates to the body which is understood to have the greatest value, providing physical energy enabling the performance of essential duties such as cultivating

the land, shepherding the flocks and building shelters. As the source of fertility and breeding, it has to be protected from birth until death. Anything external which might damage the body is regarded as an enemy to be promptly identified and expelled; this covers diseases (*makongo*), physical injuries from conflicts (*kondo*) and accidents (*ajali*). For this reason the parts of the surrounding environment, such as bushes, rivers, air, trees, the ocean, animals, means of transport and the unseen (evil powers viewed either superstitiously or religiously), are all noted carefully to prevent them from causing physical harm.

The second category relates to mental health. The mind (*akili/miyazo*) is considered central because it helps to store knowledge and skills. In many ways it controls the performance of the body. Human beings are often affected psychologically when they encounter a variety of difficult and oppressive situations. These could be on a personal, family or communal level: for example, sexual abuse; failure to fulfil life goals; or a life-threatening disease. Humans may apply defence mechanisms such as repression, denial, suppression (*kudzihenda*) or shifting blame, which can later affect their life. Such struggles for the Midzi-Chenda are sometimes taken as negative experiences (*shenene*) causing sickness of the mind (*mbayumbayu*). When the mind has problems, it easily affects the family and the community, even at a national level. That is why mental health is so important.

The third category of health concerns the soul (*chivuri/roho*), which is regarded as the essence of life itself. Its care has a major part to play in the overall welfare of human beings. The Midzi-Chenda affirm, religiously, that death claims the body, but not the soul, which does not die (*chivuri kachifa*). Those dying of old age are said to have

completed their share of time on earth and happily join the world of the living dead and ancestors. Since protecting the soul from wrongdoing is crucial, the people try to ensure that their way of life on earth determines that there will be good for them in the life hereafter.

Based on this research, the understanding is that illnesses, or other tragedies among the Midzi-Chenda, have to be diagnosed by the appropriate ‘specialists’ and in a religious way dealt with communally (Mbiti, 1969). This is the point Fiagbenu failed to address in his study. For example, there are specialists who are able to deal with mental problems (*aganga a chitswa*). Amongst the local people there are also particular elders who, to an extent, will give counselling services to sick people (Mbiti, 1969). Nevertheless, Fiagebenu’s (1996) study regarding health as community based, applies to the lifestyle of the Midzi-Chenda (see literature review). Confirmation from the current research is that the entire Midzi-Chenda community makes efforts, using whatever resources are available, to seek appropriate treatment indigenously. Parkin (1991), in his study, shows evidence of the Giriama (Agiriama) conducting health rituals, not as individuals but as a community. Evidence of this is the way the Midzi-Chenda conduct public meetings (*moonano*), where members hand over concern for individual and community well-being for elders and religious specialists to discuss and take action on behalf of the community. Their understanding is that because health is a community concern, a sick person is regarded as ‘our’ patient (*mkongo wehu*) and not as ‘the’ or ‘my’ patient (*mukongo wangu*). This illustrates that the Midzi-Chenda people have a constant and deep concern for everyone’s health and normally take indigenous religious remedies first, and modern medical remedies second (Boerma and Bennet, 2000).

The Midzi-Chenda also endeavour to live a good moral life so that when they die they can become honoured ancestors (*Koma mbidzo*), rather than evil ancestors (*Koma mbii*), in order to continue with the role of overseeing health and well-being. Such intense awareness of this layer of reality, in all parts of life from birth onwards, means that children are taught to respect these revered ancestors and trained to welcome the world of both the living and dead. The dead are said to protect the living community from the attacks of evil spirits (which can affect health) and from natural calamities, but also to intercede for the living. Health is believed to be arbitrated by good ancestral souls, which are close to both God (*Mulungu*) and the people (*adamu*); they are able to give warnings of any crisis threatening the community. The soul, through dreams or by the use of certain symbols known to the specialists, can interact with the living. Special rituals are conducted from time to time to revere the spirits of the departed. This means that community health is not only observed and practised by those who are living but it receives assistance from both the living dead and ancestors playing a role in the health of their society (Mbiti, 1969; Dickson, 1984).

4.2.2: Animal Health (Anyama)

Uzima wa lalo also extends to life in close proximity to animals, both wild and domesticated. This is for reasons of economy, or for reasons founded on the good health of society. The domestic animals that are of value for both wealth and health are cows, goats, sheep and poultry which are universally considered as the lifeline of individuals and families. The idea of health as wealth, as emphasised by the circle of concerned African Women theologians (2006), falls in this category. Domesticated animals have to be given quality health care, for they act as the economic power and their products, such as milk, meat and eggs, help people to maintain healthy bodies.

Belief in the value of animals as affecting the health of society is based on the fact that they play a role in bringing about productive relationships between people, God and spirits. If their animals become sick then the family also becomes sick. Animals facilitate the creation of social bonds, such as in marriage when they become part of dowry due to a woman's family. Animals are also used as symbols of unity between the living and the living dead (or ancestors) in instances when they are used to appease ancestors or spirits by means of blood sacrifice. Part of the Midzi-Chenda beliefs, is that spirits which seem to be stubbornly and actively troublesome to the community can in most cases be appeased by the use of animal blood sacrifice (Mbiti, 1969).

When domesticated animals were not available for this purpose (*viryangona*) people would usually obtain wild animals. Those living in game reserves, such as elephants, lions, or wild pigs, are considered equally important as they serve the same purpose. Even small 'game' such as birds, insects, worms, fish and reptiles are equally important in safeguarding the well-being of humans. In the past, they were preserved from total extinction because their presence was a sign of blessing to the community. Essentially, closeness to nature is very real: the living natural world is of great relevance.

Occasionally animals pose a danger to livelihoods. Men used to hunt as a group in order to discourage animals which interfered with food crops and caused insecurity. It was in and around the forest that destructive wild animals lived and the Midzi-Chenda would drive them back into the forest if they came to forage and destroy human crops. The Midzi-Chenda and their animals cannot be separated from each other, or from their health. They coexist for the purpose of overall well-being. Therefore, animal health and husbandry have always been a major preoccupation for these people. Consequently,

animals and all wildlife are recognized as having a fundamental relationship with human health.⁴⁶

4.2.3: Environment and Ecology (Weru)

Over time the Midzi-Chenda have given much thought to the link between human well-being, the ecology and environment.⁴⁷ Recent modern developments highlighting these things are not new to the Midzi-Chenda, for such concerns have always been part of their culture (Nyamweru, 1995). By ecology is meant relationships in the larger sphere of the atmosphere, rivers, streams, land, soil, vegetation and all living things. The Midzi-Chenda consider land factors in particular to be essential, for they are the foundation of economic survival. The soil is both food and medicine and that is why they always put such emphasis on the value of land. Land produces food crops, grass for animals, and thatching for houses. It allows trees to grow and when mature these can be used for a variety of different purposes such as building houses, making musical instruments, defensive weapons for security and making furniture. Land also enables the growth of medicinal herbs, which are often the source of indigenous pharmaceutical cures (*mihaso*) requiring leaves, roots, tree bark and flowers or ingredients found in different types of soil, and rocks. All are identified as providing remedies for particular health problems, and are used for the prevention of disease. The Midzi-Chenda have always sought to protect their land in order to ensure healthy living. It is to the land that they look for their future inheritance.

⁴⁶ *Chikw'ehu* encourages the care of animals. The government of Kenya has a ministry for tourism and wildlife but does not recognise the concept of protecting wild game indigenously. This is one of the concerns the community felt were being sidelined.

⁴⁷ The Midzi-Chenda value the significance of environment and ecology. It is part of their health determinants. This was narrated to the researcher by a Kambe village woman elder in January 2006. There is much evidence as is shown in the appendices.

Professor Wangari Mathaai of the World Green Belt (Kenya 2004), and Celia Nyamweru (1995) hold the opinion that the African world-view of health is founded on natural resources; forests, rivers, lakes, soil and mountains. Nyamweru (1995), in her study among the Midzi-Chenda, and the current study observe that due to its diverse repercussions in health, the ecology was always strictly protected. Adding to her observations is that Land was to be utilized as carefully as possible; for instance, a strict rule was that no fire was to be lit in the forest without permission. If unmonitored this could cause death and famine for animals and birds. If land was to be cleared for farming, alternative trees were to be planted because to them many answers to life 'lived' in the land and soil. In a case where somebody destroyed or abused land without the consent of the elders, he would be fined (*kuriwa gonzi*) and barred from continuing with what was considered a sin against the land. Noting, in general terms, his observations concerning Africans in relation to land Northcott writes:

Land and the shape of it create character in Africa, land is life in Africa, and the amount of it and the use of it help to stamp the character and the customs of the people. Land is the universal link; it speaks for the past of the tribe, the family ancestors and the living hopes of the present and the future. (Northcott, 1963: 15-16)

Due to this, the forests have served as barriers to water loss such as caused by erosion or heavy evaporation. For the use of water, there were/are special water points (mostly in static positions) for animals, washing (*viva vya kunwesa na kufula*) and for human use (*viva vya madzi ga kunwa*). The hygiene of rivers or water points, which are used to harvest water, was always taken care of. Men in particular, and from different groups, would act in cooperation by watching over these places. Water from the sea or streams, either running or in some cases stagnant and also things that live in it are important in many ways for the treatment of human illnesses. Therefore, the ecology of rivers and other water reservoirs were/are protected to the fullest.

Health is also considered as an issue of justice and peace both within the community and in relations with outsiders; a fact widely noted by Dube (2006) and Ēla (1988). Relations between a husband and a wife, parents and children, encompass the extended family and the larger community. It is believed that when a husband and a wife have marital problems the health of the house is at risk. At such times elders are called by one of the parties and a dialogue to ‘look for justice’ (*malau*) is held. Special fines are imposed on the one considered to be in the wrong and community laws are implemented to guide a man and his wife towards living in harmony.

Though patriarchy has been a major subject in Africa, Midzi-Chenda women have always enjoyed justice and men are not supposed to oppress their wives or approve of wife punishing (*muchu kahendwa hivyo*). For this purpose ethical education regarding peace, respect for others, and tolerance shown to all is laid down from childhood. This knowledge enables individuals to create sound relationships. I discovered that when a man decided to abandon his wife and children, relatives took the initiative in caring for the abandoned family. For this reason the Midzi-Chenda children have not commonly been known as ‘street children’. If they were to be employed by Asians, Arabs, or Waswahili (a local Mombasa community) in big towns, for example, the historical custom of the Coast is that they work as house boys, and girls.

Justice was pursued in different ways, all resolved through dialogue; land disputes, witchcraft suspects, adultery, theft or assault, for example, are the common cases which are always settled locally without involving government courts of law.

4.2.4: The Christian Midzi-Chenda World View on Health

While the indigenous Midzi-Chenda world-view of health focuses on the total wholeness or well-being of humanity as a community issue, the Christian Midzi-Chenda world-view on health appears to offer little that is significantly different in practice. In the heart of the Christian religion, God (*Mulungu*), the creator of humanity and nature, as well as the giver of life and health, sustains and maintains all that exists. Christians understand Christ as the bearer of health, especially through what he underwent on the cross, whilst the Holy Spirit gives believers guidance and counselling in their spiritual journey. The Bible as the 'only word of God' helps them to understand in-depth God's love and purpose in creating all that exists on planet earth and thus humanity is obliged to be a responsible carer of everything in this life. It is their obligation, as part of the body of Christ, to be responsible stewards for the well-being of society and nature.⁴⁸

There is an awareness of the role played by Christian missionaries, from the earliest years, in the understanding of and dealing with health issues. However, their approach to health (*uzima*) was seen as being directed towards certain limited medical issues such as hygiene, the treatment of particular diseases by stressing their cure rather than considering the total well-being of every human individual (Wilson, 1975). Applying this understanding of health, the first missionaries to the Midzi-Chenda country (*t'si*) went about establishing health centres such as St. Lukes Kaloleni, where they also trained nurses. Kinango hospital was built by the Roman Catholics and Ngao hospital by the Methodists.

⁴⁸ This understanding and information was received during two church meetings attended. One at the Methodist Church in Kenya Pwani Synod conference 2006 and another at the Anglican Church of Kenya Mombasa Diocese. 2007. Both Meetings had special (Health and Wholeness) committees discussing the issues of health within the region.

This specialist approach to community health was inherited by some after independence. Now, as the Christian society enters the mainstream which understands health in a 'wholeness' context, it has accepted that their former understanding and approach did not meet the whole need of community health (Roy, 1978; Grenberg, 1991). Recently, the church has reacted with a new understanding of health (*uzima*). It is now understood and taught that poverty, lack of sufficient food and water, poor infrastructure, lack of security and protection for both individuals and their property are important; as also are essential needs such as love, acceptance, and respect. All these are important for community health.

In this regard, it is perceived that any health crises hinder progress and salvation, opposing God's plans for his people (cf. John 10: 1-10). One view sees much to be the result of human evil, and believes God is to be seen as punishing wicked individuals, or even communities. On the other hand, community health crises are viewed by many as brought about by people being unwilling to respond to God and by a refusal to believe in his only son, the Lord Jesus of Nazareth. By believing in Jesus Christ of Nazareth, one is accepted into God's kingdom to become part of that family: those who do not belong to God through faith in Jesus Christ are believed to belong to the devil. It is the case that health depends on a sound relationship between people and God, as well as with one another. The understanding is that outside Christianity there is neither security, nor salvation; also, that God's work of protection and good health is directed more towards the Christian believers than to the non-Christians (Hick, Ariaraja, Samartha). 'All things work well for those who believe and there is no condemnation for those who believe in Christ.'

In relating to one another, they maintain the value of the scriptural charge that everyone has to love their neighbours, as they love themselves. However, in most cases this applies only between Christians, rather than with those who belong to AIR.

This research has revealed that recent education and elucidation of health issues emphasising 'wholeness' has brought a new awareness to Christian communities; particularly to the Roman Catholic Church, the Anglican Church and the Methodist Church in Kenya. They have begun to make strenuous efforts towards devising and running comprehensive health programs that from time to time are supported by donations from their mother churches abroad.

According to information from a former health co-ordinator of the Methodist Church, a 'Health and Wholeness' program was taking place in the former Pwani Synod; activities were organised to bring access and awareness to people working at ground level in churches within the province, relating to hygiene, HIV/AIDS, prevention of diseases, food-security and development.

This program reached church members rather than the entire community, and the regular (annual) reports showed that the co-ordinator was only answerable for health activities that were conducted in church circles. Community members who were non-Christians were unaware of the initiative and seemed not to have been involved in any of the decision-making. It appears that they were considered as people concerned only with old traditions and beliefs. It was thought that they had to learn from and copy ideas and activities of the 'people of light'. This seems to have been a form of recruiting program aiming to wooing non-Christians into Christianity. The program in the Pwani Synod

ended in 2002 due to a lack of resources when donor funds became exhausted. Up until now there are no significant church-established, locally-based programs that pursue the health and wholeness initiative, apart from a health centre on the south coast, 'Mamba dispensary', built by young people from America.

The Anglican Church of Kenya, in 1983, began an analogous program within the Church: the Pwani Christian Community Services (PCCS) were unable to continue due to financial constraints. Later in 2004, stations were established in Ganze and Bamba with a main office in Mombasa. Under this program, church leaders claimed to have obtained evidence that the Midzi-Chenda community were living in increased poverty and experiencing extremely poor health. They decided to revive the body (PCCS), which is now officially registered by the Kenya register of companies, although remaining under the auspices of the Church. The aim was to reach the community's social, economic, spiritual and political needs through an holistic approach. They claimed that the interpretive language of 'the good news' and 'mission' was for this community to have access to clean and safe water, sufficient food, proper medical services for the people and also care for livestock and crops. Additionally, there were to be proper educational facilities for young adults and older people, with the availability of necessities that since independence had never been satisfied.

The objectives and underlying principles of this religious program, originally planned in order to serve the community, seemed impressive. Nevertheless, a major weakness was that its target was mainly intended to involve Christian Midzi-Chenda in decision-making. Thus, this was a project whose main stakeholders were Christians. Non-Christians were left feeling that they were there to be *seen but not heard*. It appeared that

a group of Christians representing (PCCS) had done research and come up with the proposal of a five-year-long plan of achievement. The project involved the Christian community in attempting new techniques of agriculture, harvesting water for domestic and small-scale irrigation, sanitation systems such as modern pit latrines, as well as lobbying and advocacy on a wider front. The aim of PCCS is to reach other parts of the Coast districts, but this is inwardly focused on bringing people closer to their own religion and if possible to convert others.

The Roman Catholic Church also showed concern for Midzi-Chenda community health. They have medical clinics in rural areas and also some hospitals with the aim of preventing diseases, providing healthcare, and education. The implementation of some of these roles they have now handed over to the government, but they remain as sponsors. They have also been active in civic education, peace and justice education; additionally they have been encouraging people to form community-based organisations so that they can handle their critical issues with a common voice. The opinion of the Roman Catholic Church, relating to indigenous believers, was formerly similar to that of the Methodist and Anglican Churches: that the Midzi-Chenda are an ‘unyielding’ people refusing any change that is against their old beliefs; that their hesitation in responding to many social matters is due to the same ‘stubbornness’. However, the Catholic Church has been somewhat more positive towards the people practising their *Chik’wehu* than the Anglicans and Methodists have been. Holding on to their indigenous customs has been part of the community’s distinctiveness. It means that Christians from the Catholic Church are to some extent freer to practise their own traditions, as well as those of the Church.

The National Council of Churches of Kenya, Coast branch, is a body of Protestant churches that have agreed to unite. It has an ecumenical section that from time to time discusses and reports on progress of community well-being. Being in a position of frequent contact for talks with fellow churches, NCCCK (Coast region) spearheaded the move to bring together other religious leaders of the Coast to address various issues; chiefly the necessity to end conflicts within the region. Eventually, an Inter-Faith Clerics Coast Peace Initiative was formed in 2001 during heightened clashes between two communities, the Orma and the Pokomo, in the Tana River district.

In former years (1995 and 1998) clashes between the Midzi-Chenda and others in up-country Kenya became an ongoing concern, and in 2007 they were about to erupt into major violence due to land settlement disputes. The reason for this was that subsequent to independence a majority of the Midzi-Chenda have lived as squatters on their own ancestral land. Secondly, it appeared that people at the Coast were aware of employment discrimination by hotel managers, Kenya Ports Authority, and by other businesses and farms. It was asserted that some Midzi-Chenda did not meet the criteria necessary for available jobs. Due to pressure, an inter-religious body of Muslim clerics, Christians, Hindus and Jews, based in Mombasa, was formed. The pressure was due to some Midzi-Chenda youth protests.

When the religious leaders became alarmed by the pressures that were then causing the community to react violently, they determined to resist the tide of events by calling in youth groups, women's groups and the men, for the purpose of emphasising the dire results that would follow such violent actions. The inter-faith group strategically looked into the issue of land ownership, the revival of the agricultural industry, and the education

of young people which was a major demand and cry of the community. Later this list of demands was presented to the government representatives. It is a body that looked deeply into the problems affecting the well-being of society. By extending its roots to the ordinary people, the body established branches all over the Coast region. This research established that a weakness existed. To be identified with this program, people had to be Muslims, Christians, Hindus or Jews. The indigenous religious adherents were again disregarded, not only by the inter-faith group round table, but were also left in the background when plans and processes were discussed.

4.2.5: Young People's Views

The young people whose views are represented were of both primary and secondary school level, as well as being school 'dropouts'. From the views they expressed, it was clear they were aware of the varied meanings of health. Apart from the views narrated by the elders, health was understood as having good education, a job or business enabling the earning of money, sufficient food, living in peace with each other, and having access to health services, either indigenous or modern.

Additionally, they were conscious of the acute problems caused by diseases such as tuberculosis, malaria, typhoid and HIV/AIDS, all of which had become resistant to modern medicine. They were also aware that drug abuse, prostitution (Mombasa being an international port and tourist centre) and early parenthood contributed to health problems.

There was further emphasis of the need for justice. One complaint was that those having informal 'jobs' such as 'touting' (selling) on the streets of Mombasa, faced police harassment, with arrest if they were unable to pay an 'enticement'. The city council police

also continually obstructed those who were earning incomes on the streets from cooking. The young were emphatic in claiming that such petty corruption throughout the region worsened the situation of low-income earners. Unity was essential, they said, in the face of these obstacles and many other problems. This understanding of the need for a unified approach to all problems, since they all had a direct effect on health, came not only from their parents, school and both indigenous and Christian religious education classes, but also from their personal life experience of the gap between rich and poor, the educated and less educated.

The government was accused of having failed to adequately tackle these problems following independence. It was frequently asked why religious leaders remained disunited concerning the need to put pressure on the government. In their view, each religion had its own mission and policy for protecting humanity and nature. The difference lay in the style of approach and both religions were viewed by the youth as being essential, dynamic forces in the community. It was understood and accepted that the religions should lead people into handling health matters in a spiritual way which could give hope to a community, even when hope had almost been lost. The opinion of the young was that irrespective of their origin, religions need to serve the community and people should agree to share religious experiences, bringing forward ideas for community health development.

They claimed that the dichotomy between the Christian and indigenous religions, arose from the fact that Christianity had an ongoing interest in converting others. It was not common sense for religions to continue demeaning each other through discourse, songs and competition for adherents. Similar to the views of Shenk (1997), the young people

did not see the logic of contending that one religion was better than the other and quoted this proverb: 'something not authentic will advertise itself, but something good will be found in the market' (*Kibaya cha Jitembeza, Kizuri chajiuza*). Dialogue between religions was a way of solving existing and potential problems which the young generation would have to face.

4.2.6: Views from the Sick and their Carers

The sick and those who cared for them, from both religions, considered the problem of health from a religious point of view, rather than from a scientific one. Both blamed evil, whether from Satan, witchcraft, or as a result of a broken relationship (sin) with God and ancestors. Others held the notion that being sick or having a permanent ailment such as leprosy and polio was planned by God. Therefore cure was unlikely. Ill health in the community was regarded as an enemy retarding development and human progress. Their views revealed that elders and religious specialists sought ways to ensure that the evil powers attacking humanity were exorcised from both individuals and the entire community.

Sick people and their carers explained that rituals neutralising evil powers, or restoring good relations between God and his creation, were conducted by their religious specialists who could demand tokens such as animals, birds or even clothes (*viryangona*) for the rituals. Sometimes money was necessary. Christians also have rituals such as renewal of covenants and special prayers for the sick, especially for those being nursed at home or in hospitals. The prayers were normally conducted by clergy or recognised laity. Christian chaplains were evident in many hospitals, but indigenous religious specialists were not

available inside hospitals; they were only allowed to perform their prayers outside the hospital if patients needed them, or secretly on their behalf.

Christians who were sick, and those who cared for them, did not favour the view of relating with indigenous religious followers for the benefit of the community. They, like other Christians, asserted that Christianity should not tolerate the ideas of other faiths. However, there was evidence revealing that some Christians, in times of illness when Christian prayers seemed to have failed (*Jeso rishindwa*), had accepted traditional treatment (*kuuyira ga Chik'wehu*).

The next section explains why the Midzi-Chenda community have had a culture of unity respecting humanity and nature. It then explains a history which brought about a splitting of the community.

4.3: Udugu/Ubuntu: A Culture for Community Dialogue

In analysing the data, an important world-view is established of the Midzi-Chenda portraying a unique character in their day-to-day life. Fundamentally, what prompts dialogue in the Midzi-Chenda community is their practice of communitarian culture; living as a community (*udugu*), managing their issues of life and nature religiously through community dialogue (*kudzigidzwa/kuryana vitswa*). This is an established tradition, within the indigenous Midzi-Chenda religious culture.

Thanzauva, in his study, explains that 'communitarianism is a concept and life principal of tribal community in which a homogenous people live together sharing their joys and sorrows in mutual love and care' (2004: 136). Of utmost importance in the communitarian cultural life of the Midzi-Chenda has been the emphasis on valuing life and 'needing'

each other. This sense of belonging (*udugu na umwenga*) allows them to have common things in life (Day, 2006). In this way they are able to address life issues in unity, so that it is possible to order the well-being of society in a 'divine way'. 'In African religions the place of the community is of central importance, and the religious community is identified with the civil community' (Parratt, 1995: 92).

Dube (2006), Mbiti (1969), Ajayi (2000), Kwesi (1984) and Asare (1984), though not writing in the Midzi-Chenda context, clarify that one of the most vital features of the African heritage is the sense of community. It is generalised that in African culture, such as that of the Midzi-Chenda, members of the social group live and act in such a way as to promote their society's well-being. Their network of relationships is remarkably extended and has a long-term, profound impact on the people. Dube (2006) describes this as the 'community-centred approach'. The Midzi-Chenda understanding of community makes no separation of things. There is no dichotomy between one's own and others' interests; the individual does not and cannot exist alone, but only corporately (*chala chimwenda kachivunza tsaha*):

We cannot live without one another, our God, our ancestors and nature. A person is who s/he is because of other persons (*mudamu be ni anzie*). Our *Chik'wehu* engages us in maintaining this unity which promotes us to love each other. Anything can happen in life; it is wrong for a member to become disassociated from the community for s/he will be left alone when facing critical problems. For example, when one does not attend funerals (*kalaa mazikoni*) within the locality, s/he will be isolated when personally encountering a similar situation, and will have to personally carry out all necessities 'from grave digging to burial' (an elder from Dumbule village, Jan 2006).

According to this research, and also the study of Parkin (1991), the Midzi-Chenda understanding of communitarian life involves healing the community, by corporately and 'divinely' fighting the many problems that they have to face. Writing in a community development context, Sally Paulin explains that most indigenous communities tend to

resolutely retain their culture and claim a strong voice in matters which concern them. 'They focus upon the different ways in which people come together in the community to achieve sustainability outcomes, encompassing environmental, social, cultural and economic goals' (2006: 1). Similarly, the indigenous religious norms of the Midzi-Chenda, such as 'living with each other gently, in harmony with nature and the spiritual world' promotes community health and wholeness.

An expression of this is revealed through the many instances of their participation in communal activities (*mwera*); ploughing, or hoeing and harvesting. For these activities to be successfully carried out, community members must come together and form working parties (men, women and youth) in order to assist those who have no means of support. Mugambi (1995), writing in general terms of the Kenyan community, reveals that being a true African human (in Midzi-Chenda community) is affirmed by cooperating, and avoiding living in isolation (*mutu ni watu*)

Viewing the manner in which the Midzi-Chenda people live as 'portraying a dialogical community', they clearly do not restrict individual interests, but emphasise the interests and involvement of their community centred society. The evidence is that they cannot 'live without the neighbour'. This is so because they claim that they all belong to the one creator (*hosini huamulungu*). The concept of one creator will be revisited in the theological reflection, in Chapter Six. Mutual engagement, support, sharing and cooperation, practised by the Midzi-Chenda, is the essence of a community, for it enables members to be effective in whatever they set out to do, and to then do it better than they ever could as separate individuals (Audrey, Urry, 1980).

Samartha, Granberg and Ariarajah, in their contributions concerning the religious task of seeking for a dialogical community that serves the people, affirm that it is crucial to the way the Midzi-Chenda live. The model of communitarian cultural life lived by the Midzi-Chenda can be compared with Samartha's idea of encouraging religions to seek for a dialogical community. Samartha's focus is the need for religious communities to work corporately in order to handle society's problems.

Latterly, Samartha's idea was emphasised by Gordon Brown (UK Prime Minister), during the United Nations Conference, Boston U.S.A. (BBC 24 News at 18.00 hrs, April 18th 2008) with his call for a global community to handle global problems. In his UN speech, Brown did not mention religion but his perception is that of one global community. Thus two leaders of public opinion (Sarmatha and Brown), perceive unique and critical global issues which fundamentally affect nature and human health (of those without dignity, at the grassroots level); poverty, global warming, terrorism, political violence and entrenched diseases such as malaria, HIV/AIDS and, increasingly, cancer. It is now seen that these contentious issues, similar to those faced by the Midzi-Chenda community, need a united intervention, ultimately addressed to the real situation where ordinary people have to face severe consequences.

4.3.1: Community Dialogue as a Divine Service (Ministry)

It was discovered that the term *Midzi-Chenda* has a far richer and deeper meaning for the community than the word ordinarily signifies. When a Midzi-Chenda person dies, for example, the contribution towards assisting the family with expenses for transport and funeral arrangements is also termed *Midzi-Chenda*. People who have heard news of the death will come from far and near to pay their last respects to their member and dialogue

may be held to learn the cause/circumstances of the death (*kutsakula chifo*). It may also be decided who will be held responsible for the care of the family if the one who died was their family financial provider.

This approach to solving life crises ensures that community members always ask initially whether the elders have had dialogue before proceeding to any action (*vidze gano gasagarirwa niavyere?*). It means that dialogue is the core element of the community's life activities; it motivates, empowers and builds (unites) the people for the development of community well-being. Without dialogue members will be reluctant to participate in the relevant community activities. Research has observed that community dialogue is also greatly valued at other times, even when things are normal. Elders meet to discuss how best to keep reminding the community to adhere to its customary laws, and sometimes to hold thanksgiving rituals for what their *Mulungu* and lesser deities have done for them.

This answers some of the questions raised in the literature review, where many researchers failed to establish whether African indigenous practitioners are guided by their religion to hold dialogue for life and action (cf. conclusion of Chapter Two). It is contended that AIR in the Midzi-Chenda context already embodies a dialogical approach and theology which adequately serves in the capacity of the community's holistic healing, relating to their social, political, economic and spiritual conflicts.

In politics, for example, interested candidates will have to petition their interests through the *makaya* councils (*ngambi*). This is one of the reasons Parkin estimated the *makaya* to be contemporary centers for political interests and activities. Old Midzi-Chenda politicians such as the late Ronald Ngala, the late Karisa Maitha, and Robert Matano, and

also younger politicians such as Chirahu Ali Mwakwere and Morris Dzoro have all had to receive blessings from the *makaya* elders to achieve a healthy political life for the community (cf. Appendix I; 1m). It is dialogue that renders services of transformation and reconstructions of communities, leading towards a better life. For Ngala, Zeleza writes:

The most famous Mijikenda politician in the 1950's was Ronald Ngala. Trained in mission schools, he became a teacher. Although he was a Christian and wanted to modernize his society, he was interested in Mijikenda tradition. Before a major campaign Ngala always went to the kaya to be blessed by the elders. (1995: 44)

Personal experience as an AIR insider, previous to becoming a Christian, and personal research conducted, have formed the argument that many theologians (including African Christians), unless they are insiders of the system, are usually unable to understand these mysterious issues.

This indicates how greatly dialogue is valued by the indigenous people of rural Africa. It is an idea which has been discussed by Amoah and Ariarajah who regard community dialogue as being a ministry. The advantage of Samartha's ideas of seeking for a dialogical community, and those of Granberg's for forming healing communities, coincide with that of the Midzi-Chenda communitarian life and participation in community dialogue to serve (heal) for maintaining community well-being.

4.3.2: A Healing Community

Midzi-Chenda communitarian life (*udugu na umwenga*) is evaluated as going beyond that of a dialogical community. It transcends to become a 'healing' community, with a highly cherished ultimate value and standard. What Granberg has suggested in her work, about the formation of a healing community being influenced by the CMC, is already being practised by the Midzi-Chenda, whose issues of healthy living are woven together; one

aspect of health cannot stand without the other. When one aspect is missing, life no longer holds together. Amba contends that 'Africans operate with an integrated world view that assigns a major place to religious factors and beliefs' (1992: 9).

From the literature review, Kubi's study has shown that a healing community in the African context is that which has sound relationships, and an honouring of all creation (nature). These are the major ingredients of healthy living among the Midzi-Chenda, illustrating that they and other African peoples are life affirming, considering wholeness as a 'God-life'. This holistic living has been affirmed by other African theologians such as Dzobo (1983). For them, 'God-life' is full life lived in an essentially reciprocal relationship. The Midzi-Chenda claim:

Because we live a communitarian life, we are guided by our religion to live 'wholeness' of life. For example, we have to accept people who are raised by *Mulungu* in order to heal the community, nature, animals and humanity. During the time of Kajiwe wa Tsuma (Midzi-Chenda saviour) people (Christians and AIR adherents) responded to his call and had to travel to Rabai and take the water of life which Christianity did not afford to give. We took that divine water which was meant for health and wholeness to the society. Kajiwe was our saviour – from witchcraft, illnesses and forces that were believed to perpetrate poverty. For to us health is unbroken. (elder from Bengo Village Rabai, Jan. 2006)

Culture and religion, which are inseparable in Africa, can be seen practised alongside each other. The question of whether African Indigenous Religion is a religion of the past or present is answered. It was noted that among the Midzi-Chenda, AIR is still taken seriously and is always seen as influencing the whole of life. It becomes apparent that health and wholeness are explained as a religiously dynamic issue. That means life is a whole and if religion works, then it must be seen working in life (Amba, 1983). Lyon writes:

Health is wholeness. It is related to every part of man and to all his activities, and human relationships. Health in its ultimate sense is the meaning of life. It affects the

whole community of man. Until every man is whole, no one man can be whole. The health of society depends on the health of every individual. (1966: 24)

Granberg, in her study, contends that ‘while communities may have different visions and ways of working together to accomplish their mission, ultimately they all exist for the healing of the nation’ (1991: 16). It is evident that the Midzi-Chenda communitarian life holds everyone together. From time to time efforts are made by elders and religious leaders to accord every individual the attention of the whole community. This is particularly so during those periods when they face life disasters. In the process, individuals not only have the sense of belonging, but have the obligation to contribute to overall well-being. That means everybody has a role and a stake in solidarity with the community. Dzobo, writing in general terms of Africans, explains:

The divine life becomes full as God shares it with us and our lives become full as we in turn share the life that God has shared with us with others and with the whole world. The full life then is realised in relationship, in community, in living together as a human family in which we share our resources with our sisters and brothers. (1983: 127)

In support of Granberg’s ideas, Emmanuel Lartey (1994) contends that the true test of any healing community is its capacity to handle pain, suffering and loss. Communal participation in the *Makaya*, *Kayamba*, *hanga ivu*, *sadaka*, *vifudu* and *Ngoma* (Midzi-Chenda religious ceremonies and rituals) for exorcising evil spirits and healing, as described by Parkin, explains how Midzi-Chenda handle pain, suffering and loss in togetherness. Their tradition is that whatever happens to the individual is believed to happen also to the whole group and whatever happens to the whole group also happens to the individual.

In view of this, Luke Pato (2003) explains that being an African means becoming engaged in the suffering that others suffer, rather than ignoring or escaping from it. There

is always an effort made by the Midzi-Chenda to bring people together in a sharing and caring way and to foster the growth of families within which there must always be harmony. The sacred shrines, such as the *makaya* for example, are recognised as places where the distressed, the ill, the bewitched, the troubled and the bereaved converge for healing (Lartey, 1994). This concept equally coincides with those recommendations laid down by CMC:

As one body with different parts, we cannot have true community unless each of us shares in its life, placing our talents at the service of others. When one suffers, all suffer, when one receives honour all rejoice together. When part of the community is in pain, the whole body groans. When one part is healed, the whole body is renewed. (CMC report 1990; cited in Granberg, 1991: 10)

Evidence shows that, sound relationships (peace) amongst themselves, with neighbours (of different colour and religion) and with their deities are a key to total life. All activities enabling liberation from any kind of oppression (injustice) bring security from harmful circumstances affecting their own health and that of the natural life around them: encouraging spiritual life is part of their healing. The Midzi-Chenda community's vision is that when life is intimately tied up with that of others, even after death, it lives on in those others (the living and the dead are one in struggles of community well-being), just as it continues to live the life of others (Pato, 2003). This basically makes their communalism not only dependant on the living but also on the departed and the unborn.

Sofoluwe explains that in the African perspective:

Community health is that branch of a health service which aims at achieving the highest levels of physical, mental, social, moral, and spiritual health for all citizens on a community basis. It seeks to do this by first identifying the root cause of all prevalent diseases and health problems, and then dealing with them through a judicious utilisation of governmental, private, and especially community resources. (Sofoluwe, 1985: 3)

4.3.3: The Impact of Missionary Christianity on Communitarian Life

Chapter One has already provided a narrative of how Christianity was introduced in Coastal Kenya, especially during the period from 1844 onwards. I am not repeating the information already provided. Here I only seek to establish the effects of Christianity on the Midzi-Chenda community life.

When intensive mission work started in the Midzi-Chenda territory, priority as already noted in Chapter One, attention was given to freed slaves, who were then camped at Freretown, Ribe, Rabai, Jomvu and Ganjoni (Mazeras). It is recognised that these are among the Midzi-Chenda villages where life is still lived intimately and indigenously. Being a culture of welcoming, hospitable people, the Midzi-Chenda placed no obstacles in the way of accommodating the *ahendakudza*, together with the religion that they were associated with. Primary data of this research supports secondary information obtained which is that the Midzi-Chenda thought the *ahendakudza* were only temporarily staying as friends (*ayawehu/asena*) and for reasons of economics were destined to go later to their own homelands. Zeleza explains that the Midzi-Chenda were wrong in these assertions, because this was the start of what turned out to be a permanent stay.

The initial encounter of the Midzi-Chenda community with Christianity went alongside colonization, *azungu amisheni na amumiani osi niamwenga*. Comparably, whilst missionaries were acquiring land for mission stations where they could separate and settle Christians apart from indigenous adherents, colonial settlers were busily campaigning to acquire the best or most fertile lands, which soon fell into their sole ownership. The colonisers were also in the process of changing the indigenous leadership systems. Anderson writes:

The missionary gathered a group of people around him and opened the Bible. 'Seek ye first the kingdom of heaven,' he pleaded with his African listeners. He then asked them to pray, telling them to bow down their heads and shut their eyes. The Africans dutifully followed the instructions and the missionary earnestly prayed that the things of this earth would not prevent any one of them from reaching the joys of heaven. When the prayer was over, the Africans opened their eyes and they were alarmed to see that their land had been stolen. 'Never mind', said the missionary, 'the earthly things are not really important' and he led them in singing, 'this world is not my home.' (Anderson, 1977: 104)

This inter-related process was observed with much suspicion; it was seen as direct interference in the interconnected Midzi-Chenda communitarian life. Thus, the codes of socio-political stability, economic foundations and religious potentiality were being undermined and uprooted, replaced instead by 'the song of the foreigner and a dance to his tune'. This is imperialism as Dube contends:

Imperialism is an ideology of expansion that takes diverse forms and methods at different times, seeking to impose its languages, its trade, its religions, its democracy, its images, its economic systems and its political rule on foreign nations and lands. The victims of imperialism become the colonised institution, that is, those whose lands, minds, cultures, economies and political institutions have been taken possession of and re-arranged according to the interests and values of imperialising powers. Imperialism is, therefore, about controlling foreign geographical spaces and their inhabitants. (Dube, 2006; in Sugirtharajah, 2006: 297)

Furthermore, the leaders of the new religion (*dini ya amisheni*), the settlers and their colonial government, as recounted by Zeleza, Oliver and Kadodo, had a persistently negative attitude and approach to the holistic life of the Midzi-Chenda. All were unyielding in their resistance to any understanding of how Indigenous Religion worked for the community. The missionaries went ahead mobilising the freed slaves and a handful of the Midzi-Chenda in the mission camps, indoctrinating them to evangelise in the non-religious community and to save both their souls from 'eternal hell', and 'civilize' their culture, which was deemed primitive and lacking any hope for future development. Westermann argued:

However anxious a missionary may be to appreciate and retain indigenous social and moral values, in the case of religion he has to be ruthless; he has to admit and even to emphasise that the religion he teaches is opposed to the existing one and one has to cede to the other. (Westermann, 1937: 94)

Nevertheless, missionary attempts to Christianise the Midzi-Chenda did not bear much fruit, as shown by Baur, Nthamburi and Anderson and as explained in Chapter One. Reasons given include the fact that Islam was introduced earlier than Christianity and had already dominated the community; but findings have shown that Islam also was in many ways resisted, for it was seen as a means of social integration with the Waswahili and Arabs (Adzomba). Evidence of resistance to Christianity can be identified in a Midzi-Chenda song below which is in use but composed during those days.

Midzi-Chenda song against taking their children to the missionary schools

	English	Midzi-Chenda
Leader:	I tell you something,	<i>Ndavagomba utu x 2</i>
All:	Tell us, we are attentively Listening	<i>ghaya ugombe ndaulola x 2</i>
Leader:	The Rabai elders confess that	<i>atumia achiravai nikunena akamba</i>
All:	The missionaries don't tap palm wine, don't cultivate the land, they are people who walk with idle hands fooling people. Don't go my child, don't I warn you, you will be fooled too.	<i>amisheni kaajema kaarima ta nimikono tu lewelewe kutsembera ndokazi yao, tsende tsende manangu tsende undavuvizwa.⁴⁹</i>

As explained by Zeleza, Christianity and its mission schools became unpopular with the Midzi-Chenda. Due to the missionaries' connection with the colonial government, they were never fully trusted. It is clear that the Midzi-Chenda did not bar their children from

⁴⁹The Midzi-Chenda usually sing this song when they are drunk in their local drinking clubs (*mangw'eni*). The song is famous and taught in schools. This occurred because they were always denied an audience to vent their grievances. The only way they could do so was by expressing themselves in songs. When they were caught doing this and taken to court, they would say that they were unaware of what they were singing as they were drunk *Nakala nidzi reya*. Eventually, local palm wine (*uchi wa munazi*) was prohibited, not only in the days of colonialism but also, significantly, during the rule of President Daniel Toroitich Arap Moi.

gaining education and learning to read and write, but it was at those missionary schools where their children were supposed to learn Midzi-Chenda culture and religion (*chimila na chikwehu*) that these were treated as irrelevant. The Midzi-Chenda knew that when their children were given this understanding and taught in this way, it would stay in their minds and produce a negative attitude towards their own indigenous culture, which would be carried forward to other generations. They understood that 'pot moulders, mould their pots while the soil is still wet'. Mugambi writes:

Christianity has been introduced among African peoples as a religion which is 'higher' than, and 'superior' to the traditional African way of life. Most missionaries,... expected prospective African converts to abandon their traditional way of life and live as the missionaries taught them to do. The missionaries as a whole sincerely viewed evangelisation in terms of 'civilisation' and 'conversion'. Civilization involved wiping out the 'primitive culture' and replacing it with the 'civilised' one which the missionary had brought...to dress like the missionary, eat like the missionary, build like the missionary, marry like the missionary and even think like the missionary. (2002: 151-152).

The campaign was meant to interrupt and degrade Midzi-Chenda rituals and to break up the communitarian life, replacing it by that of individualism. This was one of the negative consequences of colonialism and Christianity. It negatively marked the beginning of community religious isolation by deliberately attempting the destruction of the solidarity of Midzi-Chenda life. This was accomplished in three notable ways as explained below.

4.3.4: Destabilising Local Leadership

The first of these ways was to destabilise the Midzi-Chenda structure of local leadership, based on local councils of elders (*angambi*) and by replacing these with headmen. This undermining of local leadership made the Midzi-Chenda even more suspicious of colonialism and of Christianity. The Agiriama, for example, were dissatisfied with the proposed leadership changes. However, these were soon to be forcefully imposed upon them and they then had to resist to the fullest. Zeleza writes:

But the local authorities still wanted control of Giriama and other Mijikenda territory. Many of the British-appointed headmen had grown old or disrespected. The Giriama wanted good leadership that would look out for their own interests.

In June 1913, the Provisional Commissioner addressed a public meeting. He urged the Giriama to pay taxes, obey colonial laws, and above all to send their young men to work for the Europeans. Many in the audience did not like what they heard. Among them was Mekatili, a bright woman with a gift for public speaking. (Zeleza, 1995: 37, 32)

The British-Giriama resistance of 25th October 1914, was described by Zeleza and noted in the KNA: Coast Section 5/336 report on the Giriama Rising. It provides evidence of a deep unwillingness to be governed by foreign powers. This was a movement through which the Midzi-Chenda determinedly, yet cautiously, intended to liberate themselves from those foreign powers which intimidated their religion, leadership and economy. The liberation movement was influenced by a woman, Mekatilili wa Menza who gained support from notable elders, such as Wanje wa Mwadori from the *makaya*. The consequence was that the revolt left the Midzi-Chenda worse off, with the subsequently necessity of living in greater poverty, for their land was no longer under their control; greatly affecting their community well-being.

This deterioration was mainly due to the compulsory policies laid down for them by the British. Taxes of reparation and forced labour at the behest of colonial landowners who

became employers were enforced on a people previously accustomed to the freedom of self-sufficient farming. Among other measures taken was the imposition of a Witchcraft Act which applied to AIR. Amazingly the Church, being white and European, was biased and never really 'saw' the harm or injustice carried out by their colleagues. The missionary colonial church raised no voice on behalf of justice and liberation for the oppressed, or in condemnation of the oppressor. Thus, to an extent, in later times, Christian missionaries came to be seen as an arm of the colonial administration (Kenyatta, 1932).

There were persistent famines due to heavy taxation (*nzala ya faini*) and to the limitations placed on cultivating their land for food crops. All this resulted in people having to sell their food products to pay taxes. Consequently the community reached a very low point. The British at last comprehended the dire consequences of their policies for the indigenous Midzi-Chenda way of life and, in particular, on their leadership. Zeleza explains: 'Thus both the British and the Giriama decided to revive the traditional Giriama government'. Nevertheless, the new 'arm' of government was looked upon with even more suspicion, as it tended to undermine the leadership of the indigenous council of elders which the community had always valued most.

4.3.5: Destabilising Local Economy

The second destabilising factor was the economy. Mutoro (1998), in his study, explains that the Midzi-Chenda had always been a people of enterprise, actively involved in trade and agricultural activities, selling their agricultural produce to the Swahili and even to neighbouring countries such as Zanzibar. Prior to the arrival of the Europeans, the Midzi-Chenda had already established trade with the Waswahili, the Arabs, and Asians, who had

good trading and farming skills. The arrival of the British and the formation of the British East African Company meant there was a need for cheap labour.

The former slaves were willing, but there were not enough of them. That left the Midzi-Chenda, the largest native population in the area. 'But with their own successful farming and trade economy, the Mijikenda were not interested in working for the Europeans' (Zezeza, 1995: 30). Since the Midzi-Chenda were settled in their commercial way of life and reluctant to work for the company, the British targeted the fertile lands of the Agiriama, as they were the largest group in the population. Zezeza shows how colonial troops marched through the Giriama territory, burning villages, looting livestock and firing on people, determined to crush all Giriama independence. This was solely in order to meet their objective of obtaining people for cheap or unpaid labour.

4.3.6: Destabilising of Indigenous Religion

The third element in destabilising communitarian life was based on religion. Early Christians were encouraged not to associate with non-Christians, as they were people 'not walking the same way'. The establishment of mission camps was meant to press home this doctrine; their fellow citizens were to be seen as a fallen and suffering people (Oliver, 1952). This manipulation created a social gap. According to research, the Midzi-Chenda considered Christian converts as social outcasts within the community and perpetrators of evil in society, especially as they did not respond to calls for dialogue by community indigenous religious leaders. Instead, persuaded by certain limited interpretations of Christian teaching, they considered themselves to be people of God whilst those outside the Christian community needed conversion in order to become an equal people in the Kingdom of God. A particular question from the indigenous people was:

The Ajeso (Christians) many times say they are people of God. They then say those who are not Christians belong to the devil (*Shetani*). Now if this is the case, did *Mulungu* create his own people and the *Shetani* his? For example, when it rains is there a distinction to say that the rain will fall on Christians and not on non-Christians? When death comes does it choose to take a Christian and leave a non-Christian? We all take the same breath of air, enjoy the same sunshine and rains, and we are all born to die. (Student from Mariakani High School, Feb. 2006)

The same dilemma was expressed by the first President of the Republic of Kenya, Jomo Kenyatta (1938). Writing in the context of the Agikuyu people, he described how communitarian life was affected by the missionary work. He explained that the Agikuyu had lived a well-knit communitarian life, but the colonial government and the use it made of religion resulted in many efforts to destroy the system. Kenyatta, in his book (*Facing Mount Kenya*), wrote that when the Agikuyu realised they were being manipulated (especially when they were not allowed to participate in their traditional cultural religious practices), they did more than compose songs like the Midzi-Chenda. Instead, they formed their own Church of the People of God (*Dini ya watu wa Mungu*), used the Christian Book of God (*ibuku ria Ngai*) and worshipped the God of the Mountain of Snow (*Kirinyaga*) (Kenyatta, 1938).

Ngugi wa Thiong'o, from the Agikuyu community in Kenya, described, in three novels (*The River Between* [1965], *Weep not Child* [1964] and *A Grain of Wheat* [1967]), that by arguing the Europeans divided the African community, by singling out individuals in order that they should become tools for colonization and civilization. Mugambi also writes:

This strategy of divide-and-rule was adopted by all the three categories of Europeans in Kenya. The missionaries established mission-stations in which they indoctrinated selected Africans to denounce their heritage, calling it primitive, heathen and Satanic. The mission-stations became centres where clerks and office messengers were trained to serve the colonial masters and the settlers. (Mugambi, 1992: 101)

It is my view, that in the name of religion the circumstances of community separation were started by early Christian missionaries and inherited by their followers. This explains why there arose an ingrained belief, or attitude, that there are those who 'belong to the light and those who belong to darkness', those who belong to the devil, and those who belong to God. Research has shown that missionary Christianity and associated negative attitudes towards the Midzi-Chenda community (Africa, in general terms) has continued until today as the primary cause of rejection of inter-religious cooperation in the Midzi-Chenda community. Primarily, I argue that community religious disintegration has resulted to the resistance of inter-religious community dialogue among the Midzi-Chenda. A similar resistance was experienced in the WCC Nairobi Chapter when a recent suggestion was put forward for Christianity to be in dialogue with 'people of living religions'. Similar attitudes were observed in Zambia. Opoku, in his study among the Akhan, observes:

The idea of exchange between two sides (Christianity and AIR) was absent, for the existence of the other side was not recognised. And since the propagators of Christianity believed that their faith owed nothing to the local religious heritage, no dialogue could begin, and therefore real interaction and growth were not possible. And even though communities developed in areas of missionary activity, the resultant communities were incomplete, partial, or artificial communities, for they did not share understanding and experience which constitute a significant method of building a true community. (1982: 153)

As has been expressed in the study of Ciekawy, the Midzi-Chenda expected a change in attitudes after independence, but those who took over from the missionaries continued with the same attitudes and policies of ignoring their *chimila na chik'wehu*. This to them was, and is, a deprivation of their human rights (*tsi haki*), especially in the light of continual health problems affecting the community (Ciekawy, 2000).

4.4: Conclusion

This chapter has examined the information obtained in Chapter Three by critically analysing its data; coming up with three major themes that engaged in attempting to answer the research question and those questions that rose from the literature review. The first theme attempted to answer the question of whether the Midzi-Chenda have a theology that cause them to conduct dialogue in cases where they face life crises such as health problems. Reflecting the study of Amoah (1998), referring to the Akan community in Ghana, the Midzi-Chenda also is a community of dialogue and cannot take a step of healing rituals without communal agreement.

The second theme informs a deeper understanding of the Midzi-Chenda world-view relating to health. An explanation as to how the indigenous religion approaches issues of community health has been offered. Evidence provided has shown how, despite the opposition of Christianity, the community has for centuries continued to practise its indigenous religion in issues of well-being and nature; a fact which also has been observed by PCID, IRRD and LWF. The chapter has also analysed the way in which Midzi-Chenda Christians perceive and approach community health issues. It is now known that the Christian community has come to terms with contemporary information related to health, and that it has begun to handle this issue with greater tolerance.

The third theme has focused on the type of life which has been observed to be holistic, religious and gives one a sense of belonging. It is within this system of life that they ably work hand in hand, being enabled through dialogue to deal with their life issues in unity (*undugu na umwenga*). This research has analysed that this system of life builds a dialogical community which becomes a tool in serving the community by actions of

healing. Thus, the ideas and theory of Samartha, Ariarajah and Granberg for seeking a healing and dialogical community are already embraced in the lifestyle of the Midzi-Chenda.

The question of whether Midzi-Chneda (*Chikw'ehu* and Christian believers) have had a tradition of dialoguing to handle life issues together has been answered. The understanding is that, despite the Midzi-Chenda distinctive home-grown religious life, a negative attitude of Christianity and *Chikw'ehu* towards each other is still strong, regardless of their long-standing joint existence in the region. It has been shown that members of both religions have been working for the community, but in different ways, causing Christianity an immense barrier to cooperation with people of the indigenous religion. The theory, established by this research, is that; both Christianity and AIR have a theology that can be employed for a joint dialogue, as a way of relating to each other, uniting in order to pilot community health development.

It is the purpose of this research to formulate ideas as to how the dilemma may be solved so that the community can reconstruct its cultural communitarian life and address issues of health in unity. Details as to how this might happen are to be discussed in the concluding chapter. Nevertheless, it is important to understand the root cause of religious exclusivism that gradually crept into Africa. The following chapter will involve a brief exploration of the history of Western Christian tradition (its biblical and theological basis) in the context of this subject.

CHAPTER FIVE

Tracking the Biblical and Ecclesial Tradition of Religious Exclusivism

Introduction

In order to explore further the history of Western Christian tradition on exclusiveness, it has been necessary to pursue information drawn from relevant literature other than that found in the literature review (Chapter Two). This is for the purpose of achieving a clearer view of the origin of the problem, enabling reflection on what might prove to be the best way forward. A question from history is: 'How did Christianity's exclusivist attitude towards other religions develop and become so entrenched that it now seems almost impossible to reverse?' This chapter, in trying to unearth the source of the problem, is arranged in two categories.

Category one begins by exploring the history of religious exclusivism; probing Judaism, its practices and experience. Secondly, the historical Jesus is surveyed, focusing on understanding his mission and movement, by analysing and critiquing how New Testament writers presented him. Consideration will also be given to the way in which the post-resurrection Jesus was presented by the Jerusalem, Judean and Antioch churches in Christianity's earliest days as argued by Gerd Theissen (1999) and A. C. Bouquet (1958).

This will be followed by identifying characteristics of exclusiveness in the early Church and also the way in which Jesus was introduced to Africa by missionaries bringing their own understanding of exclusivism. The reason for acknowledging Christianity's 'exclusive' history is to learn whether or not the attitude adopted towards the Midzi-

Chenda by missionaries and their later converts had characteristics similar to those of Jews and the early Church in relating to others. This can help in seeking for a dialogical theology

Category two critically considers the question of whether Christianity can find it possible to dialogue with AIR. This exploration is located within the Midzi-Chenda Christian context. By adopting an historical approach and learning from it, an inter-religious dialogical community might be restored: enabling the possibilities of addressing society's health and well-being, so heavily affected by various life-disasters.

5.1: Pre-Jewish Attitudes to Communities of Other Religions

An examination of the Jewish community's religious life and its attitude towards other community faiths is useful. Scholars derive several implications from biblical accounts as to how the Jewish religious community related to the religions of other religious communities. As observed by Coward (1985), Kirk (1984) and Ariarajah (1985), the Jewish Bible recounts critical episodes which influenced Israel's development into a segregated community, cut off from the vast array of different religious communities around them. Abraham's obedience to his sense of a call led him to leave his homeland, Mesopotamia, and its customary worship of many gods, to migrate to a foreign land where he might experience a new religious life (Coward, 1985). The move was not only Abraham's acceptance of God's call, but also an affirmation of what he believed to be God initiating a covenant with him. This later became the all-important relationship between Abraham's descendants (The Chosen People) and God.

Later, freedom from long bondage in Egypt marked a series of ritual covenants prepared

by Moses, aimed at reminding the Jewish community of the relationship and loyalty with their God. The Hebrew Bible views the Jews as ‘*a community of Yahweh’s choice*’. Their worship under designated priests was carried out in order to demonstrate their singular loyalty to *Yahweh* and to enhance their covenant relationship.

Numerous texts of the Hebrew Bible, from the giving of the Ten Commandments (Exodus 20: 1-17), reveal the nature of the Jewish God and of the instructions given to ‘God’s people’:

And God spoke these words: I am the Lord your God, who brought you out of Egypt, out of the land of slavery. You shall have no other gods before me. You shall not make for yourself an idol in the form of anything in heaven above or on the earth beneath or in the waters below. (Exodus 20: 1-2, NIV: 55)

The Jewish community was, therefore, restricted from participating in other religious practices and associations. It was claimed that their God was ‘a jealous God’, deeply affronted when God’s people associated with other religious communities. Moses had to intervene in the episode of the Golden Calf idol (cf. Exodus 32, NIV: 64-65). It reveals the severity of their agreements. Worshipping of an idol was a backward step: later, many in the community died from sword and plague (Exodus 32, NIV: 25-35). This was interpreted as the result of apostasy and failure to worship the only true God who must not be associated with other gods.

Joshua succeeded Moses and led the people into the Promised Land. Newly arrived, a renewal ritual of the covenant was conducted. There was expectation of experiencing religious, social, economic and political challenges from other communities: therefore, it was essential to ensure that their God protected them. When nearing his life Joshua reminded the people:

Be very strong; be careful to obey all that is written in the book of the Law of Moses, without turning aside to the right or to the left. Do not associate with these nations that remain among you; do not invoke the names of their gods or swear by them. You must not serve them or bow down to them. But you are to hold fast to the Lord your God, as you have until now. (NIV Joshua, 1984: 168)

As a result it became generally known and accepted that the Jewish community was austere, with no choice but to follow the traditions of their religion, especially the prohibition of collaboration or compromise with communities worshipping other gods, despite times when this appeared to be politically essential or convenient. So it is clearly seen that the earliest Jewish community was, from the time of the Exodus from slavery in Egypt, under a religious bondage imposed by covenants made with *Yahweh*. Consultation with *Yahweh* was essential whenever any change within their political, social and religious systems was to take place. An example of this was the occasion when the people wanted to emulate the Canaanites and have a political ruler, with a trained army able to challenge their enemies. The high priest Samuel was reluctant to permit this because it had always been maintained that God alone was their *King* and the one to fight their battles (cf. 1 Samuel 8: 5-10).

As seen, the culture of Judaism strongly rejected any relationship with foreigners, and this particularly applied to intermarriage. The adoration of foreign gods, even to eating their foods, was abhorrent and forbidden to the Israelites. External influences of any kind, whether political, economic, social or religious were unacceptable. Within any new conquered territory, the people of *Yahweh* believed that they must destroy local gods and dominate the defeated people by controlling all their systems and leading them to the worship of the true God of Israel: ‘Destroy all their figured stones, destroy all their

molten images and demolish all their places' (Numbers 33: 52, NIV: 122).⁵⁰

During the time of exile from their land, and the diverse challenges from external forces, prophets of the time claimed that defeat and captivity was not because invaders and their gods were more powerful but because Yahweh was using 'idol worshippers' to show that the Jews had gone astray. It was understood that God was punishing their disloyalty. To restore things they must humble themselves, repent of their sins and return again to 'their' God.

With this unyielding culture, the Jewish community obstinately held on to traditional beliefs and fiercely opposed those of others. Even in the long period of captivity by Babylonians and later domination by Romans, they remained resolute in resisting the imposition of foreign cultures. According to Coward (1985), this reveals that Judaism believed it had a mission to ensure that: 'every knee shall bend before *Yahweh*, every tongue shall swear by him' (cf. Isaiah 43: 23 NIV: 514).

Coward writes:

In the Babylonian exile, the Jews switched completely to monotheistic practices and developed the tradition of not mingling with other nations. Also during that time, the Jews developed the revolutionary religious institution of the Synagogue...the end of exile and return to Palestine marked the beginning of a more exclusive approach. This was Jews living with Gentiles. (Coward, 1985: 13)

As a means of upholding their cultural religion, the Jews established synagogues wherever they had communities. These were intended for the purpose of teaching their children the Torah and the correct way of worship. This was the case for Jews living within Graeco-Roman culture and under the threat of 'Hellenisation'. Their strong

⁵⁰ I note that there are instances when the Jews had to tolerate the influence of other religions, particularly during their historical periods of exile.

resistance eventually brought about the uprising (revolt) of the Maccabees. However, there were those who strayed and decided to adopt Hellenisation and the lifestyles of foreigners. Inevitably, Jewish exclusivism and the determined conviction of being God's chosen people sometimes led more powerful communities to treat the Jews with hostility, even to the extent of destroying their centre of worship (the temple); necessitating its rebuilding at different periods.

The next step is to be clearly aware of Jesus, with awareness of his Jewish cultural inheritance. It is essential to try to understand whether or not Jesus in any way sought to develop an exclusive religious movement and mission.

5.2: The Historical Jesus

Explanation and understanding of the purpose of Jesus' ministry will enable comparison with the Christian movement during its earliest times, as also with both later and contemporary periods when relating to other religious communities (Kasemann, 1969). To achieve insight into the historical Jesus' ministry, he has to be studied from the historical political-economic context of his native community (Horsley, 2003; Vermes, 2003).

History reveals that before and during the time in which Jesus lived, Roman rule had dominated Palestine. Galileans and Judeans had experienced much suffering from foreign rule (MacCulloch, 2009; Horsley, 2003). The two communities were oppressed economically by the compulsion to pay taxes not only to the Romans but also to the High Priests for the temple in Jerusalem. The Jews were manipulated by Roman rule and

religiously exploited by the Pharisees and Scribes representing the priests⁵¹ (Sugirtharajah, 2006). Together, they reduced the community to powerlessness (Selby, 1995).

Inevitably, there was frequent unrest as some felt compelled to resist Roman rule. Vermes (2000) and Horsley (2003) explain that prior to Jesus' innovative movement, the Galilean and Judean zealots had frequently protested against the harsh rule that threatened their religious culture.⁵² Horsley writes:

For generations both before and after the ministry of Jesus, the Galilean and Judean people mounted repeated revolts against the Romans and their client rulers, the Herodian kings and Jerusalem high priests. (Horsley, 2003: 35)

The result was excessive cruelty by the Romans as their captives were nailed to crosses along roadsides, a visible threat to all. The anguish of his society's cry deeply concerned Jesus (Selby, 1995; Stegemann, 1999). It was out of these conditions that he began his ministry; chiefly concerned for the health and well-being of the poor deprived communities with which he was familiar. Selby (1995) assumes that Jesus' work was intended as a rescue, or 'salvation', for the lives of those living in desperate circumstances. There is need to explore the way in which Jesus involved himself in this 'delicate' environment. Did Jesus effect his ministry in an exclusive form or did it embrace unity?

Firstly, Jesus was very aware of his sick community. He was himself a Galilean who had grown up experiencing the pressure of poverty and sickness. He began his ministry by

⁵¹ The New Testament Synoptic Gospels as explained by Vermes, indicate the different opponents of Jesus. Pharisees and Herodians are mentioned by Mark 3: 6, Pharisees are only mentioned by Matthew 12: 14; Pharisees and Scribes are mentioned by Luke 6: 7. In this research, I will dwell on the Lukan version of Pharisees and Scribes as many scholars have referred to them.

⁵² I am not going to give details of the many revolts, but history narrates that the Essenes and the Qumran communities revolted against the Roman rule. The Maccabean revolt, led by Judas, is an example.

healing the sick and exorcising their demons. The community responded to Jesus decisively, recognising him as a person who was bringing salvation, as he sought to bring his people hope and well-being. On a number of occasions, Jesus is reported to have healed the sick on the Sabbath day. Was he against the doctrine of his own religion? When challenged by teachers of the law he asked them: 'which is lawful on the Sabbath: to do good or to do evil, to save life or to destroy it?' (cf. Luke 6: 9; NIV 1993: 728). In ways similar to this, Jesus endeavoured to create for the community an awareness of how their religion, by its exclusiveness and rigidity, was creating suffering and a situation of violence, enslavement and the destruction of normal safety and home-life (Horsley, 2003).

In view of this, the second step taken by Jesus was to teach the common people, in the open air, new ways of understanding their religion, revealing new ways in which individuals should relate to each other. Horsley's study (2001), based on the Gospel according to St. Mark, shows that an important part of Jesus' ministry and movement was aimed at bringing renewal of community religious life and at making his listeners aware of how best they should live with the injustices of Roman political rule, which was founded on a desire for wealth and power. The Scribes and Pharisees had failed to teach as Jesus did. Jesus' passion for a free religious society made him act as a reformer of the Law, teaching by giving the Law a new interpretation; all done with the aim of showing how it could meet contemporary community needs. Jesus' way of life and teaching enabled the community to recognise that he was worth hearing and following. Nicodemus, a member of the Jewish Ruling Council, himself acknowledged Jesus as a teacher from God (cf. John 3: 1-3).

The third aspect of Jesus' ministry was his acceptance of and association with the deprived and outcasts. Jesus created an intimate relationship with his closest followers, in order for them to understand in depth the religious issues concerning the Law and the Kingdom of God. He showed the justice of the Kingdom of God by being in solidarity with those who were impoverished and marginalised, enduring experiences similar to those of today's Midzi-Chenda. Jesus' ministry was not only to heal the effects of Roman violence and economic exploitation, but to revitalize and rebuild the people's cultural religious spirit and communal vitality (Baus, 1980). Clearly, his message was to assist and encourage the people in their everyday needs and aspirations. Baus maintains:

Shocking for many was his message that publicans and sinners, the poor and infirm, whom God seemed so obviously to have punished, had the first right to expect welcome in the house of the father. (Baus, 1980: 71)

Secondary sources reveal evidence that Jesus' ministry and movement were not based on religious exclusivism but intended to help the well-being of a peasant community and enable the high-priestly rulers to understand that the most important of all things in life was humanity itself, and its universal longing for salvation (Bühlmann, 1982). To fulfil this longing meant accepting Jesus' envisioned change, which would instil hope into a hopeless society. He established a reformation that would democratically renew and mutually support social-economic relations in village communities constituting the basic pattern of people's lives (Sugirtharajah, 2006; Horsley, 2003). Those who followed him were reassured when he worked in village communities, and attended village assemblies, that his longing was to renew the peoples' faith that God's salvation was in place and that together they could rebuild their damaged society.

As a result, Jesus therefore emerged as a wise leader (sage) among the Galileans and Judeans, taking on himself a social role revealing a way of living and loving that could lead to health and well-being. Horsley affirms:

A leader is someone who decisively influences, persuades, inspires, organises followers in a seriously problematic historical situation in such a way that they gain new perspective and take decisive action. (Horsley, 2003: 58)

This is the significance of Jesus being portrayed as both a wise leader (sage) and a rescuer: his thoughts and actions were influential, persuasive and inspiring; they went beyond the literal interpretation of the Law. Sugirtharajah writes:

One of the fruits of the recent Jesus is the emergence of a sage and the increasing attention of his wisdom sayings...what emerges is the figure of a sage who uses material not only from a rural Palestine but also from the wider Hellenistic culture and who offers a critique of the oppressive values of those institutions and issues that matter most...family, honour, purity, marriage, and poverty. (2006: 264).

Fourthly, Jesus led a humble life despite being recognised as a wise leader. According to the arguments offered by Ariarajah, Vermes and Hick, he did not exalt himself nor did he regard himself as sharing powers with God. He did not seek reverence or adoration from his community; the issue that mattered to him was to show humanity the true image of a loving God, whom he addressed as a real 'father'. Vermes maintains that 'the loving and caring heavenly father is the model for Jesus' religious action' (ibid: 198). He always spoke of God's importance, not of his own. If this is the Jesus who was known in Galilee and Judea, a further question for this research is to determine what transpired, in the course of history, that caused Jesus' name to become so elevated, that it was claimed there could be 'no other name globally for human salvation'? Bühlmann (1982) and Vermes (1993) contend that the historical Jesus and his mission for reformation was from the time of Emperor Constantine onwards made un-Jewish by being uprooted, 'sanitised', Europeanised and patronised. How this was processed will be discussed in a following section.

Another question to be asked is, what approach did Jesus use to preach the unconditional love of God that embraces all nations, and how did the community respond? Being in the context of both Galilean and Judean communities, in a wider Hellenistic society, Jesus became aware that it was unrealistic to claim love for God who was unseen, and yet hate neighbours who were seen, merely because of religious differences. He emphasised love of neighbour and of stranger, regardless of their religion (Ariarajah, 1999). Jesus' belief was that God was known to all people, not only to Jews but also to Gentiles. A right religion was not limited to love for only those known, but also for those who were unknown: love for a community had to be holistic love embracing strangers, their culture and even their religion (as in the case of the Samaritans).

The notion of one single race being the chosen one of God was not enough for Jesus. His perception was that God was not only the father of Jewish people but the father of all humanity. Baus observes that 'the supreme Law of the religion he preached was the unconditional love of God and of a love that embraced men [sic] of all nations' (1980: 71). Jesus' aim became focused on making a transition from election to universalism: 'but I say to you, many will come from East and West and recline at table with Abraham, Isaac and Jacob in heaven, while the children of the Kingdom will be cast out' (cf. Matthew 8: 11ff; Luke 14: 23ff, Mark 12: 1-9). Jesus' proclamation in word and deed and his conviction that the Kingdom of God was at hand meant an enthused program of religious reformation that was to affect every one (Horsley, 2003). Arguably, he was in the process of forming a dialogical and healing community, one which would foster the health and well-being of every individual and group through inter-religious dialogue. In his work, Baus explains:

He (Jesus) proclaimed no kind of only individual piety or religion, but a message which binds together those who hear it and are filled by it as brothers in a religious family that prays together to the father for forgiveness of its sins. (Baus, 1980: 72-73)

Even though Jesus' ministry aimed to reform the religious life and well-being of the communities by teaching, healing and exorcising demons, his movement remained within the framework of Judaism (Theissen, 1999). It is evident that Jesus took his stand within the Law in order to re-interpret an approach to the God of all nations. He did not intend to represent an exodus from the Jewish religion but renewal and a revolutionary movement within it (Theissen, 1999: 34). His renewal was intended to reshape some prophetic traditions, fulfilling and transforming the Law so that it could be understood in the context of real life situations; associating with other religious people, in order to address humanity's problems in real unity.

With this perception, it can be understood that Jesus' endeavour was not to enhance religious exclusivism, but to reform Jewish religion by replacing its old restrictive practices by new understanding. It is necessary for Christian exclusiveness to be diagnosed from its church history in order to get a clear answer which hopefully will guide towards achieving a solution.

5.3: The New Testament, Early Church and Missionary Jesus

Although there are four New Testament Gospels in the Bible,⁵³ Hick and Samartha observe that the one according to St. John has texts revealing Jesus claiming special authority for himself and a certain unique relationship with God (cf. John 10: 38, 17: 22).

According to the Gospel to St. John, Jesus claimed to be the only way to God because he

⁵³ I note that there are other gospels outside the canon, such as the Gospels of Barnabas and Thomas, but like many other ancient religious documents these have never been accepted as dependable.

was himself 'the way, the truth and the life', 'the light of the world' superior to the Law, and that he and the Father were one so that anyone seeing him could see the Father.

Lucien Richard (1981) contends:

What emerges out of the New Testament are two different strands of thoughts that serve as groundings for claim about uniqueness and finality. The universalism of the New Testament has its source and foundation in the one person of Jesus Christ as God's very special agent and ultimate fulfilment of God's promises. The doctrine of incarnation is an attempt to express Jesus Christ's special agency... The other affirmation of the New Testament...is that in him, sacred history has already come to its end. Realised eschatology is one of the roots for the church's claims about Christ's uniqueness and finality. (1981: 6-7)

The writer of St. John's gospel presents a unique Jesus, different from the historical Jesus of the Synoptic Gospels, who associated with community members without ever exalting himself. The explanation given by Ariarajah and Hick is that the gospel writers were all struggling to explain Jesus, his mission and what these were to a multi-religious society existing in the Pax-Romana of the time. The apostles experienced pressure, in particular that imposed by contemporary Greek philosophers. Realising the challenge and having no documented history, they had to gather and write all they had learned about Jesus, from whatever sources had been available.

It is within the idea of incarnation that Jesus was not only viewed as a vessel where God dwelt in order to manifest his love to humanity, but that Jesus was God. This concept raises questions. Samartha, writing cautiously in the Indian context, questions the meaning of 'deity' and 'divine' suggesting that they are two different concepts. 'The Incarnation, I wish to suggest, is best understood not solely in terms of "deity," but in terms of "divinity." It is one thing to say that Jesus of Nazareth is divine and quite another thing to say Jesus of Nazareth is God' (1991: 118).

Early followers and supporters of Jesus, according to Vermes (2000) and Kirk (1984), were uniquely attached to Jewish traditions, such as observing the Sabbath, keeping dietary laws, circumcising baby boys and attending synagogues for continued teachings about Judaism. Basically, they followed the way of the historical Jesus himself; a devout religious Jew. In his study, Charlesworth (2008) argues that it would be unrealistic to maintain that the historical Jesus initiated the parting of ways between Law-centred Judaism and the newly-formed Christianity which deified him. Vermes has contributed by arguing that;

Though admittedly not *totally* unconnected, the religion of Jesus and Christianity are so basically different in form, purpose and orientation that it would be historically unsafe to derive the latter directly from the former and attribute the changes to a straight forward doctrinal evolution. It would seem no less unjustifiable to continue to represent Jesus as the establisher of the Christian church (or churches) (1993: 214)

It is evident that even though Jesus was neither a Christian nor the founder of Christianity, stories of his works and words continued to be told after his death and therefore Christianity is closely associated with him (Walls, 2002; 2008).⁵⁴ The early Christian movement was a mono-cultural revival which had earlier been started by Jews. Unlike Jesus' own movement the early Christian movement preached the renewal of Jewish faith by repentance and baptism through Jesus the Christ (Charlesworth, 2008).

Christianity, having grown from the Jewish community religion, was in its beginning strongly opposed by the Judean Jews who were exclusivists. It was seen as aspiring to be a sect diluting the original religion. After St. Stephen's martyrdom by the Jews in Jerusalem, who were opposed to the beliefs of Jesus' followers, some Jewish Christians

⁵⁴ This idea was from an inaugural lecture by Professor Andrew Walls as Professor of the History of Missions at Liverpool Hope University on 24th May 2008. The title was *African and Asian Dimensions of Christian History*.

became insecure and sought refuge in other parts of the Roman Empire. Antioch, a city in Syria, was one of the places of refuge.

In Antioch, followers of Jesus found many Gentiles who were attracted by the stories of Jesus and his teaching; a larger, more varied, community was created. This soon drew the attention of the followers in Jerusalem. Peter, Paul and Barnabas were sent to provide periods of in-depth teaching about Jesus (Sugirtharajah, 2006). Antioch, already an important multi-cultural city, became an important centre of Christianity to the Gentiles. During that early time, the figure and message of the historical Jesus which was presented remained unspoiled by additional alien structures built upon it. There was no necessity to suppress other cultures. 'Christians from the earliest times must have known best what it meant to be Christian but perhaps this was not exactly what Christianity later became' (Bühlmann, 1982: 54).

A characteristic of primitive Christianity was the uniqueness of its community life. Christians had fellowship in their shared worship, centred on the breaking of bread and the singing of psalms (cf. Acts 2: 42-47). They were united in their need of each other committing themselves to sharing their possessions, and agreeing to sell their properties and give alms to their fellowship (cf Acts 4: 32-37, 2: 42-47). Their charity involved looking after the welfare of others, not only in their own community but also in other communities, such as those of Judea.

There was no discrimination in primitive Christianity; both the non-baptized and those merely observing and listening were allowed to take part in the stories about Jesus' life and teaching. Everyone listened to all that was said about the ministry of Jesus and his

wisdom. Often they were gripped by such excitement that bystanders would say ‘truly God is among you’ (cf. 1 Corinthians 14: 25). At the heart of this early Christianity was the sole and simple purpose of telling the story of Jesus’ life and teaching. Rather than seeking to disrupt other people’s beliefs and cultures the aim was to reveal the joy and liberation experienced in living as Jesus’ disciples.

However, indicators of exclusivism began to appear within the world of the Apostles and disciples even in the early days, as Christianity moved away from the Jewish community to that of the Gentiles (cf. Acts 15: ff.; NIV: 780-781). Evidence of this is provided by the reaction of Antioch Christians who contested a proposal that seemed to exclude non-Jews. Jewish Christians in Jerusalem wanted to impose their own original Jewish cultural rules on Gentiles before permitting them to become fully Christian (Stegemann, 1999). There was intense debate between both Jewish and Gentile leaders until the Council of Jerusalem was convened. The problem was initially settled by an agreement to tolerate the Gentile tradition regarding circumcision in order that they might be absorbed into Christianity (cf. Acts 15: 1-19).

However, the Antioch Christians, unlike later missionaries in Africa, received Paul and Barnabas as teachers to the Gentiles, who defended, Christian liberty on their behalf. In other words, the early Church did not seek to persuade but to invite all to come and learn about the deeds and message of Jesus. Baago (1967) observes that ultimately Christianity shook off its Jewish heritage to present itself as a new religion that could be universally embraced without further restrictions. Thus it became a mixture of many traditions; Judaism, Greek Philosophy, mystery religions and Roman law. Andrew Walls (2008) explains that there was a paradigm shift from mono-cultural Christianity, to a bi-cultural

Christianity: later still to a multi-cultural Christianity as it became accepted and practised both inside and outside the Roman Empire.

At first Christianity was socially inclusive, holding that there was 'neither Jew nor Gentile, male nor female, slave nor master' in its fold. However, Christianity gradually lost its early simplicity and became secularised, whilst maintaining that it had the central and theologically exclusivist message of the new man in Jesus Christ (Baago, 1967). The vital change came during the reign of Emperor Constantine, who called the council of Nicea which made Christianity the official religion of Rome and imposed a common creed (mainly for political gain). The collaboration of Church and State refused to tolerate other religions found in the Roman Empire; even the Greek philosophical schools in Athens were closed down, and a notable pagan philosopher in Alexandria, Hypathia, was killed. People no longer enjoyed their earlier freedom of worship. The situation developed where secular rulers, in association with church leaders of the time, enforced the acceptance of one uniform doctrine.

Gradually, changes in terms of leadership and doctrine emerged in different parts of the ecclesiastical world; church laws were framed, communities were organised and re-organised, resulting in the emergence of new waves and types of Christianity. According to Samartha (1981) and Hick (1987), ecclesiastical doctrines eventually went hand in hand with human power. It meant that powerful Christian nations, or empires, could eventually dominate other nations, forcing them to surrender their earlier religions, cultures, economy and political powers. Hick writes:

For during the period when it was accepted as right that all Britons, Frenchmen, Germans, Dutchmen, Spaniards, Italians, and Portuguese should rule over whole black and brown populations, it was psychologically almost inevitable that they should see those whom they dominated as inferior and as in need of a higher

guardianship. This categorising of black and brown humanity as inferior included their culture and religions. (1987: 19)

This was the significant beginning of European (Western) Christianity's negative attitudes towards other religions. These attitudes were further enforced by the reformers of the 16th century, as also by missionaries following in the wake of later European expansion. Baago (1967) explains that this religious 'dividing wall' was manifested in Europe at a time when all the indigenous religions of Europe had been wiped out by Christian armies enforcing conversion to Christianity on those they defeated. It is noted that it was during this period of Christianity in Europe that 'crusades' were organised against Muslims. These were fuelled by the belief that Christianity was the only religion which humanity should practise.

Along Coastal Kenya during this period, as observed by Baur (1990), there was stiff rivalry between the extremist religions of Arab Muslims and Portuguese Christians. At that time, the choice for many people (on both sides) was to either convert or face the sword. Some of the Midzi-Chenda, fearing death and the threat of hell, were compelled to accept one or other of the religions. In theory this was how 'exclusivism' came to be established, a process indirectly related to the Hebrew religious attitude towards other religions

Of first importance for this study is the fact that primitive Christianity reflected in its characteristics of solidarity (community life), an essential concern for individual needs, whether these were spiritual, social or for health and well-being. Similar to this is the Midzi-Chenda communitarian life (see Chapter Four) which regards religion as a factor uniting the community by requiring that everyone should watch out for the well-being of others (Amoah, 1998; Dube, 2006). Also of importance was the way in which Jesus' story

was literally narrated (Samartha, 1981). The Jerusalem Council, according to this research, displays a good example; openly proclaiming that Gentiles were not to be yoked with Jewish culture in the name of Christianity. In contemporary Africa, where there is both religious and secular enlightenment, an exclusive religious attitude raises critical questions challenging African Christian theologians. They need to seek a suitable response, such as that of the Jerusalem Council, to the strongly-held belief in Christian 'uniqueness'; the finality of the lordship of Jesus Christ (truly man and truly God) and the important African titles given to Jesus all hinder mutual dialogue between Christianity and AIR.

The question is whether African Christians are willing to relinquish espousal to Christian 'uniqueness' and the finality of the 'lordship of Jesus Christ' in order to cooperate with indigenous religious adherents? (Shenk, 1997). How can this quandary of religious division among people of the same community, such as the Midzi-Chenda, be healed? This is a question that needs to be answered in the search towards a dialogical theology.

5.4: St. John's Gospel, and the Missionary's Legacy to African Christian Theologians

Secondary and primary information obtained from research provide evidence that early African Christians inherited the attitude of exclusivism from the first missionaries and it has since persisted. However, some who experienced the teaching and attitudes of missionaries as oppressive decided to rebel; they formed their own indigenous churches which were to some extent compromised by African indigenous traditions (Mwaura, 2008; Adogame, 2008). Simon Kimbangu of the Congo is an example. He attempted to bring African beliefs and customs into Christianity. The Roman Catholic missionaries

became unhappy because members deserted their congregation to seek for Kimbangu's healing. They persuaded the Belgian government to imprison him. Kimbangu served life imprisonment until his death. In Kenya, the Agikuyu started the *Dini ya Watu wa Mungu* (Kenyatta, 1931). However, although one is aware of them, it is not of interest for this study to scrutinise African Christians who rebelled and formed their own indigenous churches.

Of special interest for present purposes are the ideas and attitudes of African Christians who did not completely separate themselves from the ideas of missionaries. After their studies in Western Christian theology, and adventure into African theology, they tried to fit Jesus into indigenous African society by giving him important (unique) African titles. These were to make him better understood by African society. In this section of study there will be an analysis of only a few selected examples of titles (similar to those found in the Gospel according to St. John); these elevate Jesus and Christianity as unique experiences. It will be shown how they are related to the problem of employing dialogue between African Christianity and AIR.

The first unique title accorded Jesus was that he was the great ancestor per se of Africans. Mbiti (1969) has written significantly about the concept of ancestors in the African Indigenous Religion. His work has been advanced by other African Christian theologians such as Nyamiti (1984) and Bujo (1992), who have both written extensively on relating Jesus to African ancestors. They have optimistically argued that the roles African ancestors play in society are similar to the role of the risen Jesus.

The primary understanding of an ancestor, according to research undertaken from the work of African Indigenous religionists, is wider than anything that Jesus has been said to

represent. Ancestors (*koma/mikoma*), according to the Midzi-Chenda, are those people who lived a life of sanctity, respected their social relationships and were responsible in their family affairs: they never involved themselves in witchcraft (*utsai*), neither did they kill or misbehave sexually (Nyamiti, 1984). Another factor is that they should have been married people, ceaselessly teaching their families to maintain acceptable morals, values and standards in their society. During their lifetime, they gained respect from the community. They were entrusted with the responsibility of ensuring that community members lived in peace ‘mediating between conflicting families’ (*akanyi*) and of ensuring that their cultural laws, traditions and customs were keenly observed. When a crisis arose, they would call upon each other to discuss the issues and come up with suitable agreed solutions for solving problems.

From such social awareness, leadership and personal qualities, the ancestors continued to be recognised, even after departing from the seen world to the unseen one. Remarkably sanctity, responsibility and respect pass together through transition to a level where after death the soul *chivuri* is recognised by other ancestors, becoming able to join those close to *Mulungu*. For this reason, descendants who follow lineage are in a position to consult with ancestors during life’s crises. Ancestors are not gods, and Africans never regard them as such, but they are distinguished spirits close to *Mulungu*, as well as overseers of their community well-being. They can act as mediators between man and *Mulungu*, being given the responsibility of passing on grievances as well as thanks to the creator. There are no ancestors who have visibly ‘risen’ after death; in fact Africans would run away from them, thinking them to be in the category of evil spirits *mizimu*.

African Christian theologians such as Nyamiti (1984), and Bujo (1992) have tried to convince us that the figure of Jesus is to be likened to that of an African ancestor per se. However, this needs to be questioned by consideration of what the historical Jesus was like before he died (Vermes, 2003). The first fact that does not allow for the idea of Jesus being understood as an ancestor is the family issue. 'There is one rite of passage which is of basic importance in the African life cycle, for which there is no evidence at all in the life of Jesus, namely marriage' (Parratt, 1995: 83). However, marriage and children in African life are the key to gaining community respect. Jesus would certainly have been given automatic respect in Africa if he had married and left children behind after death.

The second fact is that Jesus never owned anything such as land, livestock, house or crop plantations; material and property which could be passed on as an inheritance at his death for family members to share communally.⁵⁵ This contributes to honour and respect, members enjoying a sense of joyful achievement that the departed had worked hard for the family. Those left behind are encouraged to imitate their forefathers and mothers. The two facts above indicate that Jesus lacked what could have made him easily recognisable to Africans as an ancestor. Jesus himself confessed that the 'Son of Man has no place on which to put down his head'. When Jesus died he left nothing which could be inherited and shared, apart from his garment.

The second title given to Jesus was that of an African mediator. When conflicts arise for African communities they do not wait for intellectuals to come and intervene (Amoah, 1998). They call for meetings where an elder will lead the talks until a reasonable solution is accepted. In the Gospels, Jesus is not known to have mediated directly for those

⁵⁵ During research this information was narrated to the researcher by five Midzi-Chenda elderly Indigenous men; two from Kinango District and three from Kilifi district.

experiencing misunderstandings. There is an example in the Gospel according to St. Luke, of a young man who needed Jesus' advice concerning the division of family property, but Jesus told him that he had not come to judge such matters (cf, Luke 12: 13-14). He became recognised as 'the Prince of Peace'. He earned this title by teaching his disciples and followers that in no situation should they attempt to exact revenge: 'you have learned from your forefathers that an eye for an eye is appropriate, but I say to you do not ... (return like for like)'. His 'missionaries' used the Scriptures, not to put emphasis on bringing communities together, but instead to perpetrate extended conflicts by dividing communities.

The question asked by those of the AIR is: how can Jesus be an ancestor able to mediate for conflicting communities, when he failed to bring mediation during the period when Africans were under pressure from missionaries?⁵⁶ They also ask how Jesus can mediate between communities and *Mulungu*, especially when it is confirmed that he (affirmed as divine) did not bring unity but division in families already established in a strong communitarian life. These questions arise from Jesus' own words (cf. Matthew 10: 34-39; Luke 12: 49-53).

Notably this encourages individualism which opposes African communitarian culture, exemplified by their philosophy 'I am because we are' (*ubuntu, udugu*). If an African ancestor had supported individualism during his lifetime, he would have been held to have perpetuated disunity and disloyalty in the community and would have lost respect. These facts do not qualify Jesus to be an ancestor and mediator in the African setting.

⁵⁶ In this statement, questions arise in the way the Church responded to the problems of colonialism in Kenya, especially along the coastal and central regions where education for African children was limited to class four, and the restriction of Africans to obey this policy from their masters. It also questions the response to Henry Venn regarding the appointing of Africans to lead and evangelise their own people.

A third title given to Jesus was that of an African chief. Ideally, the concept of indigenous political structure in Africa was that of the council of elders, who had their leader (chief) as head of the community (chiefdom). A chief was either appointed by the council, or possibly religiously emerged as having great wisdom from *Mulungu*, or he might even have inherited the post. A chief was a realist and wise elder (sage), a family man and often a grandfather (with experience in handling a family). Those who inherited leadership were thoroughly examined by elders in family issue responsibilities. A chief also possessed land, food crops and domestic livestock. Community members with personal problems, or who were in conflict with others over such matters, were allowed through the council to meet with the chief: they might even been able to stay with his family, sleeping there and having security whilst their cases remained pending.

A chief had the authority to punish mistakes, especially the breaking of community cultural laws. He was a bold and courageous leader who in most cases opposed foreign imposition of any kind. That is why most African chiefs resisted foreign rule. Some of the prominent chiefs were Dingane, Zwengedaba, Mzilikazi, Mosheshi and Shaka (South Africa). In Kenya, chiefs included Kivoi, Koitalel Arap Somei, Waiyaki wa Hinga, Wanje wa Mwadori, Nabongo Mumia and Olenana. This system was eventually replaced with one dominated by European political leadership structures.

Returning to the life and background of the historical Jesus, we find that he lacks all the above. He was not a chief in his own Galilean village; neither did he have a permanent place from which he could address community problems. Jesus went into the streets of Galilee, Judea and Jerusalem (Vermes, 2002). The argument of Jesus 'as a chief' is unacceptable to many African Indigenous religionists and African theologians such as

Kwesi. There are two examples to give. One is from Ghana in a research conducted by Diane Stinton (2008). An interviewee responded:

But the Jesus that people see cannot easily be projected as a nana (chief), you see, because we associate in our minds a certain gorgeous way of life with nana. A certain opulence with nana. Jesus as nana will mean Jesus who married many wives, Jesus who had so much wealth, so the image doesn't quite fit. (Cited by Stinton, 2008: 256)

The second example refers to a missionary. After a talk about the greatness of Jesus, the missionary was challenged by a Maasai countryman from a community of Maasai in Northern Tanzania:

One day he (the missionary) was explaining to a group of adults the saving activity of Jesus Christ, the son of God. He told how Jesus is the saviour and redeemer of all mankind. When he finished, a Maasai elder slowly stood up and said to the missionary: you have spoken well, but I want to learn more about this great person Jesus Christ. I have three questions about him: first, did he ever kill a lion? Second, how many cows did he have? Third, how many wives and children did he have? (Healy and Sybertz, 1996: 76-77)

The questions of the Maasai elder and the comments of a lay man from Ghana show that African Christian theologians have to re-examine their understanding and explaining of Jesus as having any possible likeness to an African chief.

Jesus was also given a fourth title as an elder brother for Africans. An elder brother in the Midzi-Chenda (African) understanding is the first male born in a village; one who has passed through the rites of passage such as naming, initiation and marriage. The first son of the family is given responsibilities for guiding the junior sons and daughters, as well as for protecting them. At the desired age, he may be introduced to and invited to participate in some of the elders' meetings. He will become known as an intermediate person who can be sent to convey important messages that have been passed in meetings. He will be introduced into 'taking' local brewed beer by elders and thus participate socially in

dialogical meetings.⁵⁷ In respect of this, for Jesus to be the first elder brother in the African context it would have been necessary to marry before the younger brothers could do so. Being not married would enforce delay in marriage for others. If his younger brothers married before him, as a result of delay, certain rituals would have to be performed to harmonise the cultural laws.

What disqualifies Jesus from being an African elder brother is the fact that the Gospels portray Jesus as a defector from his own family members, making his parents and brothers wonder what had gone wrong with him. Jesus could be an elder brother with less recognition, due to the fact that at the age of thirty, when his parents needed him most, he was rarely to be found at home. Authentically, the image of Jesus does not make it possible for him to fit into the African community's requirements for a committed and responsible elder brother who could be totally relied upon by his siblings.

Jesus was also given a fifth title of liberator. A liberator according to African world-view is a courageous man or woman who will defend the rights of humanity; in the struggle for a just society and by being in solidarity with the deprived, poor and oppressed (Magesa, 1991). It is to be noted that Africans understood that their ancient (*zamani*) God was unhappy with the European and Arab oppression. They also knew that God is universal, not a respecter of persons, and also was unhappy with the oppressors. God listened to and understood the cry of his [sic] people as a result, using Africans such as Jomo Kenyatta, Steve Biko, Nelson Mandela, Robert Sobukwe, to mention a few, to liberate Africa from oppressors.

⁵⁷ In the course of participant observation, I noted that it was always the responsibility of a young man to pour local beer into the local wine cup (*chiparya*) during the moonano. When I asked the focus groups what that meant, I was made aware that the first elder son of a village was always given the respect of serving the elders with local palm tree beer (*uchi wa munazi*) when they had meetings (moonano).

For them, the one important factor about Jesus was that they understood him to be a foreigner who sided with the oppressors, which is why he was silent, unable to control his 'agents', who presented him in the wrong way, Jesus could not hear the Africans' cry; despite the many African indigenous adherents who united their pleas to *Mulungu* for liberation. The African and universal God spoke to indigenous religious leaders. For example there is the historic indigenous ecumenical Kenyan movement called *Mau-Mau*, formed by Agikuyu, Akamba, Aembu and Ameru communities seeking to gain liberation from British colonisation (Maathai, 2006; Mazrui, n.d).

The prayers of the people reflect the idea that, for the African, God is one with them in all their everyday liberation struggles. Two examples illustrate this:

God, tomorrow morning, we are going to wage a battle with the White man because of the land you gave us, which he has wanted to take by force. You know what God? The White man told us that you have a son whom they say can save people from violence. This being a serious bloodshed battle concerning our land which is our right, we kindly urge you, not to send your boy to this battle because he will be scared and run away leaving us helpless. God, we propose that you come to this battle 'YOU' in person and defend us from our enemies.⁵⁸

Mwenenyaga, you know how tough this Mau-Mau guerrilla war is, please *Mwenenyaga* do not send anybody else (your son) to this battle, come yourself so that we may win and chase them away to their home land and we can get back our land.⁵⁹

The first quoted example above is from a Griqua Kok Chief of the North Western Capes of South Africa, and the second is from a Mau-Mau priest in Kenya; both prayers were used during the independence struggles. In neither of the prayers does the communities' knowledge about Jesus, as being unique for all nations, play any significant role in their liberation struggles.

⁵⁸ This is a prayer once offered by a Botswana indigenous priest. This was narrated to the researcher by Canon George Wauchope, who is a tutor in mission studies at the Queen's Foundation for Ecumenical Theological Education. Canon Wauchope has experience of working in Botswana as an Anglican priest.

⁵⁹ This is a prayer used among the Mau-Mau religious movement in Kenya that fought for independence. Dr. Philomena Mwaura, a lecturer at Kenyatta University in Kenya, narrated it to the researcher from an observation made during her fieldwork in Kenya

According to Mazrui and Maathai (2006), the movements of freedom fighters such as those mentioned above are held by the indigenous Africans to be in reality initiated by faith in God as their liberator (not Jesus), who guided them towards victory fighting for social justice for their communities. Mazrui maintains that:

Ever since I wrote my article “On Heroes and Uhuru Worship” for TRANSITION magazine in Kampala in 1963, I have sided with those who have interpreted Mau Mau as a genuine national liberation movement. I took the same position when I was interviewed by the BBC in the year 2001, when the memory of Mau Mau was being positively rehabilitated by the Kenyan authorities. (Mazrui, n.d)

The question asked by AIR adherents is: where was Jesus ‘the liberator’ during the period when Africans were being oppressed by his agencies who claimed to be his followers? What voice did he give to the voiceless Africans against slavery and colonialism? Was he guiding his agencies to become chaplains in the slave ships to pray for Africans to be forgiven of sins they never knew to have committed, to allow them the grabbing of native land and forcing natives for free labour?⁶⁰ The Kenyan well-known saying, written by Ngugi wa Thion’go, is that ‘the missionary and the settler are equal partners, like the Arabs they knew one another by their turbines’ (*Waarabu wa Pemba wajuana kwa vilemba*). Bujo (1992) notes that the missionaries worked ‘hand in glove’ with the colonial power, by indeed preaching the Gospel but within the framework of a tainted system.

His other disqualification is that, according to the Maasai of East Africa, Jesus had never been a *moran* (trained to become a soldier); he never killed a lion (to show his boldness). He would be scared in the African independent struggles such as the Mau-Mau and Griqua-Kok due to lack of experience in liberation battles.

⁶⁰ Lectures from Dr. Baikiao Ngunyura of Kenya Methodist University, 2001 (Liberation Theology).

The argument from this research regarding the above thoughts is that AIR adherents do not see the importance of the titles bestowed on Jesus. This was the same method that the writer of John's Gospel used and by which Jesus was Europeanised. P'Bitek (1970) has described this process as just another clever way of enforcing Christianity, similar to and alongside the neo-colonialism of globalisation and Westernisation. This seems to be Christian imperialism and 'absoluteness' surfacing in the African context. It becomes a hindrance to African communities attempting to effect inter-religious dialogue, as earlier said by Shorter; leaving both communities and individuals with a persistent lack of solutions for their health and wholeness problems. Africans need Christ who identifies and engages himself in solidarity with the community's suffering, pain, injustice, poverty and participates for life transformation (Thamburi, 1991).

5.5: Conclusion

This chapter has explored the history of religious exclusivism through biblical narratives and early church and missionary attitudes, which seemingly were later inherited by the African Church. It has been understood that the exclusive attitude of Jewish religious adherents towards other religions was contrary to the teaching of Jesus the Jew. However, this attitude was fostered during the period of Constantine and became the inheritance of later missionaries who presented the gospel in Midzi-Chenda territory. This imperialistic Christianity, which undermined other cultures and religions, was adopted by many converted indigenous Midzi-Chenda. These Christian Midzi-Chenda have been an immense barrier for Christian cooperation with those of the indigenous religion. Examples of important African titles given to Jesus by African theologians have been mentioned. The next chapter seeks to develop a theology enabling cooperation between

the two religious communities, making it possible to have fruitful dialogue and address their issues in unity without any religious barriers.

CHAPTER SIX

A Theological Reflection on Inter-religious Dialogue

Introduction

This chapter seeks critically for a theological discourse between Christianity and AIR; reflecting on the views of informants; comparing them with biblical support, vital for addressing dialogue hindrances. Theological opinions and contributions offered by informants could constructively be employed by both religious groups, for the purpose of reaching an understanding with each other in order to develop a community able to engage in dialogue and foster the health and well-being of every community member. Basically the chapter seeks a theological answer to the posed question: can there be a suitable theology that can be used for engaging a fruitful inter-religious dialogue between African Christians and AIR adherents for the purpose of addressing issues of community well-being?

So far, this research has discovered four considerable and complex impediments to the achieving of inter-religious community dialogue among the Midzi-Chenda; both Christian and indigenous religious communities. Presumably, these hindrances for inter-religious cooperation are similar to those among the rest of the African community.

Firstly, information from school students, religious education teachers and church members asserts that Christianity is distinctive as being the only true religion. It can be argued that the lordship of Jesus Christ (Christocentric) have been interpreted in a way to humiliate other religions (Ariarajah, 2006; Samartha, 1981; Sugirtharajah, 1993). This has

continuously been taught to children, lately by way of the introduction of a Programme of Pastoral Instructions (PPI); employed from primary to secondary schools in Kenya.

Secondly, secondary information revealed that at higher levels of education, such as universities, African Christians have introduced a theology of inculturation, which seeks to harmonise African traditions and Christianity. In the course of doing this, they have borrowed key African titles, applying them to Jesus in order to make him unique to AIR adherents. Christians use inculturation as bait in order to convert AIR adherents (Shorter, 1998).

Thirdly, the adherents of AIR, noted in participant observation as also expressed by Midzi-Chenda Christians lack sufficient and accurate documentation of their religion; hence many of the AIR religious specialists are not literate enough to competently discuss issues with academicians of the religions of books (Nzeki, 1978; Mbiti, 1969). Arguably, according to Emeffie Ikenga-Metuh, this may be true if one considers dialogue only as an abstract theological exercise requiring literacy and systematic reasoning.

Fourthly, the powerful control of inherited colonial (*ukoloni*) and religious leadership has continued to suppress local leadership (Mugambi, 2001; Ciekawy, 2000; Hick, 1987). This is experienced when *Chikw'ehu* adherents need to hold and conduct their own religious rituals; government administrative officials ask them to apply for permits. When public meetings and rallies are held by the government, those asked to pray for the events are either Muslims or Christians, but never AIR adherents. These polemics between Christianity and AIR have been a core challenge towards establishing a tangible 'dialogue for life and action'.

In order to achieve a reliable answer to the question stated above in relation to the hindrances for inter-religious dialogue, consideration on the awareness and acknowledgment of Midzi-Chenda feelings about this issue is necessary. That is, providing a full account of their theological opinion, especially about views on Christian willingness to cooperate and dialogue with members of the indigenous religion relevant to the well-being of society.

6.1: A Theological Discourse

Information obtained from primary sources (essentially informants) of both religions (see Chapter 3) has been analyzed in Chapter 4. It presents significant theological viewpoints and ideas which could be used to pilot religious cooperation: thereby developing a dialogical theology for fostering a healthy society in Coastal Kenya. Among the crucial viewpoints from these sources, to be given emphasis in this chapter, is each community's theological recognition that human beings need to see and to accept each other, irrespective of racial-religious background (*hosi huadamu a Mulungu*). Amoah (1998) in her study among the Akan and Ajayi (2000) as well have similar observation.

A primary argument raised by focus groups and those interviewed elucidating the 'need' of each other is based on the belief of belonging to the 'same' creator. The concept of the 'same' God (*Mulungu mumwenga*) is a theological opinion and viewpoint which the Midzi-Chenda contribute to this thesis. It is essential, for it helps in the discovery of God's revelation to mankind [sic], also the potential values and roles which different religions can play in their society. 'AIR and Christianity are religions that point to God. Both those who believe in the religions and stay in the same community need to relate

well as they are people of the same God.’ (See Appendix 2 Note 1 and the cited Baar declaration of 1990).

A theocentric theology, originating from the views of the informants is acceptable in this research. The theology is identified to be alleyway for introducing and conducting an inter-religious dialogue. It is given an in-depth discussion in this chapter. The hypothesis is, those impediments established from research and which have continued to cause difficulty in implementing inter-religious dialogue hopefully can be addressed by employing theocentric theology. This suggests a requirement of commitment from both Christianity and AIR adherents to engage in creating awareness of God’s love as being revealed through other religions.

Another factor contributing to the ‘need’ of each other is those difficult circumstances continuing to prevail in Midzi-Chenda society which have failed to find a solution by employing individualistic, non-cooperative ways (*chala chimwenga kachivunza tsaha*). Research findings reveal that both groups are well aware of the many problems directly, or indirectly, affecting the community’s well-being (*uzima wa lalo*). The community realises that the issues facing humanity, the ecological world and all of nature, are approaching a critical point that could in the near future destroy the planet’s well-being; eventually making a non-productive and more difficult place to live in.

Scrutinising some of the common expressions found during participant observation and in focus groups, such as those uttered in the form of questions or songs, shows that dialogue at a basic community level is a necessity. In many ways, statements made by ordinary poor people, express their long-lived sorrow (*shenene*). The researcher noted questions

such as: Why was I born? (*navyarirwani mino?*); What kind of poverty is this poverty? (*uchiya uno ni uchiya wani?*); Why do we have no good health? (*heka kahuna uzima?*); Why are we being 'eaten' by enemies? (*heka hunariwa/hunalumwa?*); Why are we going through a desperate life? (*heka funagaya/funasirima?*); Where have you placed me God? (*Mulungu udzanikahi?*)

These questions reveal a long experience of suffering and remind us that *Mulungu* should not only be concerned with indigenous forms of worship, but should also be concerned with all that happens in society. *Mulungu* needs to be relevant to spiritual issues as well as to the community's material needs; 'poverty, hunger, internal misgovernment, unjust international economic and marketing order...' (Amoah, 1992: 50). Life is considered God's best gift, but the Midzi-Chenda have had a painful experience of it in many different ways, most of which have failed to be adequately addressed by either AIR or Christianity.

Despite the long lived suffering, evidence from research reveals that the Midzi-Chenda view of God is an encouraging presence in human society. They perceive God working through agencies such as religious and community leaders (*angambi/atumia/akare a lalo*) enabling them to amicably deal with issues of well-being in cooperation, solidarity and love. The Midzi-Chenda belief is that *Mulungu* enables individuals and community members to have the awareness necessary for understanding of the importance of everyone taking communal responsibility, managing and handling successfully those issues which have become threats to health and wholeness.

It is their awareness that no specific religion, spirituality, or any particular group of people is able to manage the task ahead alone. There is a great existing need for the joining of

hands (*umoja ni nguvu*) with people of other spiritualities in order to bring about a healthy and just community, with the aim of making it possible for people to live better lives today and in the future (Amoah, 1992). Inter-religious community dialogue from below is therefore a necessity. In the Indian context, Selvanayagam explains:

Relating to the 'other' is essentially a spiritual act. The 'other' may be God, a life partner, brother, sister, friend or opponent. The 'other' may be terrifying if we do not have a good relationship with him/her. On the contrary, he/she may be fascinating if we have an intimate relationship. (Selvanayagam, 1995: X)

The basic importance of such unity (*umoja*) is that it builds communitarian life (see Chapter 4) and is considered to be an essential life-value and theology for society; something which the Midzi-Chenda community recognises and practises. When life crises arise, *umoja* always provides a major theological impetus for them to call for communal meetings (*moonano*) engage in dialogue enabling a search for durable answers and solutions for persistent problems to be made¹. Agreeing together and working practically on agreed solutions is what it means to be human in the Midzi-Chenda culture. Those who disregard such unity and its praxis are considered to be less than human and even as outcasts (*fulani tsi mutu, na kariwa*).

Reflecting on Africa in general, from a religious perspective it is un-African for anyone to address issues of life effectively in isolation. The notion of *ubuntu/undugu* is of significance to Africans, as well as to more recent immigrants who need to accept each other wholeheartedly, together with all the changes that are becoming permanent features of the continent. Indeed, it has become essential for all African people, regardless of religious or other differences, to accept handling issues such as those of health and well-being in unity rather than diversity. Appia-Kubi writes:

The spirit of solidarity plays a cardinal part...and the existence of the individual cannot be conceived outside the framework of one's integration in society. Religion therefore acts as a unifying factor in African culture. (1981: 122)

In order for the Midzi-Chenda to maintain their *umoja* and religious culture, a tradition has been to create awareness about God and introducing religious values to their children as they grow up. Despite religious values and roles being taught informally through storytelling, songs, participation in rituals as also through social and moral training, the significance is the theological meaning. As stated and clarified in data analysis (Chapter 4), religion moulds children to become acceptable and reliable members of the future community. A religious teaching that "misleads" children is unacceptable to the community, this is why the Midzi-Chenda once had to refuse to allow their children to attend missionary classes; missionary religious education was discriminative by its teaching of the negatives of *Chik'wehu*.

Inter-religious dialogue for life and action between the two religions to be effected successfully amongst the Midzi-Chenda needs commitment. The opinion expressed by students (see Appendix 2 debate notes) is to introduce an appropriate religious education programme in schools. Their viewpoint has been contemplated to be a platform for enhancing the understanding of theocentric theology; however it lacks a structure for implementation.

For a community to develop holistically, it needs religious educational support. This enables members to grow in good ethics; e.g., peace, justice, and care for God's creation. A divided community will end up in enmity, even creating social exclusion. A recent manifestation of this is terrorism in its new forms (Appendix 2).

The policy of initiating inter-religious educational promotion in schools and in the local community, as a contribution from informants and with endorsement from the researcher, is given emphasis by way of introducing considerable structures and desirable methods of approach that could embrace the call for theocentric theology, fostering for inter-religious community cohesion.

6.2: ‘Theocentric’ Theology for Inter-religious Dialogue

The concept of the central role of God is so universally established in the mind of Midzi-Chenda that they maintain their children do not need to be formally ‘taught’/indoctrinated about God (Kwesi, 1984). For instance, Midzi-Chenda children will inherently know that God watches over their every activity; this is reinforced by parental attitudes such as correction of wrongdoing, where God’s watchfulness and judgement are taken for granted. Research carried out by Mbiti in over 300 African communities discovered that the same concepts, with similar attributes of God, apply all over Africa. It can be contended that it was neither Muslim nor Christian missionaries who introduced God to Africans (Mbiti, 1969). Long before the missionaries arrived, the pre-existing (*zamani*) God was already within Africa and being worshipped by Africans, albeit in different ways.

Among the focus groups, the Aduruma, Araphai and Arive explained to the researcher that their religious understanding is of God as the universal creator of all human beings and all living creatures. They pointed to doves, pigeons and the sea, asking whether they are different from those in Europe, affirming that God created all things and cares for them; for example, by providing rains so that people may cultivate their land and have

food. God does not divide the rains for Christians, Muslims and African believers. They are for all to share. They believe that *Mulungu wa osi* is just, loving, caring, and peaceful:

God is a great king (*Mulungu ni mfalme*) who is given most high respect. He [sic] cannot be compared with human kings who manipulate society. *Mulungu* has no colour in his eyes. You will be black, white, yellow but *Mulungu* does not see any difference. Look at the chickens we have, brown, spotted, black, small. But all of them are chickens and belong to the poulterer. When he calls them to feed, they will all come, flying and running. But when they start eating, there are others that chase some away, some are very greedy and others are polite. The polite ones end up going hungry. Sometimes they are cared for by being given second helpings by the master. Similarly, other people of the world are very greedy and want to have everything *Mulungu* has given, even religion; they want to eat it away. That is why *Mulungu* regularly appoints specialists to give advice and counselling to the oppressed and the oppressors. (Ngoro wa Kalimbo Mazola Kinango, Jan. 2006)

The Midzi-Chenda acknowledge theocentric theology to be a key and a tool; informing them about religious pluralism and cooperation, a perception which Hick (2009; 2001; 1995; 1985; 1980) has constantly observed in a different context. The support for religious pluralism is the considerable experience of the two world religions they have had, Christianity and Islam, and of the different styles of Christianity which have been accepted; those of Catholics (*akatoliki*), Methodists (*amethodist*), Anglicans (*aanglikani*), and the more recent Pentecostals (*apentekote*). The significance of religious pluralism and cooperation, and of God's ultimate reality, is based on the fact that all the different religions have their uniqueness, their salvation, their truth claims, and their 'lords' who guide followers to the ultimate reality. The real, according to Hick, is the supreme power, whether this is revealed to Hindu, African, Christian or Muslim. As a result the Midzi-Chenda find themselves with a deep understanding of theocentric theology (*zosi ni dini ela Mulungu niyiye mumwenga*).

The Midzi-Chenda recognise that the religions practised by humanity have a deep meaning for society, and because society has been mixed for many years they need to

treat each other's religion with respect; that is, 'the religious other' should be 'loved as the others love themselves'. This is shown in the way they respect the views of their children, who get much information about Christianity and Islam from schools and even from open air markets. When I first became a Christian, my father did not want me to eat any of the meat he had received when attending traditional rituals. He was the first to provide me with education relating to Christian requirements.

A theology which emphasises the universal supremacy and central role of God (Theocentric), who loves all humanity, would be welcomed by the Midzi-Chenda. Like any other faith community, they understand that *Mulungu*, the God of all, knows and cares deeply about what happens to humanity because everyone is special and equal in the sight of *Mulungu*. It is in the light of this emphasis on the ever-present power of God that prayers are formulated calling on God to come to the aid of those in need, in full expectation that it will be done.

There are three formats of prayers among the Midzi-Chenda, illustrated here signifying that *Mulungu* is always given foremost adoration, with lesser spirits following. When an elder wants to start an ancestral ritual service, for example, he instructs the people to sit down in a circle. The 'consultation' prayers with ancestors then proceed as follows:

	English	Midzi-Chenda
Elder	Ancestors are below	<i>Koma tsi</i>
People	God is above them all	<i>Mulungu dzulu</i>
Elder	Who dies leaves others behind	<i>Asena afwaye nikusiya hebu kasiya</i>
People	Yes, he leaves others behind	<i>Eeh nikusiya</i>
Elder	When anyone is in problems doesn't he report?	<i>Mutu achipata riki nikugomba hebu kagomba?</i>
People	Yes, he reports	<i>Eeh nikugomba</i>

Elder I am addressing you ancestors, from my mother's and father's side, those that I recognise and those that I do not know *Bahi koma zosi za kuche na kulume, nizimanyazo na nisizozimanya*⁶¹

Another format of a prayer putting God first, is when after dialogue the community agrees to offer to *Mulungu* a communal sacrifice, for the sake of community well-being.

Usually a healthy undefiled black bull is taken to the *Kaya*. A priest (*mutumia wa Kaya*) conducts prayers as follows:

	English	Midzi-Chenda
Priest	Midzi-Chenda, I draw your attention	<i>Midzi-Chenda sumilani</i>
People	We are attentive	<i>Ghai</i>
Priest	When we become attentive	<i>Huchisumila</i>
People	We receive healing	<i>Nahuvole</i>
Priest	Who is it, who deserves worship?	<i>Bahi Alombwaye ni ghani?</i>
People	God alone	<i>Ni Mulungu ghakeye</i>
Priest	God listens and sees us	<i>Mulungu hulole</i>
People	We are attentive	<i>Ghai</i>
Priest	When we talk	<i>Kugomba</i>
People	God is amongst us, hears us and responds	<i>Nakusikirana</i>
Priest	God we are in your presence this time... ⁶²	<i>Ah Baba Mulungu, kahungagombere dzuwa riri</i>

The priest then continues to pray and, after the prayers, he advises the people to observe customary laws in order to continue in good health. Then the bull is slaughtered; some of the blood is caught in a coconut shell and given to God as a symbol of repentance and reconciliation between God and humanity. Old women prepare *wari* (food) from corn flour. After eating they start singing and dancing (*Ngoma ya Mulungu*). From its inception, the Midzi-Chenda community has always worshipped God (*Mulungu*).

⁶¹This format of prayer was given to the researcher by a mduruma elder January 2006. This prayer is commonly practised by all indigenous Midzi-Chenda people where the primacy of God is put first.

⁶² This prayer was conducted during a communal worship service to seek help with drought in Kinango Dumbule. This was a participant observation, schedule 10th February 2006, and the observation applies to all the Midzi-Chenda people.

The last illustration of this spirituality is when a diviner lays hands on a sick person. Diviners understand and communicate directly with God and with different spirits, either harmful or of benefit to humanity. Diviners become spiritually aware of both individual and community problems; sickness, disease outbreaks, drought or famine. Diviners have the spiritual power to exorcise evil spirits, to heal and also to give advice on what should be done in order for communities to become free from danger. When a diviner is conducting a healing function, she/he starts by exchanging holy greetings with everyone present. The following is a healing prayer where the sick person is made to sit on a mat (lest she/he falls down during the exorcism). This is similar to some Christian practices.

The diviner spits saliva on her/his right palm and then lays the palm on the forehead of the sick person, whilst those present sit in a circle to give support⁶³.

	English	Midzi-Chenda
Diviner	I greet you colleagues with holy greetings	<i>Aganga Taireni</i>
People	Thanks, we receive the holy greetings from God	<i>Za Mulungu</i>
Diviner	Apprentices, I also greet you with holy greetings	<i>Anamadzi taireni</i>
People	Thanks, we receive the holy greetings from God	<i>Zamulungu</i>
Diviner	God and child of God, you are the true owners of this person, he/she has been in physical pain and complaining about dreadful dreams. God, why then should you leave him/her to suffer	<i>Mmm uwe mwenyezi Mulungu na uwe mwana Mulungu, Mwimwi ndo murio na chihi chichi/kihi kiki, mbona mnamuricha yunayugika</i>
Diviner	Peace I command you spirits, do not fight him/her. He does not deserve your punishment; give him/her peace to enjoy a healthy life	<i>Ghaini, ghaini, ghaini pepo. Mvuguleni apigwe ni peho</i>
People	Give him/her peace to enjoy healthy life	<i>Mvuguleni na apigwe ni peho</i>
Diviner	When we pray for health does God grant us or not?	<i>Huchivoya uzima kwa Mulungu nikuvugulwa kavugulwa</i>
People	God grants us good health	<i>Nikuvugulwa ni Mulungu</i>

⁶³ Comparably, this method of healing has similarities with some of the healing methods used by Jesus.

When such a religious healing function takes place, all present as well as passers-by are supposed to greet the people by saying *Taireni* (holy greetings) while the people answer *za Mulungu* (greetings of God). This means that all the people are together in the function and wishing well to the one receiving treatment.

The point emphasised here is that the Midzi-Chenda recognise and acknowledge the central role of *Mulungu*. They point to God who dwells both in the sky and also amongst humanity (*Mulungu wa dzulu na tsi*). God's provision, protection and sustenance to all creation are not doubted. As already established, the indigenous Midzi-Chenda, according to the research, accept the supremacy of the one God who sent Jesus to the Jewish community and to other communities. Was it not the same God who sent such 'saviours' as Kajiwe, Kabwere and Mekatilili to the Midzi-Chenda? These were well-known prophets and spiritual leaders for their community. In other words, it can be argued that the Midzi-Chenda belief about the pre-eminence of God is similar to that of early Christianity. Jesus, the religious Jew, frequently pointed to God rather than to himself: 'my Father is greater than I' (cf. John 14: 28); 'to know thee as the true God, and Jesus Christ whom thou has sent' (cf. John 17: 3) has features similar to those of Midzi-Chenda prophets and leaders who point to God (*alombwaye ni ghani? komatsi Mulungu dzulu*) rather than to themselves. Emphasis on the supremacy of God, as practised by the Midzi-Chenda, is unique in African society and it is observed by Healey (2004) that:

Throughout Africa, there is wide spread belief in one supreme God. In many places in Africa the one high God speaks through the world religion of Islam, in others through African religion, and in still others through the various forms of Christianity. (Healey, 2004: IX)

Comparably, early Christianity emphasised the same supremacy of God as that inherited by the Orthodox as their strongest tradition, particularly within the Eastern Churches of

Greece, Russia and Ukraine (Coward, 1985; Bria, 1986). The Eastern Churches focus on the 'Holy Spirit' of God who has no limits; and who is 'omnipresent'. In this belief, God's spirit is discovered as revealing the God-self to all humankind.

Full authority and the supremacy of all life is centred on God. This is similar to the promise made by Yahweh to Jeremiah; in the last days, Yahweh would pour out the spirit on all flesh. Coward and Bria explain how the Eastern Churches have accommodated religious pluralism. This has not been a significant factor of Western Churches which have asserted the uniqueness of Christianity, and the sole lordship of Jesus, without accommodating any pre-existing ideas of God in those they evangelised. Coward contends:

Orthodox theologians attempt to absorb and consecrate the good, no matter where they find it, as part of truth. No one can limit God's presence. It is not given to Christians or anyone else to judge where God is not. The doctrine of the Holy Spirit...is the basis for the positive approach of Orthodox Christians to other religions. (Coward, 1985: 26-27)

Because the importance of theocentric is already recognised by *Chik'wehu*, Christianity, and other religions, this concept can become a theology; an approach to an understanding whereby God is viewed as the primary focus for unifying all humanity (cf. John 17: 20-21), rather than limiting the only possibility for a united world society to Christ and Christianity. In my opinion, Africans do not need a God who is small enough to be put into a box sealed by 'particular' people, claiming to be 'chosen' ones. Africans of all religions need a new theological paradigm, accepting that for all religions God is one. This would allow the universal God (*Mulungu mumwenga*) to work for society in all life's situations. Hick (1987) notes that in the past the notion of the God of a chosen race obviously brought racism and religious superiority.

On the other hand, Christianity, which stresses the uniqueness and finality of Jesus in African communities, needs to be re-visited and given a new interpretation. It has taken a long time for Africans to understand this concept, because the idea does not accord with their interpretation of what constitutes religion and leadership in Africa. Schools have taught God, churches have emphasised that Christianity is the only true religion and that Jesus is unique. However, many of those who have heard this message have yet to understand what it means.⁶⁴ This is because they regard all humanity as belonging only to the creator and if Jesus was a human being then he too belonged to God, the parent of all humans (*hosi huadamu a Mulungu*). The Midzi-Chenda regard Christianity as a religion that came with foreigners (*yosi ni dini ya amisheni*); but that all religions should, essentially, lead humanity to worship only one God (*Mulungu ye mumwenga*). A Midzi-Chenda saying claims that ‘many roads lead to the same city’. This refers to the different religions, each with their own prophets, who at different times have shown the way.

The Midzi-Chenda have clearly expressed that they interpret Jesus of the Bible as a sort of ‘seer’. Some of the things he did are similar to those done by Kajiwe the Midzi-Chenda prophet. For example, while Jesus spoke symbolically to the Samaritan woman, saying that he would (metaphorically) give people the water of life, the Midzi-Chenda saviour ‘Kajiwe’ practically provided water (*madzi ga Kajiwe*)⁶⁵ for life; all Midzi-Chenda, from their different regions, went to take this water meant to heal the community. Shenk, Hick, Samartha, and Ariarajah all agree that different religions have their own saviours who need recognition.

⁶⁴ The local people in rural churches do not have much understanding about Jesus being unique and Christianity being the only true religion. That is why, when Christianity and Jesus do not answer their problems, they turn to *Chikw’ehu*.

⁶⁵ Kajiwe had divine power. He called his fellow Midzi-Chenda to go to Rabai where he provided this water-for-life. Christians and non-Christians were all invited. I remember having been taken to drink that water by my grandfather when I was young. After taking the water, one was not supposed to drink, smoke or have marital relations for a period of seven days.

This does not mean rejecting or denying the centrality of Jesus in either the New Testament, or in the Church. However, Christians should re-read their Scriptures in order to achieve fresh insight, and so cultivate both a new relationship and cooperation. Adopting a new and more open approach would reform Christianity, enabling it to come to terms with AIR *Chik'wehu* and lead the way towards meaningful dialogue. The 'old wine in the old wine skin' is the Christian belittling of other religions. What is required for new wine is a new wine skin, a new way of thinking and acting and that is inter-religious dialogue.

A problem arising from Christ-centred theology, according to Ariarajah, is that it will not answer the need for inter-religious dialogue. In the current African society encompassed with life worries, such as those found within the Midzi-Chenda community, Christianity needs to establish a Christology emulating the teaching and life of the historical Jesus; embracing all humanity so that, by working together, a life-giving service can be achieved by all communities. The suggestion is that although Christians need to accept the rule of Christ (Christendom), they are not required to 'lord it' over others, but to be a servant to the world as were all those whom God divinely called to serve society.

6.3: Inter-religious Education - a Way Forward

As already observed in the data analysis (Chapter Four), the necessary quest for both inter-religious cooperation and community dialogue for life and action is at the forefront of the Midzi-Chenda concern and also of many minds today (Race, 2008). However, a well organised criterion is required, formulated to neutralise the effects of an unconstructive historical religious movement which divides the community. The hoped outcome to replace this would be a new and urgent enforcement of a pluralistic religious

community, able to live in love and solidarity. An inter-religious education programme that focuses on a theocentric theology is the recommendation heart of this thesis. The proposal for this programme according to informants is meant for schools, colleges and universities but the researcher's input is for the programme to be extended for the whole community, especially churches and indigenous groups. It will be facilitated by using local available resources and personnel.

As already explained in Chapter One, school education in Coastal Kenya was pioneered by missionaries; as a result, there was an advantage in teaching about Christianity, so that in schools it might become better known than other religions. Country wide, the schools curriculum and syllabuses were copied from those countries where the missionaries came from. John Hull basing his study on British Education system writes:

The whole of education was to be consistent with, and where possible directly derived from, Christian beliefs. The school was to be considered a Christian community. The function of religious education as part of the curriculum was to create Christian discipleship. All teachers were preferably to be Christians; teachers of religion could not be effective unless they were Christians (1984: 93).

Part of the crucial changes after Independence was the handing over of these missionary schools to government control and oversight in order that they should become public educational facilities. Teachers were then trained in government teacher-training colleges and the Teachers Service Commission (TSC) became the employer, whilst the Ministry of Education manned the national education system. The Kenya Institute of Education (KIE) replaced the churches in taking charge of developing the curriculum for basic and higher education. Churches became sponsors of their schools, rather than having involvement in planning the education system and organising the employment of teachers.⁶⁶

⁶⁶ I am able to give a detailed history of the development of religious education in Kenya because I was trained for two years at Thogoto Teachers Training College and then at the Christian Religious Education

Independent Kenya paved the way for different Protestant churches to form the Christian Churches' Educational Association (CCEA) and for Catholics to form the Catholic Secretariat Educational Association (CSEA) in the 1980s. Together they created a combined Christian Education syllabus for primary schools; publishing a series of the 'One in Christ' which was later replaced by 'God' with US' for teaching religious education. This was extended to include all higher and vocational education. The syllabus series for religious education takes Christianity more seriously than it does AIR.⁶⁷

African Indigenous Religion in Kenya being the oldest lacked representatives to claim a need for its own syllabus. As said by Mbiti (1969), it was taught at home through storytelling, participating in religious rituals, and observing cultural laws. It recently came to be accepted as a teaching subject in schools and universities; for primary schools, it became a unit within the larger syllabus of the 'One in Christ/God with US' series. (Mugambi, 2002). However, there was the stirring of competition; Muslims, feeling neglected started Muslim schools and created Islam syllabus as well. This syllabus was also developed for primary and secondary schools. Muslim teachers were employed.⁶⁸

On the other hand of this system of religious education was the introduction of a special programme; Pastoral Programme Instructions (PPI); pupils in primary schools had special

Awareness for Teachers (CREATE) at Goibei Kisumu for four months. As a qualified teacher I taught religious education for five years before joining the ordained ministry of the Methodist Church in Kenya.

⁶⁷ I was able to talk to an experienced religious teacher who has had long service in primary school teaching at St. Augustine Mombasa. She informed me that the teaching of religious education is significantly based on Christianity and Islam which are examinable subjects. AIR is merely a passing note in the CRE syllabus.

⁶⁸ It is to be noted that the long history of Islam in Coastal Kenya did not create much impact in education. Muslims started introducing formal schools as a matter of necessity due to job competition in the region and to accommodate interests of their religion, e.g., students dressing in the Arab culture and worshipping freely at their prayer time. However, they follow the same system of education. This is because their religious culture (the way of dressing for example) was not accepted by Christian schools. However, they follow the same system of education.

days when church ministers and Kadhis went to schools to nurture children's faith by teaching the elements of their particular religions. To enable pupils to be taught, the system separated them into different age groups. Those who did not belong to the recognised religions had no alternative but to join either a Christian or Islamic group. The Kenyan system of religious education in primary and secondary sectors became discriminative, as a result of which inter-religious dialogue was discouraged. Weisse writes

If pupils are separated into religious or cultural groups, religious education will not fully utilize the opportunity to assist children and youth to jointly find their bearing when such fundamental questions about the shaping of their lives and the world are to be answered. (In: Miedema 2009:111)

This religious education scheme continued to indoctrinate children into strictly following the acknowledged religions whilst ignoring others. Writing in the same context, Hull (2009) argues that; 'Powerful religions tend to marginalise and exclude less powerful ones, and to minimise their ontological status, just as the powerful world of able bodied people tend to minimise the small, disabled worlds.' (In: Miedema 2009: 30). They fail to understand; 'when children and their teachers encounter the religion of other people it is like meeting another world' (Hull, 2009. In: Miedema 2009: 21). In Kenya, the attitude of 'powerful religions' caused severe debate amongst parents and music teachers in the 1980s when students from both primary and secondary schools were to participate in cultural music festivals; singing and dancing to the accompaniment of their own cultural religious music. This event was an abomination to Christians. It took a long time for Christian parents, including both those attending adult education (see below) and the highly educated, to acknowledge the importance of such cultural music in schools.

The Ministry for Culture and Social Services, in association with the Ministry of Education, developed an adult education scheme (*elimu ya watu wazima*) in the 1970s. This initiative was different from that of the churches. The government's main vision was essentially for Kenyans to be able to read and write. Efforts were aimed at reaching adults who had not had the advantage of attending school and so teaching the basic skills of reading, writing, hygiene, arithmetic and agriculture. Religious education was assumed to be adequate and was therefore not part of this programme. It was believed that adults had religious education/experience and had already made decisions on which religion they would follow.

Whilst adult education provided basic literacy skills, a continuum of cultural activities was also now seen as essential; importantly, cultural singing and dancing events were encouraged and indigenous healing practitioners, who had long petitioned for their practices to be licensed by the government, received approval. Among the Midzi-Chenda, the most famous of all cultural dances such as the *Sengenya*, *Goma*, *Kayamba* and *Ngoma ya Mulungu* now contribute to healing of the community as well as to providing it with entertainment (listen to CD 2 appendix 1). These advances, however, have continued to be condemned by Christianity as also, in many aspects, by Islam.

The suggestion is that an improvement of Kenya's religious education system is of primary importance. Kenya, like other African countries, is facing dynamic social, religious, cultural, economic and political changes. These changes are accentuated by the existence of communities migrating from elsewhere and professing not only Christianity and Islam but also various indigenous religions, as well as Hinduism, Judaism and Buddhism. Their children now attend the same schools and associate with each other regardless of their religious differences. In modern times, the separation of children in

religious classes, throughout their primary and secondary education, creates mistrust between the religions; thereby continuing to create religious rifts, which make it very difficult to effect inter-religious dialogue. It is said that the way in which a child is brought up is the way the child will grow (*mototo umuleavyo ndivyo akuavyo*). Later in adulthood is the time when they gain enlightenment about the real picture of religions, as is happening now (Shorter, 1975).

For example, a progressive feature has been the emergence of understanding among African communities, through research and deeper awareness of religious truth from studies in comparative disciplines such as philosophy, theology, anthropology and sociology, relating to the role of AIR. As a result there is now knowledge that AIR is still a practised and effective religion. An example of this is the recent international recognition of the Midzi-Chenda sacred forests (*Makaya*), which are occasionally used as holy shrines and have long been preserved for that purpose (East African Standard, 14th August 2008; Daily nation 14th August 2008).

In respect of these new ideas and dynamic change, not only within Kenyan society but also in other parts of Africa, a need now exists for a common inter-religious education syllabus for Kenyan schools. Notably, the proposal has been put forward for a syllabus that does not contain the sole objective of nurturing religious faith but, importantly, the objective of imparting knowledge of other religions and their social roles. Selcuk (2009) referring from Grimmitt argues that Religious Education is; ‘learning about religion’ and ‘learning from religion’ as opposed to ‘learning into religion’. (In: Miedema 2009: 56).

The question is how we can sing the song of inter-religious dialogue in Africa when basic school religious education is dominated by both Christianity and Islam? We cannot talk of dialogue while an anti-dialogue philosophy, or attitude, exists in schools. The publishing of literature by the Roman Catholic Church and WCC, as discussed before, needs to be used in inter-religious education. A common syllabus that will incorporate knowledge of Christianity, Islam, AIR, Hinduism, Buddhism, and so on, is necessary, so that children can learn that the world has people of different religions but that God is aware of and pleased about this. It goes by the African saying that, 'all cassavas have the same skins but not all taste the same'. To endorse this point, for example, in Tanzania an elderly man was being invited to join the Catholic faith. His reply was:

Father; you trouble yourself for nothing. I will never agree to join your religion. All people have their own religion. The Germans were here, and they had their own religion. The British came; and they also had their own religion. The Protestants at Ng'wagala have their own religion. The Ba-Swahili (Muslims) of Shanwa have their own religion. And we black people also have our own religion. Our ancestors are the one of Masamva (Ancestral spirits). All religions are good. (Healey and Sybertz, 1993: 295)

Respect for each others' religion is important because all religions have significant roles in their communities.

The official requirement for worship in schools (the sole aim being the nurturing of faith) is mandatory under the PPI program. It clearly needs to be examined. Hull writes: 'In schools with considerable numbers of young people from various religious traditions and from no religious traditions at all, it is not going to be possible to continue with worship.' (1984: 49). Faith certainly has to be nurtured in its respective sanctuaries - Churches, Mosques, *Makaya*, Hindu temples, etc. Regarding this idea, Miedema (2009) refers from Smart (1968) who suggested the abandonment of faith nurturing aims for religious

education in state schools. Smart's input was that religious education should create in learners the capacity to be aware of and to understand the values of other religions.

My suggestion here is that instead of creating religious differences/barriers in schools, the Ministry of Education should encourage primary and secondary school students to celebrate with common prayers the centrality of God, rather than the particularities of individual faiths. The Kenya National Anthem is a prayer that could be adopted because it is neither Christian nor Islam-based. It is also necessary to discourage the establishment of chapels and mosques within institutions of learning. An Idea of Owen cole becomes essential, he suggests:

Religion in schools will not, therefore, be an induction into belief. It is very important that we should recognise this, that we *all* should, Christian and Muslim. Until we do agree on this, progress in terms of curriculum development is impossible and the subject can only become a battleground. (1982: 172)

Within the Ministry of Culture and Social Services there is also a need to develop a syllabus, which can include adults, teaching about other world religions. This would serve to make them more aware and accepting of the diversity of society and culture; also, to accept that the world's people are not all associated with one particular religion. Most essential is that adults should have inter-religious educational 'tours' (visits to other religious bodies and sanctuaries). This could help them to 'chat dialogue' with other believers and learn from them details of their beliefs. If this is done within the circle of adult education and in the schools, both parents and children will be able to exchange ideas about the value of other religions and become aware that God has revealed Godself to humanity in different ways, times and places. (See Diagram A next page for clarification)



Diagram A. *The diagram above illustrates the concept of the universal God that can be emulated (Ministry of Education in Kenya).*

AIR, an older dominant religion, needs to be taught alongside other religions in primary and secondary schools as also in training institutions, as one that is still actively practised. It is my view, that for AIR members the time has come for them to take the initiative and put into writing all that pertains to their beliefs and liturgies. In this way both children and adults can learn of things they do not know. There is need for in-service seminars on AIR to be introduced, so that religious teachers in schools and in adult institutions may have in-depth knowledge about AIR's value and role in society.

6.4: Stakeholders for Inter-religious Education Promotion

The question of what facilities could be used, or who would be able to use them to initiate the Education Program is an important one. The informants (mainly AIR adherents and students) did not have any structure in mind, but contributed with a saying that, ‘men are not found in the urban only but in the rural as well’ (*alume mudzini, alume nyika*). Accordingly, the saying emphasises on the importance of local communities being given a chance and involvement in making contributions, opinions and decisions towards the formation of religious education structure.

The above saying in this research has been used to compare the history of religious education in Kenya and how this influenced School children and local communities, such as those of the Midzi-Chenda in Coastal Kenya. They have for long been indoctrinated into the idea of a ‘one right religion’. In many ways, the Kenya system of education has been dictated from above (*alume mudzini*) and the people who take it from below (*alume nyika*) have no alternative other than to accept what is given. This is why the recent series of changes in the education system have been welcomed; for instance, from the seven years primary, three years secondary and three years university (7: 3: 3 British system) to the eight years primary, four years secondary and four years university (8: 4: 4 American system), with periodic reshuffling of syllabuses. The people at ground level (*alume nyika*) are not approached for their views, and even if asked for their opinions, generally find that all decisions are made by those in higher authority, especially as people ‘lower down’ are not represented in the forums.

The main stakeholders of inter-religious education programs need to be the ordinary members of society (*alume nyika*). That is, those engaged in formal education as well as

those involved in adult education. The proposal is that, stakeholding members of society, need the courage to form community organisations which are inter-religious-based and community driven; valuing the interests of the entirety of community members without confusing them by being sensitive to differences of religion. This is because the community members are the first bearers of the health problems and the poverty experienced in the midst of religious wrangles. The idea of inter-religious community-based and driven organisations can motivate self-awareness and help the community to find a way towards genuine community health development. For this to be well established, support from members of both religions is needful, helped by their recognition of one God, (*Mulungu mumwenga*) and one people, (*atu amwenga*).

The initial question is who will set the program running? Is it to be the church leaders, the community members, the laity, or an initiative from the Ministry for Education? The thought here is to search for all possible means, and a vision that sees the practicality of achieving the well-being of people who are currently facing the scourge of ill health and other problems. The churches cannot do without their members; the Ministry of Education cannot do without the community; and above all the communities cannot do without their families and the people. It means that the churches, the Ministry of Education and the local community have to agree together to develop a successful healing community.

Importantly, local community religious leaders - Muslim, Christian and indigenous - need to extensively educate their religious members on the importance of religious cooperation and the concept of one Supreme Being worshipped by all. Christians, in particular, may need to be reassured when in some cases they consider they are being led along to accept the AIR practices of which they disapprove (see chapter 4). A new understanding is that

community success needs religions to corporately live together, respect each other, tolerate one another and effect a dialogue bringing people together into a better community.

There are credible approaches which, if pursued, could enable this model to achieve its goals. One approach would be the encouragement of youth-orientated inter-religious camps where participation in inter-religious activities and discussion are pursued. Youth camps in Kenya are already part of informal education, providing training in issues of society, faith and the building of a responsible social life. Unfortunately, in the course of this research I did not come across any youth organised inter-religious associations. There are Young Muslim Associations (YMA), Young Christian Association (YCA), Christian Unions in High Schools and other such religion-related associations. There are no young AIR associations, however, apart from one significant exception, the Mungiki of the Central Gikuyu region. This in fact is a continuation of the Mau Mau movement inspiring youth, through AIR, to seek their political and social rights. This movement has, in many ways, been fiercely opposed from both political and religious directions.

Another suggestion is the promotion of musical and literacy societies at both school level and in the local community, encouraging inter-religious cooperation. In promoting awareness of inter-religious cooperation by using music, art and design, poetry and so on, young people as well as the mature may, by utilising these and other means, earn income through not only attracting tourists (as is happening now), but also by earning money locally.⁶⁹ This could be extended to the entire nation by using electronic media. More so

⁶⁹ I suggest this can successfully be done from the experience I have had in HIV and AIDS awareness within the Coastal region of Kenya. Youth have organised music, poetry sessions, concerts and banners to promote awareness of health education in the communities. This started when the two religions of

now than in the past, this would be a quick and efficient means of passing information to the public, and could be used to introduce and expand programs involving religious relationships. In past decades, different Kenyan groups were unable to communicate their important messages instantly, but it can readily be confirmed that now, even in rural extremities, many can afford portable radios and have access to television (Mugambi, 2002).

The Kenyan Broadcasting and regional electronic media stations such as Baraka FM, Pwani FM and Kaya FM, with more soon to be established, need to encourage inter-religious cooperation. No single religion should dominate the electronic media, as is the present case with continuous preaching by Muslims and Christians alike, striving to create an impression of their religious superiority. Radio and television stations should welcome indigenous religious practitioners by allowing them to participate in prayer for the community and, as with the other religions, enable them to offer hope to the hopeless in society. This would at least be innovative and offer the younger generation and local communities the opportunity to gain respect for, and to appreciate, the plurality of religions (Mugambi, 1995).⁷⁰

Other stakeholders are African indigenous religious theologians and those of other religions. The former can play a role in overseeing community interests. The main argument used by many Western theologians regarding AIR is that it has neither written records, nor a founder. It is my contention that the study conducted by African

'Christianity and Islam' agreed that HIV/AIDS is 'with them' and that it will take a long time to eliminate, so it needs to be addressed accordingly.

⁷⁰ An example was 1st January 2002, the day President Kibaki was inaugurated into power. Indigenous religious leaders were given the opportunity to pray for the wellbeing of the nation. This gesture should now be extended to morning and evening prayers as when media stations are opening and closing their daily services.

theologians such as John Mbiti, Dickson Kwesi, Laurenti Magesa and Abimbola in their arguments have significant information, and resulting impact, in their writings about AIR which could be used as resources for the creation of a joint inter-religious syllabus for primary schools, not only in Kenya but also in general for all Africa.

They can contribute to the Ministry of Education's programme by laying out an inter-religious education curriculum for both adults and young people. Eventually, this would have to be approved by both the community and the Kenya Institute of Education to replace the existing policy of religious education. New books would need to be published for this programme, taking into account the interests of the whole community and fostering unity for future generations. The inter-religious curriculum needs to focus on benefitting the community by building cohesion and unity from the earliest stages of education.

The emphasis is that inter-religious community dialogue needs to be introduced through inter-religious education at the lowest levels and in the context of life as experienced by the community. This is what Kalilombe terms an ecumenical theology from the grassroots. His view is that ecumenism means different religions actually working together, on the ground, to better the community. For the Midzi-Chenda, and Africa in general, there is a long-held view of the importance of children and young people being 'formed' from the start in schools, colleges and universities; 'coil a fish when it's still fresh' (*Samaki Mkunje akiwa mbichi*).

The Kenya Ministry of Education changed its curriculum in certain subjects, such as geography and history. These were formerly taught in the European context; now they are

taught from the Kenyan and African perspective. Students are able to compare their geography and history with that of Australia, Europe, South America and so on. The same reform is needed for religious education, in order to teach children from the known African Indigenous Religion perspective and from there to extend their knowledge of the unknown. If this approach is employed, it will gradually help in creating a successful cooperative inter-religious community.

The proposal for inter-religious education will presumably undergo solemn debate, doubts and much opposition from both laity and religious leaders. For this reason, it would be risky to claim that inter-religious education will immediately take root in Kenya. A Midzi-Chenda saying is that, 'you cannot sow a seed today and expect to harvest the same day' (*k'ayiphandwa rero na yikavyala rero*). In his study Hans-Günter Heimbrock explains:

However, to agree to the inevitability of dialogue, and to start educational projects, does not lead automatically to successful and continuous dialogues. Enthusiastic efforts do not carry always suitable means of dialogue, nor do they provide a sufficient reflection on the basis and the goals of inter-religious dialogue. (Heimbrock 2009. In: Miedema 2009: 84)

Nevertheless, its success requires not only the sincere goodwill of both Christian and AIR religious leaders, but also support from the government-related ministries, these being the Ministry of Education as well as the Ministry for Culture and Social Services. Such support would be essential for the implementation of inter-religious education programmes having explicit policies for unifying a multi-religious society.

6.5: What Efforts the Church Made for Christianity to Dialogue with AIR

Ecclesial efforts to find ways by which cooperation might be achieved with communities of other living faiths began in 1948 soon after the Second World War (WWII) (Pollitt, 1996; Samartha, 1991; Wood, 2009). Of particular note is the Second Vatican Council of the Roman Catholics, initiated by Pope John XXIII, and later developed by Pope Paul VI (Shorter, 1975; Isizoh). The World Council of Churches also initiated a similar program through a series of extensive and lengthy theological debates in their meetings: Edinburgh and Oxford in 1938 and 1939 at Tambaram and Madras respectively (Pollitt, 1996). The watershed was the 1975 Nairobi general assembly with the theme 'Breaking the Barriers'. Both Catholic and Protestant Churches acknowledged that religious people must talk to each other, rather than continuing to remain apart. This could achieve meaningful discussion of issues related to wholeness of life. Viewing Scripture, the theological debate held that:

The Bible does not offer comprehensive or definitive solution on the question of Christians relating to those of other faiths in the 20th century. The situation in which the Bible was formed was so different from our own that we could hardly expect to find in it a blueprint for contemporary relationships. Nevertheless, it does provide sufficient and significant pointers for Christians in their search for a theology of inter-faith dialogue. (BMU, 1984: 27)

Samartha also observes:

The Bible does not give us 'blue prints' to solve modern problems. The question of the relation between people of different religions today is in many ways a new problem, which cannot be compared to Israel's relation to the nations in the Old Testament times or early Christian's relation to the religions in the Roman Empire... It is, however, important and necessary for Christians, when faced with such a new problem, to go back to the Bible for insights, indications, and directions that can help them as they struggle with new problems. (Samartha, 1981: 24)

It has taken a long time for Christianity to accept and regard the existence of AIR as an existing and true religion of the Africans. It is a religion possessing a living spirituality, giving life and empowerment to men and women, young and old, rich and poor: involving participation in life-giving activities (Amoah, 1992). In realising the spirituality and spiritual values found in AIR, for example, Oborji (2002) explains that Pope Paul VI in 1967 published his historic document in favour of AIR (*Africae Terrarum* 1968), praising the values of AIR and its culture and encouraging Africans to hold firm to their rich spiritual heritage.

Thereafter, the Catholic Vatican II Council upheld the same view and later published an article 'Meeting the African Religion', which was meant to deepen awareness of AIR in the world (Shorter, 1975). This step by the Vatican II Council paved the way for AIR to be viewed with a different approach and vision than previously. Progress accelerated when the Vatican Secretariat for non-Christian religions established a section for dialogue with African Religions within the PCID, and appointed Cardinal Arinze as the president of the office. Later, they organised a consultation on AIR at Gaba Pastoral Institute, Kampala, Uganda in August 1974 (Shorter, 1975). This consultation faced some severe challenges as a majority of the African Christians regarded AIR as a religion that had no meaning for them, a view which Nzeki (1978-XIII/3) agrees with.

Basically, the Roman Catholic Church has been in the forefront line pioneering the need for AIR to be given due respect by other religions. Emphasis of this was made in the pastoral letter written by Cardinal Francis Arinze addressing the African Synod Bishops in 1988. In his writing, Adu Kwabena-Essem articulates on how Pope John Paul II took a

historic step on behalf of the Church by apologising to Africa for the mistakes that were made on the frontiers of the Christian mission:

African Religions had their biggest boost two years ago when pope John Pual II, on a visit to Benin, apologized for centuries of ridiculing African Cultural beliefs by the Western world...The question is whether the Pope's 'penace' will force others to start respecting African cultures, in particular the beliefs in African religions (1995).

A question now arising is whether there was any initiative to educate the primary pupils and secondary school students regarding this discovery, in order to create a progressive change of attitude? Were the books published by the Roman Catholic Church supplied in the learning institutions, and if so, were African religious educators advised to use them as learning resources?

Surprisingly, as expressed by Abimbola (2006), the world religions - in their forums of dialogue - have for years been sidelining the primal ones; AIR in particular has suffered this alienation and was given no attention until recent times, although considerable steps have now been made (Amoa, 1998; Shorter, 1975). In September 1986, the WCC held a consultation in Mindolo Zambia (Secretariat pro non Christianis Bulletin 1988-XXIII/369: 301). The challenges were equivalent to those met by the PCID in 1974. Pope Paul II, as mentioned by Isizoh, greatly honoured AIR by welcoming their religious specialists to join other world religious leaders during world prayers for peace; affording them the opportunity to offer global peace prayers.

In spite of these 'trickledown' efforts, evidence from this research shows that because of the disagreements between AIR and Christianity there is much ground work that needs to be done, from the grassroots level in particular. As has already been mentioned, there has been a challenge among African theologians themselves towards AIR dialogue with

Christianity. There remains much ground to cover before this is possible. African theologians (such as Milingo, Martey, Nthamburi, Mugambi, and Walligo) have had an ongoing debate about the dialogue of 'inclusiveness', which is named 'inculturation of Christianity'. In this dialogue, Christianity is asked to look keenly at the values of AIR and accept them, 'as God is said to be a God of all cultures'. Nthamburi explains that inculturation is an encounter between two cultures where one influences the other 'conversion'. This type of dialogue is the one that has been developed in Africa. It is against what Hick and Alan Race considered. For them, they talk of pluralism, that all religions such as AIR are valued as unique, and they all offer salvation to humanity in their own capacity. Inculturation, contrary to pluralism, enthrones and makes one specific religion to be understood as superior to the other.

African theologians such as Adrian Hastings, Gruchy, and Henry Okullu have certainly pursued a quest in understanding the role of African Christianity in public society, but they have failed to investigate in-depth what positive roles AIR can play in the public sphere. This has meant a scarcity of African Christian literature on dialogue (LWF, 2002). Dialogue between African Christians and African Traditionalists has rarely been properly practised, with adherents of AIR holding many opinions that Christians have yet to accept (WCC, 1986; in *Secretariatus pro non Christianis Bulletin* 1988-XXIII/3 69; LWF, 2002). As a result, old divisions of two sides have existed, as described by Shorter (1975), 'a people of light' who are heading to heaven and 'a people of darkness' who are heading to eternal damnation. Since these two sides are within the same geographic and spiritual zones, there is a necessity for dialogue in order for them to address their health issues together.

There is hope that AIR and Christianity can cooperate, and have God-talk. This is in view of Ariarajah's comments regarding Christians revisiting the Bible, in which they can find unique contributions and possibilities towards dialogue with those of other religions. Ariarajah has stoutly maintained that the Bible states much that is in support of dialogue. He writes:

Is the Bible against a dialogical relationship with neighbours of other faiths? Or is the biblical message, however carefully, courteously and humbly it is presented, uncompromising in its demand that every one must believe in and accept Jesus Christ in order to be saved...is the biblical message so negative about those who do not accept and believe in Jesus, the Christ? Or is there another way to understand and read the Gospels that could become a different basis for our relationship with those who do not believe the way we do? (1987: 29-30)

He emphasised analysing the Bible thoughtfully, in relation to the contemporary societal context (rather than in the context of when it was written), and the need to produce a new approach for cooperating with people of other faiths. Ariarajah's interpretation is that the 'heart' of the Bible's Old Testament reveals God's love and relationship with humanity, particularly within the doctrine of creation. I have not referred to any myths regarding creation among the Midzi-Chenda, but according to Mbiti, Africans believe in the creational activity of God, and God's involvement, for the provision, care and protection of creation.

This was relevant to the new understanding of theologians who met at the Baar conference Switzerland in 1990 (Race, 2008), searching and exploring the issue of relating to people of other faiths. Ariarajah quotes the Baar Declaration of 1990:

'Our theological understanding of religious plurality begins with our faith in one God, who created all things, the living God, present and active in all creation from the beginning. The Bible testifies to God as God of all nations and peoples, whose love and compassion includes all humankind... We see his wisdom and justice extending to the ends of the earth as he guides the nations through their traditions of wisdom and understanding. God's glory penetrates the whole creation...we can no longer hold a theology that maintains God's absence in the religious life of our neighbours without

doing serious violence to the Christian understanding and experience of God...people have at all times and in all places responded to the presence and activity of God among them and have given their witness to their encounter with the living God...we therefore take this witness with the utmost seriousness and acknowledge that among all the nations and peoples there has been the saving presence of God.' (1987: 115-117)

Apart from the doctrine of creation, we find in the Baar Declaration an affirmation that God's love is not limited to one particular people and their religion. The story of Jonah, for example, makes us understand that, although he was reluctant to go to another community to take God's message of repentance, he found God pursued him until he went. This suggests that the rule of God is not for any one people but is extended to all humanity.

The New Testament Gospels continue to reveal God's love through Jesus. Jesus taught about loving God and neighbours, healing the sick and forgiving debts, all of which he demonstrated by the way he lived within his society. The New Testament not only reveals the love of God through Jesus, but also reveals that the life of Jesus illustrates what it 'means' to love; that is, God's own personal relationship with humanity; eating with the marginalised, showing solidarity with sinners and outcasts, for example (Ariarajah, 2003). The significance of this was shown when Jesus told the story of the Good Samaritan, who came from an outcast (lower-class) people, regarded as sinners; yet the Samaritan, rather than the 'holy' Jews passing by, showed good neighbourliness in practical ways by rescuing the life of the robbed man. This is the significant, all-embracing Christology which this research accepts.

Basically, Jesus' mission was not one of omission or rejection, but one of acceptance for everyone. The early Christian movement continued this acceptance as a result of Peter's

revelation in the encounter with Cornelius (cf. Acts 10: 9). It became evident that God does not show favouritism. Eventually, this was accepted by the Jerusalem Council (Vermes, 1993).

Coward (1985) emphasises the central role of God's love for all, as it was indicated in the Old Testament. The sense in which the uniqueness of both Jesus and Christianity was endorsed by the Church Fathers, formulated at Nicea and again at Chalcedon, says little about the central role and supremacy of God but deifies Jesus. Christianity became exclusive with the result that other religions were classified as insignificant and, therefore, were rejected:

Being in full possession of all truth, the church has not felt any need to listen to voices and other religions from the wider world... It is this attitude that has obstructed any meaningful contacts between Christian and other religions, except, of course, for missionary endeavours designed to convert non-Christians and so bring them into the church. (Coward, 1985)

Mistakes were made by writers of the Gospels but it needs to be acknowledged that they were under pressure to explain the history and nature of Jesus. This was in the context of a time when Christianity was undergoing serious challenges from the Graeco-Roman philosophers as well as from Judaism (Charlesworth, 2008). It became necessary to defend Christianity by defining it as different from Judaism. At the time, the Jews were struggling to suppress Jewish followers of Jesus by killing enthusiastic disciples like Stephen (Walls, 2008). It was out of circumstances such as those, and of other later ones in the time of Constantine, that Christianity 'enthroned' Jesus Christ by using complex and unique titles which were subsequently carried by missionaries to regions of Africa (Mugambi, 2001).

Hick, like Ariarajah and Samartha, has also wrestled with disturbing issues such as those relating to the uniqueness of Christianity and the lordship of Jesus. He has suggested that some of the texts in the New Testament, asserting the superiority of the lordship of Christ, were additions of authors who were defending Christianity against philosophical, Jewish and Roman scepticism. Hick's views, however, are that it is the lordship of God alone that will pave a way for dialogue between Christianity and other living religions.

Many people lack a true appreciation of their self-worth, and this is often due to the disregard of others. We can and do damage each other in many ways because humans have become less than God wants them to be. None of us, whatever our faith, has the right to think of others as unworthy of assistance and care when they are in need. Christianity should, therefore, respect and enter into a new relationship with those of other religions, by becoming more aware of the universal supremacy (ultimate reality) of God. Samartha advises:

Christians can no longer talk of God's work in the lives of neighbours of other faiths in purely negative terms. God's self-disclosure in the lives of neighbours of other faiths and in the secular struggles of human life should also be recognised as theologically significant. (Samartha, 1981: 28)

Human response to God's caring should be demonstrated by openness to and concern for each other, with willingness to acknowledge the necessity of valuing each other as we are valued by God. The challenge is for each of us to 'religiously' re-examine our personal attitudes and motivations towards others.

In fact Christians are called in the Bible not to make claims, but to make a commitment that opens their lives to others. And others also have their commitments. Dialogue thus is an encounter of commitments. It is in this encounter that people are able to see and hear the witness we have to offer to one another. (Ibid: 28)

6.6: Conclusion

This chapter has explored and scrutinised feasible theological preferences contributed by informants which could acquaint Christianity in Coastal Kenya with AIR in order to effect a dialogue for life and action. This could achieve full attention and understanding given to the need for restoring human wholeness. Exploration of theocentric theology (opinion from informants) with biblical support for inter-religious dialogue has been carried out, based on the primacy and central role of God; drawing attention to the way in which early Christianity continued to acknowledge the ultimate reality of God and of the universal loving spirit, before this was later negatively manipulated.

Evidence from recent Midzi-Chenda indigenous prayers has portrayed the nature of indigenous faith and practice; which is that of pointing to God. In many respects this is similar to the way in which both the Midzi-Chenda prophets and Jesus pointed to the father (God). Developing a theocentric theology and a Christology that accepts the universality of God is acceptable to the Midzi-Chenda people. This theology has been considered as the way in which the two religious communities could be drawn together so that they might find it possible to cooperate for the well-being of their society. There has been an acknowledgment that the supreme God's central role of love and of justice for humanity is evident and manifested in different ways; through the witness of special people such as Jesus, Buddha, Mohammed, Kajiwe, Mekatilili and others. Different communities receive God's revelations differently, yet all have similar meaning.

It is not the uniqueness of these religious specialists that can bring communities together, but the reality of the one God who is known in those many religions. To the Christians, Hick's advice is:

In our times a challenge to the structure of Christian beliefs has come from our awareness, not merely of the existence of the other great world faiths – there is nothing new about that – but of their spiritual and moral power. The challenge is to the traditional assumption of the unique superiority of the Christian gospel, or faith or religion...we are in the early stages of an adjustment that may take another fifty or more years. This is the transition from a view of Christianity as the one and only true religion to a new Christian self-understanding as one true religion among others. (Hick, 2001: 157)

The chapter has surveyed efforts made by the Church to dialogue with AIR but found that these efforts have not been effective from the grassroots level and from childhood. Suggestions have been offered for an inter-religious education programme, in schools, colleges and higher institution and adult education. Strategies of how to implement this have been explained. It is hoped that through this initiative, the question asked will eventually have an answer, albeit a long term achievement.

CHAPTER SEVEN

7.1: Towards a dialogical Theology between Christianity and AIR

This research has been an attempt to explore whether or not Christianity in Coastal Kenya among the Midzi-Chenda community, can agree to engage in dialogue with members of AIR. The research has also tried to find a suitable theology enabling AIR and Christianity to cooperate and deal with the extreme suffering in Midzi-Chenda society. Inter-religious community dialogue has become a necessity because of the urgency of health and wholeness concerns confronting contemporary Midzi-Chenda and African society in general (Oculus, 1983).

It is the understanding of Midzi-Chenda community that religion becomes *religion* when its theology puts first the consideration of humanity's well-being and also that of the whole of nature (cf Chapter Four and Six). When the theology of any religion misses this mark⁷¹ as its central role, it ceases in its vitality for the community, engaging instead in selfish activities such as competing with other religions; asserting itself to be the only true religion amongst all others. Eventually, this creates social and religious exclusion amongst members of the same community, as seen with the Midzi-Chenda of Coastal Kenya. A religion's theology that causes the disintegration of communities becomes a hindrance to any progress in community development. It confines and makes its members selfish. They lack a vision of uniting and developing humanity, replacing it with the 'non-policy' of exclusion which often leads to the de-humanization of others.

⁷¹ In this context 'mark' refers to the fact that religion should aim to hit its target (community well-being). This is African understanding about the role of religion.

Evidence from this research is that failure to address poverty and injustice has been due to continued religious rifts, which have resulted in relentless underdevelopment of health, not only among the Midzi-Chenda but throughout Africa. The Midzi-Chenda have failed to achieve a better life by working together because of the continual religious division between AIR and Christian converts. Mveng (1975) affirms that rifts originally occurred during the encounter of Christian missionaries and AIR (see Chapter Five). They created a complex and confusing crisis: 'at once psychological, religious, social, and moral' (1975: 8).

The problems of health, well-being and wholeness in Coastal Kenya and rest of Africa result from poverty and injustice, which has a long history and now needs to be addressed urgently and effectively; 'Poverty has given birth to (too) much suffering. It has made the continent appear sick, crippled, and begging' (Waliggo, 1991: 169). How can the Midzi-Chenda community fight persistent abject poverty and improve its health level? This is the most crucial question for human well-being, yet the Midzi-Chenda remain divided by religions they practice: 'People's health depends on effective poverty alleviation' (Abuom, 2001: 122). Arguably, this cannot be driven by Christianity only, but AIR, Islam and other religions are also needed. The plea is for all these to cooperate in dealing with their health and wholeness issues in solidarity. A report from The International Bank for Reconstruction affirms the following: 'Better health in Africa depends on an overall decentralisation that encourages African households and communities to become more responsible for their own health and more capable of achieving it' (WB, 1994: 4)

Extreme poverty can be explained as being due to the historical injustices of the West and economic globalisation, as also perpetrated by corrupt and exploitative Kenyan (African)

independent leaders. Other issues, such as global warming which seriously affects needy developing countries, have been due to industrial pollution in the Developed world, while diseases such as HIV/AIDS were initially transferred by way of tourism. These features in many ways affect the outlook of the religious, ordinary people such as the Midzi-Chenda, who always seek help from their faith (see Chapter Four).

In attempting to deal with this crisis, there has to be an understanding from contemporary Midzi-Chenda that both Christianity and AIR are religions remaining in, and lived by, their society. It seems that even those Christian doctrines and practices, originally brought from outside, now have irreversible effects on Midzi-Chenda (African society). These have become permanently rooted and their influences will remain as factors to be kept in mind when social problems are considered. Kenneth Stokes (1996) refers to this as *experienced, affiliated, and owned faiths*. However, Christianity has to be aware that AIR is a living religion which is practised effectively, with a theology guiding individuals and their communities to serve their society wholistically (cf Chapter Six).

The challenge facing contemporary Midzi-Chenda (African) is the need for a devout and coherent theology developed from better understanding of its faith, for the sake of society.

James Fowler's (1986) view is:

Faith (religion) has to do with the making, maintenance and transformation of human meaning... Faith (religion) composes a felt sense of the world as having character, pattern and unity. In the midst of many powers and demands pressing upon us, enlarging and diminishing us, it orients us towards centres of power and value which promise to sustain our lives. (1986: 15)

The effectiveness of the above suggestion is based on solidarity, acknowledgment of each other as people coming from the same creator, and valuing each other's religion as important to society; keeping in mind the central role of one Supreme Being for all

religions. This cultivates a collective relationship by rebuilding and revitalising the essence of communitarian culture which has been diminished by the presence of a Christianity presented in an exclusive form by missionaries. The Kiswahili phrase ‘unity is power and disunity is weakness’ (*umoja ni nguvu na kutengana ni udhaifu*) is an illustration of this consciousness. The point made here is that any good future for religious communities feeling dehumanised by circumstances relies upon their networking ties.

The Midzi-Chenda (Africans in general) are aware that: ‘everywhere and at all times, religion has taken healing as one of its principal objectives. Religion is often described as the healing of alienation between man and his creator, the world and his fellow men’ (Kubi, 1981: 125). Information obtained through this research (see Chapter Four) reveals that dialogue can be initiated between the two religions living in the same community.

Shenk writes that Christianity (in Africa) should:

recognise Gods grace at work among all people and in all great religions (including the AIR), giving up (the) claim to sole possession of the truth...to every culture its own religion, to every belief its own portion of truth. God is equally at work in all religions to bring salvation. The containers are different, but the water is the same. (Shenk, 1997: 53-54)

Theocentric⁷² theology is an approach proposed in this research, with the hope that it can cultivate and build up the spirit of a theology for inter-religious dialogue (dialogical theology)⁷³ among the Midzi-Chenda (Africans) and help focus on the prevailing problems (such as are described in the data analysis chapter), which require solidarity. It is foreseen that when dialogical theology is fully embraced by the Midzi-Chenda community and Africa in general, it might hopefully bring forth three main fruits.

⁷²Theocentric in this context refers to God identifying with other religions’ cultures and traditions rather than to a specific religion and race (See Chapter Six).

⁷³ The researcher uses the two expressions (a theology of Inter-religious dialogue; dialogical theology) that explain the same meaning.

Firstly, it is considered that dialogical theology, in spite of the community's religious differences, will create a sense of belonging rather than that of individualism (as highlighted in Chapter Five). This will harvest a desire for meeting together, talking and working as a team in order to address and overcome crucial problems of community well-being. Dialogical theology is one of a uniting movement, motivating members to work towards a healthy community. It can be an initiative that is wholly community driven, actively alleviating poverty and bringing about positive developments in community health. It is evident that the Midzi-Chenda indigenous adherents have been trying to improve their life standards by alleviating poverty through their own workforce (*mweria*). The Pwani Christian Community Services (PCCS) has also been active, but is focused on serving the church community rather than the community as a whole. *Mwerea* and PCCS need to be mobilized and driven by the community.

A major source of poor health, as noted before and clarified by PCCS, is poverty itself, particularly for those living in the rural interior. Poverty, as affirmed by the PCCS, among the Midzi-Chenda and Africa in general, is clearly seen to be an almost insuperable barrier for society's well-being. It is already understood that the lack of good health itself reduces the human capacity to work effectively in any community. This adversely affects the productivity of individuals, communities and nations in general. In an interview conducted by Agness Abuom (2001), she quoted an interviewee: 'when one is poor, one has no say in public, feels inferior, has no food so that there is famine in the house, no clothing so no dignity, no progress in the family' (2001: 11).

Through dialogical theology, the community (in solidarity) gains community-awareness of the issues affecting their well-being, confidence and acceptance of the responsibility

for starting community health educational programs such as those needed for abuse of drugs, child prostitution, HIV/AIDS awareness, sanitary practices, health foods, to mention a few among many others. A religious community should not wait for external organisations, such as Christian Aid or Amnesty International, to come and motivate them to seek for their human rights. These bodies should be moved by the cry and action of the affected people '*chiro na enye*'.⁷⁴

My emphasis of Temple's (2002) and Mwaura's (2005) studies (see Chapter Two) is that a coherent strategy does not depend upon initiatives from foreign bodies outside Africa to plan, dominate and implement the development activities of communities. Africans themselves, who are unquestionably religious, need to revisit their religious culture of communitarian life; taking note of 'I am because we are' (*ubuntu, udugu, udugu na umwenga*) and the biblical philosophy of 'love your neighbour as you love yourself'. This can be implemented in their spiritual pilgrimage through religious cooperative partnerships of dialogue, in order to reconstruct the integrity and realisation of their community life goals; calling for a just and healthy society in the present and for the future.

It is time for community religious leaders to come together and agree on how to analyse critically their own problems and address them amicably with the government, because as leaders, who meet their flock on a daily or weekly basis, they are the ones who can really understand community needs (IFCCPI, 2001: notes). When a local effort becomes

⁷⁴ In the course of this research, I happened to be close to the Christian Aid office in Carnmarthen, Wales, UK. I became eager to understand whether they were conscious of the problems of the people they hoped to help. I explained to the Christian Aid staff about the importance of the proverb that when one's relative dies, those coming to console him/her won't cry with the bereaved if the bereaved doesn't cry '*chiro na enye*'. But crying is not enough; the bereaved will have to search for the cause of the death in order to prevent further death. Outsiders can cry and search with the bereaved for a long-lasting solution.

successful, individuals and communities become stable and self-reliant. This is critical for economic productivity, improvement in quality of life with a holistic foundation and for transforming humanity (Oculi, 1981; Ēla, 1988).

Secondly, dialogical theology encourages liberation for an oppressed community. The view is that the concept of liberation when understood from an inter-religious dialogue context becomes a responsible theology in its relevance to society. Research has shown that within the Midzi-Chenda community religious oppression is not the only issue; there are also political, economic, and social ones. These remain to be addressed and cannot simply disappear without action taken to oppose them; people still use the term ‘colonial attitude’ (*ukoloni*) to refer to a certain lack of self-confidence. In 1998, for example, a dramatic injustice on the issue of land in Coastal Kenya came to a crisis point: politically, even in an independent Kenya, this has remained unresolved.

Any Kenyan leadership that attains power makes promises to bring about changes; from the period of Jomo Kenyatta, to the current 2008 government of National Unity the land issue persists (see Appendix 1 in CD). Reporting for the East African Standard Newspaper, Omanga and Ndegwa Wrote:

When he (minister for lands) tabled Sessional Paper No 3 of 2009 in Parliament, Mr Orenge accused the Kenyatta regime of inheriting the colonial state with its unfair land tenure systems and laws, and using them to enrich and empower a new political and economic elite. The minister said Kenyatta’s successors received and fostered the same colonial state, including land adjudication and registration laws... Describing landlessness in Coast Province as most acute, the policy traces historical dispossession of Africans to the Land Titles Act (Cap 282) of 1908, which disinherited the indigenous population along a ten-mile strip on the coast in favour of ‘absentee land owners’. (EAS, 19th November 2009)

For the Midzi-Chenda, the crucial answers, as stated earlier, rely on the land issue being resolved. In many respects other groups living alongside them have also been neglected;

their right to land is also ignored and they too are unable to use land satisfactorily for developing their agricultural industry. The failure to resolve this land rights issue has increased the scale of poverty in the region.

Worsening this situation was the collapse of the agricultural industry in the 1980s. This has recently been used, to little avail, as an issue in political campaigns aiming to gain votes with promises of remedial action. Apart from the land issue, the infrastructure of roads, health centres, learning institutions, safe and clean water, and so on are the most contentious concerns in Midzi-Chenda territory. Politicians and government bureaucracy have both failed to address the issues and, therefore, the belief has arisen in the community that they cannot be relied upon. The failure to create jobs for young people has also been a long-term problem, with false promises from the same sectors as mentioned above. Appreciation is given to the Inter-faith Clerics Coast Peace Initiative movement which did have a program for improving community well-being. Unfortunately, this has only accommodated Christians and Muslims while, as always, *Chikwehu* members have been sidelined.

Ideas, presented by Rosino Gibellin (1987), are that liberation movements inevitably arise from those who are oppressed, exploited, despised and marginalized. This is due to the innate need of people to seek for a fair society and their concern for the basics of life. Dean William (1986) elaborates further that liberation can be achieved when community members or individuals become conscious of, and understand, their history and identity, despite religious differences; they can learn from what they have been passing through and realise what might happen in future if they fail to take responsibility for their own destiny.

It is my view that the inter-religious community needs seriously to embark on working for its liberation by participating together in the struggle against local, government and international oppression, and by tackling all the problems that lead to poverty, disease, infrastructure failure and environmental damage. Pursuing alternatives for a just community needs a determined movement; with a vision of transforming the life of human beings and indeed the whole of nature itself. Effective, united faiths in any community need to point out, frankly, things which are Godly and those which are not, thus restoring God's place in people's lives.

Thirdly, dialogical theology becomes a catalyst in building up a healing community (see Chapter Five). This is noticeable, for example, in the African attitudinal 'love of life'. The data analysis chapter relating to the Midzi-Chenda and the writings of Oduyoye (1983) show how Africans perceive issues of life holistically. Africans always treat life as sacred. The works of Bujo (1990, 1978), Stinton (2002), and Pobee (1986) also concede 'life' to be central to the Africans' world-view. A healing community is that which not only looks at the well-being of humanity, but also at that of both domestic and wild animals, forests, rivers, sky and land.

The *Makaya* forests and main rivers in the Midzi-Chenda territory have formerly been preserved more by the indigenous adherents than by Christians. However, it is essential for contemporary society that all members of the community, indigenous or non-indigenous, male or female, old or young, develop inter-religiously conscious environmental care. The ideology now is that inter-religious cooperation brings the understanding that the preservation of nature is not an obligation for only one particular

religious community, but a profound obligation for all humanity; increasingly pleasing

Mulungu the creator of all. Masamba ma Mpolo explains:

The affirmation, preservation and reinforcement of life dominate the thinking, social structure and healing practices of traditional Africa. The whole of creation is impregnated with the life force. Plants, animals, human beings and inanimate objects are all furnished with a life force which ensures each creature its natural character...the human race (Christian and non-Christian) has an obligation to respect and to even venerate nature, for the whole of the creation has a right to full intensity of the life force, for this life force is God's creative substance. (1983: 20-21)

Building up a healing community also means sharing social, economic and political concerns in a religious profound unity, because life itself is a coherent unity.

The observation is that Coastal Kenya, along which is situated the international harbour for ships carrying cargo and passengers from different parts of the world, becomes the first to be affected by global problems: drug trafficking, terrorism, child prostitution and other ills, to a large extent all resulting from foreigners who come in the name of tourism. In the mutual realisation of these deadly ills affecting the well-being of society, members from both religions need to discuss (have dialogue) and produce mutually amicable ways of uniting in order to oppose all challenges and re-educate their society.

In view of the above thoughts, it can be argued that a theology of inter-religious dialogue (dialogical theology) in Africa enlightens the possibility of a Theo-democratic society⁷⁵; one that should be initiated by the people, and driven by the people, for the people. Inter-religious dialogue for life and action enlightens society enabling understanding of what each community means to the others and what it means to be human in the African context. In Kenya, this is reflected in the expression of the National Anthem:

⁷⁵Theo-democratic society in this case refers to a religious plural society that respects and accepts the religious values of others and is happy to cooperate for their well-being.

The Kenyan National Anthem

English

Kiswahili

1.

1.

O God of all creation
Bless this, our land and nation
Justice be our shield and defender
May we dwell in unity
Peace and liberty
Plenty be found within our borders.

*Ee Mungu nguvu yetu
Ilete baraka kwetu
Haki iwe ngao na mlinzi
Natukae na udugu
Amani na uhuru
Raha tupate na ustawi*

2.

2.

Let one and all arise
With hearts both strong and true
Service be our earnest endeavour
And our homeland of Kenya
Heritage of splendour
Firm may we stand to defend.

*Amkeni ndugu zetu
Tufanye sote bidii
Nasi tujitoe kwa nguvu
Nchi yetu ya Kenya
Tunayoipenda
Tuwe tayari kuilinda*

3.

3.

Let all with one accord
In common bond united
Build this our nation together
And the glory of Kenya
The fruit of our labour
Fill every heart with thanksgiving.

*Natujenge taifa letu
Ee, ndio wajibu wetu
Kenya istahili heshima
Tuungane mikono
Pamoja kazini
Kila siku tuwe na shukrani*

(<http://www.blissites.com/kenya/anthem.html> cited 23/04/2006)

The Kenyan National Anthem is in the form of a prayer and venerates *Mulungu*, the creator of all humankind and of the universe. This is a vision of one nation under one God. It encourages people of all religions in the nation to realise they belong to the one God and that they should be united, cooperating as a family for development (Lambeth Conference, 1884). Through unity, society will be able to seek for justice and peace by means of dialogue. This, when implemented, establishes a strong foundation for society's

acceptance of its responsibility to care for everyone's well-being, health and wholeness: the basis of what it means to be human in the African world.

It is the responsibility of multi-religious Africa to 'kick-start' a theocentric campaign that will encourage a theology of Inter-religious cooperation and dialogue in order to achieve a successful society.⁷⁶ This confirms St. Paul's encouragement to the earliest churches: 'faith without action is dead'. There is no reason for this to imply despising such as PCID, IRRD and LWF dating from 1967, and initiated by the Church. Present research acknowledges efforts made by the Church to dialogue with African Indigenous Religion.

Nevertheless, evaluation of their work by this research shows that it has been imposed from above and carried out as a project with pre-planned policies, without involving indigenous religionists. The involvement of AIR members came after inter-religious policies had been proposed and nothing could be changed. AIR members were not involved in the early inter-religious forums held in Catholic and Protestant churches. They were instead represented by African Christian theologians, talking on their behalf, making the project appear more Christian than holistic (Abimbola, 2006). AIR adherents feel foreign in this discourse.

The PCID and WCC avoided the 'suspicious' questions of AIR adherents asserting they were 'reserved for African-Christian dialogue'. Some of these questions were: What are the primary goals of the initiative and who are the custodians involved in the project? Do the goals relate to both African Christians and indigenous religious people or to Christians only? Is it practical for a project intended to focus on Christianity in Africa dialoguing

⁷⁶ Awareness is as already reflected in the literature review; that inter-religious dialogue programmes have been established in Africa but these seem to exist in theory and be more Christian oriented than wholistic.

with African Indigenous Religion, to be headed by individuals living in foreign countries such as Italy and Switzerland? Are Africans still in such a 'dark continent' that it is impossible to establish within it an inter-religious headquarters, with centres of excellence to organise dialogue for life and action? Can they not ask and answer for themselves the important questions relating to existing problems, such as those clarified by Temple as well as by the Midzi-Chenda people during their assemblies?

'Why is Africa experiencing poverty, conflicts, disease (HIV/AIDS, Malaria etc) indebtedness, bad and unjust governance, declining economies etc? What is God saying to us concerning our conditions through our religions? (Temple, 2002: 53)

The reason why the term 'suspicious' has been used is due to the fact that onwards from the period when these projects were initiated (as mentioned earlier) there has been a succession of African Christian theologians engaging in efforts to harmonise Christianity with the AIR. They have cleverly drawn upon African beliefs, adopting and reinterpreting them as preparation for the gospel of Christianity. This, in some instances, has been done by giving Jesus Christ African titles such as ancestor, chief, king, and so on. This was done without even asking the indigenous religious people what it is that Jesus means to them! Cécé Kolié writes:

Since their communities cannot name Christ personally without going to the Bible or Catechisms, they do just the opposite, and attribute to Christ the traditional titles of initiator, chief, great ancestor, and so on, that they would like to see him given in the communities. Once more, we impose on our fellow Africans the way of seeing that we have learned from our western masters. Shall we be followed by our communities, when we have finally gotten the prayers of missal, translated into these titles for Jesus whose real effectiveness has not been tested in Africa? (Kolié, 1991: 141)

This becomes a ministry to convert others and to form a Christian church rather than to develop a holistic community. How is it possible for one religion to be replaced by another? Even Judaism, from which Christianity originated, has not been replaced. In his argument Shorter opposes Inculturation, Indigenisation, and Africanisation claiming that

they all target the indigenous adherents in order to convert them. This is a fact which Abimbola brought to the attention of the June 2005 WCC conference (Ucko, 2006).

The argument is that conversion cannot answer the many problems facing Africa; rather it is yet another way of confusing society and actually increasing its desperation. Sincere and honest inter-religious dialogue is that which can encourage communities to team up in their struggles to improve life. It concentrates on what is happening in society and seeks to find solutions for unjust and life-denying situations.

This research proposes that an inter-religious educational programme be initiated in schools and the local community to encourage religious cooperation at the grassroots level (see Chapter Six), fostering this for present and future generations. Importantly, it is hoped that the approach will motivate both religions; Christian and AIR to re-interpret their beliefs, scripture (Christainity), doctrines and change the negative attitudes towards the religious other. It is the understanding of African society that charity begins at home, and at an early age. A multi-religious community that is formed from childhood, collectively, can create lasting positive effects in society.

The above suggestion would help understanding of inter-religious dialogue as a necessity, rather than as an intellectual issue. As suggested by Shorter (1975), both sides need to agree on change: 'to live is to change and all societies and cultures are continuously changing' (1975: 142). Both religions need to face the African challenge, not in isolation but by incorporation. The essential need is to focus on the problems facing Africa, rather than on struggling to clothe Christianity in African attire, which is the method constantly employed in order to securely plant Christianity in African soil (Nthamburi, 1991).

The campaign in Kenya against an attitude of naming those living with HIV and AIDS as being sinners has been noted; an example to be emulated by the inter-religious education programme. This attitude has had serious repercussions in society and African people have had to accept that many affected by HIV and AIDS, such as children, may be innocent. This was achieved by health education campaigns on behalf of HIV and AIDS sufferers, originally promoted by the Ministry of Health and later involving the Ministry of Education in preparing a special syllabus for primary and secondary schools. The Church and indigenous adherents became aware and accepted the fact that it was wrong to sideline those infected. In this way, the wrong attitude formerly held by churches is now disappearing. African spirituality becomes significant in life when it is felt to be working practically in and for the community.

The aim of the inter-religious education programme is to gradually create a community that engages in dialogue (dialogical community)⁷⁷, by seeking to use each other's faith to promote and build a whole and healing community; fostering a healthier and more just African society than exists now (Amoah, 1992). It will be the task of the dialogical community to question the universal God's will for society, and seek a proper direction leading to happier lives. This is an inclusive spirituality where the presence of God should be allowed to work in all life situations, engaging society in understanding that life should be lived harmoniously.

In view of the above suggested programme, it would help if the Church were to engage in reviewing some of the African 'cries and heartbreak' as expressed in literature, often

⁷⁷ Dialogical community in this case refers to a plural religious community that is ready to cooperate to dialogue using dialogical theology as a preference tool to address community issues.

written by non-Christian Africans (such as Jomo Kenyatta, Ngugi wa Thion'go, Chinua Achebe, Okot P'Biktek). This might direct African Christians to engage in re-reading the Bible and re-interpreting its message in the context of the African world-view, learning from writers such as those mentioned above. African Christians also need to learn from its practitioners that AIR plays a significant societal role by involving every member in caring about and maintaining the integrity of life (Amoah, 1992).

The struggle to answer the question as to whether Christianity in Africa can effect dialogue with African Indigenous Religion has raised further questions that admittedly can not be fully explored in this thesis. There is a suggestion thought to be of importance for further research, within the context of inter-religious community dialogue in Africa.

The suggestion is to carry out a research into what African indigenous adherents understand Jesus and Christianity to be, in the context of existing community problems. In this case, the critical question would be to ask whether or not Jesus and the Christian religion have any relevance to them. If the answer is positive, what are the factors that contribute to this relevance? Can Jesus be welcomed (*mtuwi*) in their daily religious activities intended for the well-being, health and wholeness of society? If the answer is negative, reasons must be found out.

It is my opinion for this kind of research to be carried out in rural Africa where African spirituality has continued to be fully maintained. As suggested by Okullu (1983), in rural Africa, it is during the night when you might hear drumbeats, sounds of whistles and flutes, eulilation and songs sung by African Christians, or indigenous adherents, celebrating a first or second funeral, wedding, initiation or family healing rituals.

Attention given to this would afford a clear view and understanding of the community's theologies. Researching this topic would unearth the feelings of AIR adherents, able to express their feelings than having everything being decided for them, whether Jesus is of any real relevance to African indigenous society and whether or not there is a genuine need to cooperate with people of other religions, especially that of Christianity.

According to the present research, it has been learnt that AIR adherents are feeling sidelined. Formerly, most research has been done by African Christians or non-Africans; in most cases they lack appropriate interpretation of meaning. Nevertheless, there are knowledgeable African indigenous adherents and practitioners who could be empowered to conduct research within their own context. It is essential for AIR members to participate in research, such as forming focus groups of different ages, and involving them in decision-making. My view is that they need to be involved from the initial stages in the making of policies and in discussing their wishes within the inter-religious education programme. This opinion may help in laying a firm and long-lasting foundation for an inter-religious dialogical community that fosters health, well-being and wholeness.

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Dates

- 27th December 2007 07.00hrs
- 28th December 2007 18.00hrs
- 29th December 2007 18.00hrs
- 30th December 2007 07.00hrs
- 31st December 2007. 18.00hrs
- 1st January 2008 07.00hrs, 18.00 hrs
- 2nd January 2008 07.00hrs
- 3rd January 2008 18.00hrs
- 10th January 2008 18.00hrs
- 15th January 2008 18.00hrs

30th January 2008 07.00hrs

18th April. 2008 18.00hrs

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GLOSSARY

1: Midzi-Chenda Terms/Sayings Used in the Thesis

Aganga	Medicine men/women
Ahenda kudza	Those who are not indigenous
Ajali	Accident or by accident
Alombwaye ni ani/ghani	Who deserves worship
Anadamu/Adamu	Humanity
Anyama	Animals
Ariyeumba anadamu osi	Creator of all
Aroromi	Carers
Atsai	Those who practise witchcraft
Atumia a mudzi	Village elders
Atumia a lalo	Community elders
Atumia a kaya	Elders/priest for the Midzi-Chenda sacred forests
Achetu	Women
Akare	Elderly
Akongo	Sick
Amisheni	Missionaries

Ayawehu	Neighbours
Asena	Friends/colleagues
Baha	Better
Bako	Bad utterance that can cause psychological problems to your neighbour
Karibu	Welcome
Kayigulwa	You cannot buy this
Koma	Dream/ancestor
Koma tsi Mulungu dzulu	Ancestors are always under God
Kondo	War
Kuluviro	Stronghold
Kuusa sadaka	To fulfil an offering promise
Kuusa muzuka	To fulfil an offering promise to protective spirits
Kuzizimisa lalo	To heal the community
Chala	Toe/finger
Chala chimwenga	
kachivunza tsaha	One finger cannot crush lice
Chenda	Nine
Chihi/kihi	Chair
Chichi ndo chik'wehu	This is our religion/way of life/culture
Chimwenga	One
Chik'wehu	Religion/culture/way of life
Chik'wehu chinativya	Our religion saves
Chikwao	Their religion/culture/way of life
Chiparya	Local wine cup
Chiravo	Oath
Chiravo cha Mwasamani	Oath administered by Mr. Mwasamani
Chirimo	Season
Chirimo cha mwaka	Winter season
Chirimo cha vuri	Summer season
Chiro	A cry
Chiro na enye	A cry that starts with the grieved person
Chiva/viva	Water reservoir
Chivuri/roho	Soul
Dzana	Yesterday
Dzuwa	Sun
Galaanahi	Where is it coming from
Ghai	Attentive
Ghaini	Attentive and peaceful
Hanga	Funeral
Hanga itsi	A funeral conducted immediately when one dies
Hanga ivu	A funeral conducted after one year or so
Juma	A day
Juma ra Mulungu	Sacred day of God
Juma ra mwezi	The first day of the month
Kachifa	It does not die
Kambi	Members of a meeting/conference

Kayigulwa	
Kudzigidzya	To discuss/talk in depth
Kudzihenda	To act as if/defence mechanism
Kufungira	To prevent
Kuhatsa koma	To talk to ancestors
Kulomba	To worship/pray
Kulomba Mulungu	Worship/pay homage
Kurya	To eat
Kuryana vitswa	To discuss issues together
Kusoma	To read/ go to schools to acquire education
Kutsowa	To have nothing
Kuuya	To go back
Kuuya nyuma	To go backwards
Kwadze munahenda vino	Why do you do this?
Lalo	Local community
Madzi	Water
Majuma	Weeks/days
Majuma ga Mulungu	Sacred days of god
Malau	Meeting to settle disputes
Makaya Midzi-Chenda	Sacred forests
Makongo/manyonge	Ailments/diseases
Matsai	Witchcraft
Mbari	Clan
Mbari mbii	Bad clan
Mbayumbayu	Psychosomatic problem that can cause madness
Mbidzo	Good
Mburuga	Diviners message
Mbuzi	Goat
Mbuzi na kadzama	Goat and local wine
Mboko	Wine container
Midzi	Villages
Mihaso	Medicine
Mikoma	Ancestor
Mila	Culture
Mila yehu	Our culture
Mimera	Crops
Minda	Land for cultivation
Miyazo	Thoughts
Mjeni	Visitor
Mjeni nzoo mwenyezi avole	When a visitor comes villagers get blessings
Moonano wa hanga	Meeting to dialogue about a second funeral
Moonano wa malau	Meeting to dialogue about distputes
Moyo	Heart/life
Mudzi	Village
Mufundo	Curse
Muganga	Medicine practitioner
Mukongo wangu/wehu	Our patient

Mulamulo	Tool used by diviner to tell the truth. Usually a stick
Mulungu	God
Mulungu mumwenga	One God
Munda	Land for cultivation
Muroromi	Carer
Muricha	One who abandons something
Mutsai	Witchcraft man/woman
Mutumwa	Slave
Muvumikizi	Secretary who takes notes by memory and sticks
Mvugule/mvuguleni	Set him/her free
Mwambadze	What are you saying?/how are you?
Mwanamadzi	Health worker/medicine apprentice
Ndala	Separate small bush meant for meetings
Ndalani	In the meeting place
Na vo pindi akare ehu...	Long time ago this is what our forefathers ...
Ngambi/kambi	Members in a meeting
Niani/ghani	Who is it?
Nyasi	Grass
Nyuni	Bird known to tell bad or good fortune when it sings
Nyuni mui	Bad fortune
Nyuni mudzo	Good fortune
Nzala	Famine
Peho mbidzo	Good weather/good health
Peho mbii	Bad weather/bad health
Richa	Leave it alone
Roho	Soul/spirit
Shenene	Sorrow
Soko	Market
Sokoni	At or in the market
Sumilani	Attention
Taireni	Holy/greetings that wish good
Tsaha	Lice
Tsi	Territory
Tsihaki	It is not right
Uchi	Wine
Uchi wa munazi	Palmwine
Uchiya	Poverty
Udugu	Brotherhood
Uhuru	Freedom /independence
Ukoloni	Colonialism
Ukongo	Disease
Ukulume	Brotherhood
Umisheni	Life and activity of being a missionary
Utsai	Witchcraft
Uzima	Wellbeing
Uzima wa lalo	Community wellbeing
Virimo	Season

Viryangona	Things used for treatment and rituals
Vitiyo/makushekushe/ mavingane	Abomination of having sex with closest relative
Vung'we	Container for local wine
Wari wa matsere	Food from cornflour
Vun'gwe	local mug for putting in local wine

2: Kiswahili Terms/Sayings

Kiswahili	English
Harambee	Public meeting
Baraza	Public meeting
Harambee	United workforce
Kizuri chajiuzza kibaya chajitembeza	Something good markets itself but one that is bad usually advertises itself
Uhuru	Freedom/independence
Umoja ni nguvu, kutengana ni udhaifu	Unity is power, disunity is powerlessness
Waarabu wa Pemba Hujuana kwa vilemba	Arabs from Pemba know each other by their turbines

APPENDICES:

Appendix 1:

This is copied in two different CD's; put in different pockets at the back of the thesis. One is for Midzi-Chenda Indigenous Songs celebrating good health, the other is a collection of information about Midzi-Chenda indigenous way of life.

Appendix 2

This appendix gives the main points debating for and against a motion conducted in three high and primary schools. The points were corrected in terms of grammar and spelling but retain the meaning and are generalised for all the schools. They were matched together and convey the real meaning as desired. The title of the motion was:

Can Midzi-Chenda Christians and Followers of the Indigenous Religion Discuss Together on How to Improve their Community Health?

2 a: Schools Debating for and against a Motion

Points for the Motion

1. Yes because AIR and Christianity are religions that point to God. Both those who believe in the religions and stay in the same community need to relate well as they are people of the same God.
2. Yes because both religions serve society for health and wholeness. Both adherents need to share ideas of how to manage health development.
3. Yes because for a community to develop holistically, it needs religious support. This enables members to grow in good ethics; e.g., peace, justice, and care for God's creation
4. Yes because a divided community will end up in enmity creating social exclusion; such as what is happening concerning terrorism.
5. Yes because a healthy community is determined by what it is; divided or united. Religions are like the fingers of the palm and all are controlled by the palm.

Points against the Motion

1. No because AIR and Christianity are different in the form of their spirituality. Christianity has a promise of eternal life while AIR is leading its adherents to hell.
2. No because Christianity is the religion that offers total healing. This is in agreement with the command of Jesus, go and heal the sick
3. No because you cannot put two bulls together. One of them will have to surrender to the other. Darkness cannot share with light.

Table Showing Focus Group Participants

Sex	Age	Dates	Area/Village	District
Male 10 Female 6	60-above yrs: 4 40-60 yrs: 6 60-above yrs: 2 40-60 yrs: 4	December 2005 & January 2006	Dumbule	Kinango
Male 15 Female 12	60 yrs above: 7 40-60yrs: 8 60 yrs above: 5 40-60yrs: 7	February 2006	Mkapuni	Kilifi
Male 18 Female 13	60yrs above: 7 40-60yrs: 11 60yrs above: 4 40-60: 9	December 2006 & January 2007	Ribe (Chauringo)	Kilifi
Youth Males 16 Females 8	20-25 yrs: 16 20-25 yrs: 8	February 2007 & January 2008	Likoni Matatu station island side.	Mombasa
Totals: 98				

NB: The numbers grew as they kept informing each other, so that those with detailed information would come and share to the group. In total, the focus groups went up to 127; 45 being women and 82 being men.

Appendix 3

This shows a discussion with one of the focus groups.

The first focus group where I did the research was in Kinango district, which is located in the western hinterland of the south coast of Kenya. The majority of the population in the district are the Aduruma who are divided into fourteen clans, but there are also the Akamba people, some of them have become part of the Aduruma clans by taking a special ritual called *kurya muuma'* or *kurya tsoga* or *kuphenya mbarini*. To gain access to these people I

obtained a letter of introduction from Queen's Foundation, which then helped me to get a letter of permission from the area chief to the assistant chief of Dumbule and so I was able to have access to the Dumbule village chairman who specified which people would be of benefit to my research. The Dumbule village is well known for having reputable elders (*akare*) and religious specialists (*aganga a lalo*) who have past and present information about traditional religious practices. This research took four weeks in the month of January 2006. As was explained in the methodology chapter, the month of January was convenient as people would have completed their harvest for the short season 'Vuri'. I was able to be with the focus group for special discussion/conversation on a resting day (*Juma*) as the first, second and third days of their traditional week (*Kwaluka, Kurimaviri, Kwisha*) were also busy days for most of the villagers. Notably, these were the days when I had to participate in their assemblies (*moonano*) where they discussed contentious issues such as those of land and health, and observed their community rituals.

In my first sitting with the Dumbule focus group, my main aim was for them to help me understand and discover their concept of health; what they knew about health in the past and how they perceive it today. I also intended to discover what role their religion would play in the issue of health, supposing there was a community health crisis. This was an open-ended discussion/conversation, and I had to record the conversation on my tape recorder. The eldest were more knowledgeable and were, for example, those who gave detailed information of the understanding of health in the past and present.

The following was a discussion that took place in a quiet place (*ndalani*) which is a small bush under a shade of a big tree, where no children or other visitors could easily come and interrupt us.

3a: Meeting with a Focus Group

	English	Midzi-Chenda
Elder	(Snuffing his tobacco) Elders I draw your attention	<i>kambi sumilani</i>
All	Peacefully we are here	<i>Ghai</i>
Elder	While we are attentive	<i>Huchisumila</i>
All	It means peace and harmony	<i>Nahuphole</i>
Elder	It is when we can pray for fortunes	<i>Hunavoya Vidzo</i>
All	That they may befall us	<i>Navidze</i>
Elder	How about the misfortunes?	<i>Vii navyo</i>
All	Let them pass to the desert	<i>Navyende</i>
Elder	Then when we talk together	<i>Kugomba</i>
All	We are able to come to agreements	<i>Nakusikirana</i>
Elder	Here is our child, born of our land and he has come to consult us so that we can tell him what the Midzi-Chenda is like. If the child asks from elders, is he informed the truth or not?	<i>'Ghaya mwana wehu hiyu yukudza ili amanyiswe mautu ga chikwehu, achuuzwa ni kwambirwa hebu kaambirwa?</i>
All	he is given the true information	<i>Nikwambirwa</i>
Elder	(As he pours libation of local wine on the ground). Our ancestors who live down with us	<i>Mmmh Koma tsi'</i>
All	And God who is above all of us	<i>Mulungu dzulu</i>
Elder	now we address you ancestors, those that we remember and those we don't, from our mothers sides and from our fathers, in order to guide us in our discussion. Now we ask you to share with us in this drink.	<i>Bahi mwi koma, hurio hunamumanya, nahusiomumanya, akuche na akulume sino husegere phapha, na hunahenza reri ili gosi gondogasumurira gakale ga reri. Ghaya hinyu uchi wenu namwi mutsumbule</i>
Elder	(As the wine is shared equally). Now Mrs. Mwanguzo Anzazi listen to what has made our son gather us here.	<i>Haya Anzazi mukaza Mwanguzo musirikise ye mwana urehewa nini</i>
Mrs. Mwanguzo Anzazi	Now it's your turn Mr. Beuchi Munga. Your elders would like to know and understand the main purpose of you calling them to gather. What is that, in particular that has caused you to bring us together.	<i>Ghaya baba Beuchi Munga, Gakwako sambu, atumia anakuuza anakwamba usumurire, heka udziwiha unariphiro bomu?</i>
Researcher	My elders I draw your attention	<i>Avyerye sumilani</i>
All	peacefully we are here	<i>Ghai.</i>
Researcher	(As he addresses Mrs. Mwanguzo, who listens and nods on behalf of the rest). I wish to thank you all for accepting	<i>Ninamulavira mumvera mosi kwamba mudzihika mukadza ili musikire riri ro dzinireha. Mino rangu bomu rodzo nireha vava</i>

- gathering with me and listening what I would like to know. My aim is seek to know and discover the concept of health as known by the Midzi-Chenda in the past and present and to understand what religion did to make sure that the communities lived a healthy life, in the past and for now. Then I also need to know whether in your matters of health you invite the Christians or not.
- All** (They burst into laughter as they continue to take their wine, randomly each gives his own joke that the topic is very precious.)
- Mrs. Mwagzuo Anzazi** Attention attention elders, you have requested him to tell us what has made him call us here, there you are now, it is such a huge matter
- Elder** attention elders
- All** peacefully we are here
- Elder** This discussion is in three parts. Part one is our concept towards health in history and today, part two how our religion helped us to adress the issues of community health and the third is whether we engage with Christians in our health matters
- Elder** Elders is it not so?
- All** Yes it is
- Elder** (to the researcher in a respectful address).
Is it not so our son?
- Researcher** yes it is true
- Elder** (As others now weave their mats and baskets, others make beads and hoe handles) Now elders, we need to thoughtfully tell our son the truth about our understanding on the topic, but need to go step by step to avoid confusing him.
- Elder** So when you get all this information what will you have to do with it?
- Researcher** Well it is part of my writing, after writing all the information, I will
- nikumanya. Nikukala nahenza nimanye, kutuwana na chikwehu, uno uzima muna umanya ni utu wani? Phiri, pho pindi na vino sambu Amidzi-Chenda akala anahendadze ili lalo rosi rikale na uzima na vino sambu nikukala anahendadze?. Hahu ni kwamba je dini ya chikristo muna-avizananayo dzulu ya uzima hebu chila mumwenga yuna njiraye?*
- Sumilani, sumilani kambi. Ghaya mudzamba mwana aseme, ghaya vino hiye yubita chitai.*
- Kambi sumilani*
- Ghai*
- neni riri ri rirahewa ela rina mafungu mahahu. Fungu ra kwanza ni uzima ni utuwani. Fungu ra phiri ni kwamba pindi Amidzi-Chenda ahendadze kurinda uzima wa adamu na lalo rao. Hahu, tsiku zino hunahendadze kurinda uzima, na je huna-avizana na akristo hebu ng'o*
- Kambi ni phapho hebu tsiphapho?*
- Niphapho.*
- Tsiphapho hebu tsiphapho baba?*
- Tu ni phapo*
- Ghaya kambi bitani vitswa hulilikane humwambire ujeri yuno mwanache lakini hwanze na menga menga hutsimuyunge akili*
- Gondo ga hewa vano undagahendera tuwani?*
- Nindagahandika chitabuni maana ni kahi ya masomo gagu*

then try to argue with what I am investigating and come up with proposals for a better health society. Suppose I pass my exam, I will try to make sure that this valid information is published as a book. It will benefit our future generation and those who want to do research about our people.

ga chik'wehu. Kisha gandasomwa ni a Midzi-Chenda a tsiku zidzazo na atu alaa kure kure.

Appendix 4

Format of Prayers

4a. A Diviner Praying for a Patient

	English	Midzi-Chenda
Diviner	I greet you colleagues with holy greetings.	<i>Aganga Taireni</i>
People:	Thanks, we receive the holy greetings of God	<i>Za Mulungu</i>
Diviner:	Apprentices, I also greet you with holy Greetings	<i>Anamadzi taireni</i>
People	Thanks we receive the holy greetings from God.	<i>Zamulungu</i>
Diviner	God and child of God, you are the true owners of this person, he/she has been in physical pain and complaining about dreadful dreams. God why should you leave him/her suffer...	<i>Mmm uwe mwenyezi Mulungu na uwe mwana Mulungu, Mwimwi ndo murio na chihi chichi/kihi kiki, mbona mnamuricha yunayugika</i>
Diviner:	Peace I command you spirits, do not fight him/her. He does not deserve your punishment; give him/her peace to enjoy a healthy life.	<i>Ghaini, ghaini, ghaini pepo Mvuguleni apigwe ni peho</i>
Diviner	When we pray for health does God grant us or not?	<i>Huchivoya uzima kwa Mulungu, nikuvugulwa Ka vugulwa</i>
People	God grants us good health	<i>Nikuvugulwa ni Mulungu</i>

4b: A Prayer to Mulungu for Rains

	English	Midzi-Chenda
Priest	Midzi-Chenda, I draw your attention	<i>Midzi-Chenda sumilani</i>
People	We are attentive	<i>Ghai</i>
Priest	When we become attentive	<i>Huchisumila</i>
People	We receive healing	<i>Nahuvole</i>
Priest	Who is it, who deserves worship?	<i>Bahi Alombwaye ni ghani</i>
People	God alone	<i>Ni Mulungu ghakeye</i>
Priest	God listen and see us	<i>Mulungu hulole</i>
People	We are attentive	<i>Ghai</i>
Priest	When we talk	<i>Kugomba</i>
People	He is amongst us, hears us and responds	<i>Nakusikirana</i>
Priest	God we are in your presence this time we need your attention due to this persistent drought... ⁷⁸	<i>Ah Baba Mulungu, kahungagombere dzuwa riri</i>

4c: A Consultation Prayer with Ancestors

	English	Midzi-Chenda
Elder	Ancestors are below	<i>Koma tsi</i>
People	God is above them all	<i>Mulungu dzulu</i>
Elder	Who dies leaves others behind	<i>Asena afwaye nikusiya hebu kasiya</i>
People	Yes, he leaves others behind	<i>Eeh nikusiya</i>
Elder	Anyone is in problems doesn't he report?	<i>Mutu achipata riki nikugomba hebu kagomba</i>
People	Yes, he reports	<i>Eeh nikugomba</i>
Elder	I am addressing you ancestors, from my mother's and father's side, those that I recognise and those that I do not know.) ⁷⁹	<i>Bahi koma zosi za kuche na kulume, nizimanyazo na nisizozimanya</i>

⁷⁸ This prayer was conducted during a communal worship service to seek help with drought in Kinango Dumbule. This was a participant observation, schedule 10th February 2006, and the observation applies to all the Midzi-Chenda people.

⁷⁹ This format of prayer was given to the researcher by a Duruma elder January 2006. This prayer is commonly practised by all indigenous Midzi-Chenda people where the lordship of God is put first.

Appendix 1

In this appendix, a series of newspapers published by the East African Standard show regard for the religion of the Midzi-Chenda and its practices. It is to be remembered that the common name used for the researched population in Appendix 1 is Mijikenda. However, as already argued and clarified in Chapter 1, the research has used throughout the term Midzi-Chenda. The appendix also shows the way in which the Midzi-Chenda have conserved their sacred forests *Makaya*, and how this has been appreciated both by the government of Kenya and by the international world. It also shows how some political Indigenous, and those from outside, have appreciated the role of religion and asked for blessings from local *chik'wehu* priests for their political careers. There is also a mention of injustice to young people regarding land and employment where the Makaya elders have been at the forefront, being the voices for the voice-less.

1a: Kibaki to meet Coast MPs

*<http://www.eastandard.net/news/InsidePage.php?id=1143993614&cid=159>
Tuesday, 2nd September 2008*

Published on 2nd September 2008

By Caroline Mango

President Kibaki has booked a date with all Coast MPs at State House, Mombasa. The meeting comes a day after Prime Minister Raila Odinga met the legislators and outlined his plan for the region. Kibaki told Transport minister and Matuga MP Chirau Mwakwere that he would like to meet the leaders in a follow-up meeting. On the agenda are issues they listed when they met the President a month ago in Nairobi. Mwakwere has informed the MPs about the meeting. They are expected to hold

discussions on Friday afternoon, after the Head of State receives athletes who arrived in the country on Wednesday.

Assistant minister and Kinango MP Gonzi Rai said on Thursday expectations by the MPs would largely dwell on feedback by the President on matters raised at their last meeting, at his Harambee House office. Kibaki is expected to brief them on steps his Government has taken so far to solve issues top on the agenda. They include land, water, human-wildlife conflict and appointments to key positions. They also expect him to state his stand on the appointment of Coast residents to parastatals in the region, including at the Port of Mombasa and other key Government positions.

East African Community Minister Amason Kingi said their expectations would be that the President would outline the Government's strategy in solving thorny issues like land. Largely, we will expect more from him because we handed over our demands on issues we felt had not been resolved in the region for a long time. Land is top on the list, said Kingi. The MPs are also demanding the immediate re-constitution of the Mombasa Water Board; a deadlock they said had delayed funds to repair the Mzima Springs, a major water source for Mombasa and its environs.

1b: Kibaki and Coast MPs in secret meeting

Published on 05/08/2008

By Ben Agina

President Kibaki held a day-long closed door meeting with Coast MPs at his Harambee House office on Monday, in what is seen as reaching out for more support for the PNU party. The meeting comes at a time when the President is facing growing rebellion from some of his Mt Kenya allies who have rejected his call for a united PNU. The Coast delegation included MPs drawn from all political parties in the province. Although details of the meeting were scanty, the MPs were said to have presented a memorandum to the President on priority issues affecting coastal people.



President Kibaki meets with Coast MPs when they paid him a courtesy call at his Harambee House office, Nairobi, on Monday.

[PHOTO: PPS/STANDARD]

Among them were land, infrastructure and the revival of stalled industries, among others. The meeting went on late into the evening. Cabinet Minister Najib Balala confirmed the meeting took place although he was absent with apologies. Speaking on the telephone from Mombasa, Mr Balala said the MPs wanted to pay a courtesy call on the President the same way they did with Prime Minister Raila Odinga two weeks ago. "MPs from the Coast wanted to pay a courtesy call on the President. He granted us that opportunity. I sent my apologies, but I was briefed," said Balala without adding details.

It was not lost on political analysts that Kibaki has often reached out to the Coast in times of great political need. In 1992, 1997 and 2002 he relied heavily on the region's vote, until last year when the ODM outsmarted him. The President has since been trying to have PNU affiliate members united, but Narc-Kenya's Martha Karua, Ford-Kenya's Musikari Kombo and Safina leaders have objected to the dissolution of their parties.

Karua has even gone ahead to announce her candidature for presidency in 2012 to the chagrin of members from Central Province.

It is the feeling of Narc-Kenya that the President wants PNU strengthening before he hands it over to Deputy Prime Minister Uhuru Kenyatta. There is a feeling in Central Province that the region risks isolating itself if it does not change its traditional voting pattern. At the weekend, the succession war among President Kibaki's allies burst out in the open as central Kenya politicians issued a veiled attack upon Karua.

Ic: Coast legislators tell Government to address perennial land conflicts

Published on 11/07/2008

By Isaac Ongiri

A section of Coast MPs have appealed to the Government to tackle land problems in the region. The legislators, including Transport Minister Chirau Ali Mwakwere, said many Coast residents lived in undemarcated land and were, therefore, landless. The MPs held talks with Lands minister James Orengo in his office on Thursday and called for action against people behind historical land injustices. "We have many problems involving land at the Coast. Every constituency is affected," Mwakwere said. Orengo said he would lead technocrats in his ministry in a tour of the Coast before drawing up a marshal plan to put the problems to rest.

Past Injustices

Orengo, who was accompanied by Assistant minister Bifwoli Wakoli, said some powerful individuals in previous regimes thwarted the demarcation of some parcels of land at the Coast. He warned that his ministry would make critical decisions to correct what he termed as "injustices" against the innocent. "We will move to the Coast to audit the extent of the problems. We shall then evaluate our findings and make appropriate decisions even if it will mean stepping on other people's toes," Orengo said. Those said to have caused land conflicts at the Coast, the minister said, should surrender to give justice and fairness a chance.

Mwakwere, who is also the Matuga MP, said the region had faced problems occasioned by land grabbing, political injustice and absentee landlords. The MPs told Orengo that Coast dwellers were optimistic that a lasting and agreeable solution would be reached without delay. Assistant ministers Gonzi Rai, Francis Baya and Ramadhan Kajembe and MPs Calistus Mwatela (Mwatate), Omar Zonga (Msambweni), Gideon Mungaro (Malindi) were present. Nominated MPs Sheik Mohamed Dor and Shakila Amina Abdala also attended the talks.

Id: PS blames land woes on Kenyatta

Published on 01/08/2008

By Beattah Omanga

A Permanent Secretary re-opened the highly emotive land issue and heaped blame on the Kenyatta regime for the problems bedeviling Kenyans today. Lands PS Dorothy Angote accused founding President Jomo Kenyatta and senior members of his Government of allocating huge chunks of land to undeserving individuals at the expense of landless Kenyans. Angote spoke on Thursday shortly after Deputy Prime Minister, Mr Uhuru Kenyatta, was interviewed by BBC TV in London and asked to comment, among other things, on land issues.

But Uhuru avoided being drawn into the question by BBC TV *Hard Talk* anchor Stephen Sackur. But Angote recalled independence history, saying the British government gave Kenya huge amounts of money in 1964 to resettle landless Kenyans when her citizens, former colonial masters, returned home at the dawn of 'uhuru'. "The colonialists left behind a lot of money to resettle the landless. But instead of the money being used for the intended purpose, it was diverted," said the PS. She added: "What I am saying now has always been an issue well-known in the public domain." The Kenyatta Government has always been accused of pocketing the money or putting part of it to other use.



Lands PS Dorothy Angote. PHOTO: FILE

Angote said if land ownership had been addressed adequately at independence, land related clashes as witnessed in the post-election violence, would have been avoided.

The PS spoke at the Kenya Institute for Public Policy Research and Analysis (Kippra) workshop that was also attended by Lands Minister James Orengo.

Angote said the land problem was compounded by politicians who failed to make right land policies to correct the wrongs inherited from colonialists and escalated by the Kenyatta Government.

"Our problem dates back to the time Kenya was still a colony. The independence Government inherited draconian land policies and ignored glaring factors that called for urgent measures. The ruling class then used land to bribe politically-correct individuals, rejecting the plight of landless Kenyans," said Angote. She said for the land issue to be addressed once and for all, Kenyans must own up and be ready for radical reforms. "We cannot talk for ever. It is time as a country and our leadership reviewed our positions on land and be ready to reform holistically," said Angote.

Will Uhuru support land reforms?

In the BBC interview, Uhuru was asked if he would support the proposed land reforms in Kenya. "Being the son of the first President, would you support land reforms?" BBC asked Uhuru. Uhuru answered: "Yes, we will support whatever position is taken by Kenyans. We will debate and we shall agree in the end." However, he declined to declare how much he owns, saying: "That is not a question I will answer. It is not that I don't want to tell you; it is only that I do not need to tell you. I don't need to sit on a BBC (interview) and say this is what I have or don't have."

The money Angote was referring to was given by the British government to partly compensate white settlers who were leaving Kenya and the balance to resettle Kenyans who had lost their land to the settlers. Orengo said his ministry was

committed to ensuring that the country adopted a sound land policy. "The land policy is before Parliament for debate. We are all committed to ensure that we get our act right on matters pertaining to land," said the minister. He said land allocation had persistently been skewed to the advantage of a few Kenyans, adding that he was happy with the support the policy Bill had been received by MPs. "There is so much anxiety out there and we will not disappoint Kenyans on land ownership and administration," said Orengo. He said unlike in the past, land issues would be handled professionally and welcomed criticism to make the policy acceptable to all. He said a proposal for an independent land commission should be supported as it would have powers beyond those of the Commissioner of Lands and the President. Orengo urged all professionals on land matters to contribute to the policy before it was adopted.

In a separate interview, the minister said there were many wrongs on land which must be corrected. At the same function, the national chairman of the Surveyors Association of Kenya, Mr Mwenda Makathimo, said failure by the independence Government to sort out land ownership concerns was the cause of the endless land disputes in some parts of the country. Makathimo said the British knew that as they handed over power, land was a major issue and resolved to provide money to help buy land for those they had displaced. "Politically correct individuals were rewarded with huge chunks, pushing majority of Kenyans to slums and rendering them squatters where they have remained to date," said Makathimo.

A few Kenyans who acquired land left behind by white settlers bought their parcels through co-operative societies. They took bank loans to buy land for members in the Rift Valley. This is how peasants, most of who had been rendered landless during the Mau Mau liberation war, bought land in the province. The land question, especially in the Rift Valley, has remained emotive with communities from the Diaspora being accused of acquiring land for free, courtesy of the Kenyatta regime.

Post-election violence in the Rift Valley early this year was sparked partly by the unresolved land question. Kenyatta and his close allies, especially senior officials in the first Government, cannot escape blame for allocating themselves huge chunks of land in Rift Valley, Central and Coast provinces.

1e: New tug of war at the Coast provides opportunity for national integration

Published on 17/08/2008

By Abdillahi Alawy

There is a silver lining to the latest altercation between Coast MPs and Prime Minister Raila Odinga. It is possible for this to be a win-win situation for both sides. Unfortunately, it is obvious the warring parties are not aware of the opportunities in their argument and are increasingly bent on politicising the issue. Apparently, a segment of Coast MPs appear united against the PM's recent directives, which have affected the Ministry of Transport. The MPs are complaining about what they see as Raila's micro-managing of a ministry headed by a minister from the Coast. Transport Minister Chirau Ali Mwakwere has twice been a victim of the PM's imposing vigour in highly visible national and international appearances.

The pro-Mwakwere MPs rightly complain Raila is purposely overshadowing the Matuga MP. They say the Premier has stolen Mwakwere's limelight, from Washington DC to the slippery decks of the Kenya Ports Authority, a key institution that falls under Mwakwere's docket. The open-air agreement between the US and Kenya, and the recent KPA saga are examples in point. In these events, Mwakwere diplomatically allowed the PM to patronise and subsequently steal the instant blitz. I witnessed it in Washington DC, and read the KPA incident. Mwakwere has been Transport Minister longer than Raila has been PM. The PM's oversight role is undefined, and he appears to be making all the important decisions under Mwakwere's docket.

Additionally, an observation is due here that Raila's involvement in the Lands Ministry is complimentary and supportive of the minister. But his constant intervention in the Transport Ministry looks more like interference than nurturance. The current debate centres, mainly, over whether or not the top KPA post should be reserved for someone from the Coast. Mwakwere's cohorts are peddling the idea KPA should be led by a MijiKenda — not just anyone from the Coast.

Surprisingly, Garsen MP Danson Mungatana does not see all those who have previously held the KPA job were exclusively from the Mijikenda community. Raila is right to state the KPA post should be a nationwide, competitive position. He is right in that Kenya should not have public positions reserved for a certain group. The MPs are also right to insist a MijiKenda should head KPA. But, more importantly, Mwakwere is right to complain of being pushed around by the PM. Mwakwere should be supported for refusing to be micromanaged or upstaged in his rightful roles. Likewise, the Coast MPs are right in standing with their colleague, and highlighting a Coastal dilemma that should be solved, through a clear affirmative action.

Processes to elevate not only the MijiKenda, but the Coastal people and all Kenyans in general, should be put in place. Otherwise, the question remains: Who are the Coastal people? Is it the cohort promoted by our MijiKenda elder for the lucrative public positions? Or is it all people born in the province? How about the Kambas of Shimba Hill and Kikuyus of Mpeketoni? Can marital connection qualify you to be coastal? What is the definition of a coastal? In the opinion of many, the train has not left, yet. And the coastal people can be redefined to include the rest of us Kenyans. Where is national reconciliation if we cannot define ourselves after so many opportunities from the post-election violence?

Our leadership should not be bent on minor differentiations but must focus on our major similarities.

If: Kingi wants 'Majimbo' introduced

Published on 20/08/2008

By Paul Gitau

East Africa Co-operation Minister Amason Kingi has called for the inclusion of the Majimbo system of Government in the new Constitution. Kingi said Majimbo would ensure equity and uplift living standards of the poor. He said Coast MPs had agreed a new constitution should incorporate Majimbo so that local people can benefit from their resources. He said Coast Province contributed resources like tourism and port operation but lagged behind in development. The minister claimed local resources channeled to the central Government were not benefiting Coast residents.

Kingi said Majimbo would address the perennial land problems at the Coast. "Once we have the Majimbo system introduced, the processing of title deeds will be done locally and land grabbing will be a thing of the past," Kingi said. The minister spoke at Pumwani orphanage in Magarini constituency during the official opening a Sh15m facility donated by an Italian couple. On Tuesday, more than 40 MPs from the East Africa Legislative Assembly toured an Italian Space Centre and salt manufacturing plant in Magarini.

Ig: Kibaki criticises Coast MPs' demand for 'local' KPA boss

Published on 29/08/2008

By Patrick Beja and Philip Mwakio

President Kibaki has reprimanded Coast leaders who have demanded that a local resident always head the Kenya Ports Authority. Prime Minister Raila Odinga and Agriculture minister William Ruto, who spoke before Kibaki opened the Mombasa ASK Show, also chided local MPs for “bickering” over the issue.

Kibaki said such politics do not benefit Kenyans. “Coast leaders should champion development and stop the talk over the ethnic background of people in Government employment,” he said. He was addressing the nation when he opened this year’s exhibition, on Thursday.

Earlier, Raila told the leaders to take a lead in development initiatives instead. “Coast region has immense potential in agriculture, but majority of the people are poor as leaders demand positions in government institutions,” Raila said. Ruto said 60 per cent of Coast residents were poor despite huge potential. “Coast leaders have not taken the lead in development. They are only making demands on the Government,” he said. Kibaki said the Government would build a cashew nut factory in Malindi and a mango processing plant in Kwale to improve farmers’ earnings. Local fishermen will also get additional cold storage facilities in Vanga, Malindi and Lamu.

President Kibaki said the Government had secured a Sh3 billion loan from the Arab Bank for International Development to revive the stalled Bura Irrigation Scheme in Tana River District.

Sugar project

He said this would increase agricultural productivity and increase acreage under irrigation from 2,500 hectares to 6,700 hectares. Kibaki said the Government would spend Sh1 billion for construction of high voltage lines from Rabai to Ngalu to improve power supply. He said another Sh305 million has been set aside for rural electrification, targeting market centres, schools and hospitals. He said they would like to see investors at Ramisi in Msambweni complete the construction of a sugar cane project in the area by next year.

Kibaki asked the Kwale International Sugar Company Limited to work closely with local farmers to ensure a successful outgrower scheme. “The Government is also supporting efforts to launch sugarcane production in the vast Tana Delta. “This project has the potential to employ up to 20,000 people and uplift the living standards of local residents with new investments being channeled into roads, health facilities

and schools,” he said. Mumias Sugar Company and Tana and Athi Rivers Development Authority and a Mombasa-based firm, Mat International, have shown interest in sugar projects in Tana. Raila said the province has the potential to offset the country’s sugar deficit, which stands at 200,000 tonnes per year. Tourism minister Najib Balala criticised the local MPs for their “tribal sentiments” at a separate function.

1h: Kibaki reads the riot act for Coast MPs

Published on 31/08/2008

By Ngumbao Kithi

President Kibaki has asked Coast residents to stop blaming their misfortunes on other people. Kibaki said the perception that the rest of Kenyans living in the region are out to take their positions and resources is misguided. "If you continue with this attitude you will be bypassed as others move on," Kibaki said.



President Kibaki during the official opening of Revital Healthcare Syringe factory in Mombasa, on Saturday. Photo: PPS

His statement comes after a similar one on Thursday, when he reprimanded Coast MPs over their demands that Kenya Ports Authority managing director must come from the region. "Why should you be keeping a few goats that do not give you much returns for 30 years without doing something about it? You must change this attitude," Kibaki said.

Speaking during the official opening of a pharmaceutical factory at Changamwe, Kibaki reminded critics of the Coalition

Government they are serious on delivering services to Wananchi. He called on Coast residents to look past post-election violence. He promised the Government would build a road linking Lamu to Ethiopia to open up the region. On the new pharmaceutical factory, Kibaki said the success of the [company](#) would help investors in the Export Processing Zones to diversify their products. Kibaki said the Government was aware the manufacturing sector was threatened by unfair competition from imported substandard and counterfeit goods.

He directed Kenya Bureau of Standards to prosecute those involved in the importation of counterfeit products. "We must not allow Kenya to become the dumping ground for substandard goods," Kibaki said. He said the Government is implementing various recommendations to reform the transport sector.

He said Mombasa port and border points of Lunga Lunga, Taveta, Namanga, Isebania, Malaba and Busia would operate on a 24-hour basis. He said unnecessary roadblocks have been removed. He announced the Government had directed the Ministry of Industrialisation and other regulatory agencies to consolidate their licensing regimes to enhance efficiency.

ii: Kaya elders uphold traditional faith

Published on 27/07/2008

By Ngumbao Kithi

Despite early introduction of Christianity and Islam at the Coast, some individuals among the Mijikenda have stuck to traditional worship.

Each of the nine tribes of the Mijikenda has its own Kaya (shrine).

Mzee Pekeshe Ndeje, a Kaya elder, says the Kayas (shrines) are worship centres.



Before becoming a Kaya elder, one must undergo a rigorous test to check his perseverance, bravery and endurance.

Before becoming a Kaya elder, one must undergo a rigorous test to check his perseverance, bravery and endurance.

A Kaya elder who conducts service in the forest must be beyond child-rearing age so that children do not distract them from their services to the community.

Kaya elders are treated as priests and normally conduct prayer sessions in the forest.

Ndeje observed that the elderly men

who put on the red, white and blue robes are mature enough to conduct prayers inside the Kaya.

However, unlike other religions, the Kaya is out-of-bounds for children. Only persons above 18 years are allowed inside the prayer venue.

“Our’s is a way of life and one has to be old enough to be taken through the process,” Ndeje said.

As part of the religions do’s and don’ts, worshippers are not allowed to wear shoes, shirts, trousers or any modern dressing.

“Worshippers are only allowed to put on a shuka of a particular colour. Those who disobey are punished,” said Ndeje.

Prayers in the shrines are held when the community is facing a problem viewed by elders as a threat to their survival.

Ndeje said several prayers have yielded results whenever the community faces severe drought.

“To demonstrate that God listens to us, when we go to the forest to pray for rain, it starts raining before we get back to our houses. This gives us confidence that our God is with us,” said Ndeje.

Another elder, Mzee Abdalla Mnyenze, said sometimes the community makes sacrifices during prayers.

Role of religion

The most common animals sacrificed by the Mijikenda during worship are black cows and goats.

“Sacrifices by the community help God listen to our prayers and bring us closer to our creator,” said Myenze.

These animals are normally slaughtered as offering when the community is faced with war or disease outbreak.

Mnyenze said despite the influence of Western cultures, the Mijikenda way of worship has remained strong and receives support from educated people in the community.

African traditional religion is more than a culture because it spells out how people should behave.

The Mijikenda religion has set out clear rules on managing households, division of labour between husbands and wives and their duties.

Ndeje noted that in case of a major problem, the community conducts joint prayers at the Kayafungo headquarters in Kaloleni District.

Kayafungo (shrine) is the largest prayer venue and decisions made by the community in that forest are binding.

To demonstrate how the community still embraces traditional religion, two years ago Mvita MP, Najib Balala was crowned “a Kaya elder” at Mwawesa village.

This infuriated Mijikendas, including Balala’s supporters, who described the incident as unacceptable and invasion of their place of worship by foreigners.

The white, red and blue robes won by the Kaya elders, mostly during political functions, are used during worship.

Ij: Fence off Kaya sites, say elders

Published on 18/08/2008

By Patrick Beja

Kaya elders want the sacred Mijikenda forests conserved following their listing in the Unesco World Heritage.

Kaya Giriama caretaker Vidzo Mwaro and his Kaya Kinondo counterpart Abdalla Mnyenze said the forests should be fenced off and title deeds issued.

"Kaya forests face the threat of encroachment. They should be fenced without delay," they said.

They spoke at Kaya Fungo when Heritage Minister William ole Ntimama unveiled Coast Kayas as World Heritage sites. They were recognised by Unesco Heritage Committee in Canada on July 8, 2008.

Other Kayas on the prestigious list are Kaya Jibana, Kaya Kambe, Kaya Mudzimuvya, Kaya Bomu, Kaya Fimboni, Kaya Ribe, Kaya Kauma, Kaya Gandini and Kaya Mtswakara.

Encroachment of sites

Mr Ntimama said the greatest challenge was to ensure they remained undisturbed by private developers.

National Museums of Kenya Chairman Issa Timamy said Unesco has opposed encroachment on the world heritage site in Lamu.

Lamu Old Town's dunes, which are a source of fresh water for the area, are under threat of encroachment.

National Heritage PS Jacob ole Miaron said Kenya had increased its contribution to the African World Heritage fund from US\$ 32,000 (Sh2 million) to US\$ 50,000 (Sh3 million).

He said supporting development activities of local communities around the Mijikenda Kaya sites would help sustain their conservation.

Ik: Divine encounter with the spirits of Kaya Kinondo

Published on 17/07/2008

By Esther Mumbua

Somewhere off the Diani Beach in Ukunda, a low-lying semi-deciduous coral rag forest that was once underwater protects revered grounds. Inside this indigenous sacred forest, the spirits of Kaya (Digo for homestead) Kinondo dictate the community's day-to-day blessings and curses.



A view of the holy forest from one of the feeder roads from the main road.

Locals converge here for prayers and to offer sacrifices to the spirits for protection. But so sacred is this Kaya that only elders are the custodians and hence hold the power to either grant or deny visitors permission to enter. And just because one is old does not automatically licence him to be a custodian. A series of rituals must be undertaken to reveal the 'chosen' caretakers who then take full charge.

Recently, I joined a group of tourists to experience this spiritual haven, which is now an eco-tourist project that attracts visitors in their numbers.

No easy access to shrine

Hemedi Mwafuja, the manager was our sole guide. A visitor wishing to step inside these holy grounds must first discern the elders' moods before approaching them for access. But since it is more difficult for strangers to have their access guaranteed, it is advisable they solicit the help of locals. Fortunately, Mwafuja had already secured our consent long before the visit.

Our anxiety was however significantly crashed when we encountered more rules and regulations before we could step into the Kaya.

"No one goes into the Kaya Kinondo without tying a black cloth around their waist," advised Mwafuja.

Why? we asked.

"Because the spirits recognise the black colour and respond to it," he informed us. "Red and white colours are also safe but any other colour is considered an insult and there are harsh consequences for this oversight."

Inside the sacred shrine, the visitor has to first offer prayers for safety through the forest, as an acknowledgement that the spirits are watching over him. Mwafuja stopped and added more rules to the list.



The Strangler plants strangling one of the trees

"Nothing should be dropped in here or carried out of here," he cautioned firmly. " All devices (mobile phones included) have to be switched off while all forms of headgear (scarves, caps, hats, etc) must be removed. Most importantly, anyone walking inside the sanctuary must have a clean heart, devoid of any ill motives against anyone or anything.

Apparently, the Kaya Kinondo spirits see and know everything and those who break the rules bear grave consequences.

Mwafuja did an excellent job in teaching us about the strangler trees planted inside the 30-hectare piece of land. Apparently, the forest houses 187 plant species and 48 butterfly species.

We stopped briefly by one of the rare species that stood out from the rest - the Chinese Cycad. It is believed that long ago the legendary dinosaurs dined on this tree. Another unique tree is the strangler tree, which produces different kinds of fruits in given seasons. The cocktail of plant species also includes medicinal trees.

Kaya Kinondo is proud of its unique biodiversity, a bi-product of its Underwater history. Plants here adapt to and tolerate very shallow soil surfaces as well as saline conditions thus forming key positions in the ecosystem.

Kaya to promote eco-tourism

Interestingly, the site had never been considered as a tourist attraction point until the National Museums of Kenya gazetted it in 1992. Though Kaya Kinondo was the first

project in Coast Province earmarked to promote ecotourism, there are more sites in the region that are in danger of being grabbed by private developers.

Kaya Kinondo is run by the communities surrounding it and is supported by the National Museums of Kenya, the Ford Foundation and the World Wildlife Fund (WWF). The money that is derived from the project is ploughed back into the community for its development.

I had lost track of time as the tour into the Kaya Kinondo forest drew to a close. Although we didn't venture deep into the 'holy of holies' where one must remove his or her shoes before entry, the knowledge I gathered inspired me to return in the future. Unfortunately, no photos are allowed inside the forest. It is the territory of the Digo spirits.

II: The Mijikenda's closely guarded 'Kayas'

Published on 26/04/2008

A visit to the sacred forests (Kayas) of the Mijikenda people reveals a bundle of secrets and taboos, closely kept for ages by grey-haired elders, writes Patrick Bbeja.

From the outside, it is a forest like any other.

The chirping of birds and screaming of monkeys welcome visitors as they approach the forest. Nature is at peace with itself.

But a visit to the sacred forests (Kayas) reveals a bundle of secrets and taboos, closely kept for ages.



Transport minister Chirau Mwakwere was last month blessed by Kaya elders at Kaya Kinondo.

Grey-haired elders strictly enforce the kaya rules. For instance, the non-Mijikenda are barred from visiting Kaya shrines. While they are free to visit the other sections of the Kaya, the shrine is out of bounds. Even for the Mijikenda, there are rules to be observed. All visitors must remove their shoes before entering the forests.

Visitors are notified at the entrance, by National Museums of Kenya (NMK) notices, that the forests are restricted sites.

The notices are hung at the entrance of all the 40 Kayas, which NMK has gazetted as monuments under the Heritage Act.

Each of the nine Mijikenda ethnic groups has its primary Kaya while other secondary Kayas dot the community's

homeland of lower Coast. Kaya means home.

In the primary Kayas, the rules are strictly followed. Those who violate them pay a fine or risk a curse.

Rules regarding visits to Kayas differ among the Giriama, Digo, Duruma, Rabai, Kauma, Chonyi, Ribe, Kambe and Jibani — the nine Mijikenda tribes.

Mzee Ali Abdalla Mnyenze, the custodian of Kaya Kinondo, the Digo's main shrine, says one must be married — for at least six months — to be allowed to participate in Kaya prayers. The person must be a Digo.

While offering special prayers, usually twice a year, or performing certain ceremonies, only Mijikendas are allowed to reach the shrine where the fingo (a protective charm) and graves of ancestors are located.

Mnyenze, founder chairman of Coast Kaya Committees, says everyone going to the centre of the Kaya must remove shoes and put on a shuka. The person must speak the local language.

Metallic or plastic objects are not allowed in the shrine.

Taking of pictures is also prohibited.

The main prayers held in the shrines are usually for rain and good harvest. Others are for warding off sickness and calamities or for blessings of the land.



Kaya elders troop to a shrine deep inside a kaya.

For such prayers a black bull, a black he-goat and a black hen are slaughtered.

Food is served in traditional utensils—such as calabash, pottery ware and baskets.

Custard oil and palm wine is used while appeasing gods.

"We don't allow beer, soda, shoes or perfumes inside the Kayas," says Mnyenze.

Among the Digo, where the Kaya culture has been kept alive, white people are allowed in some parts but a black hen is slaughtered to cleanse the forest after they leave.

The centre of Kaya Kinondo has a grass-thatched hut that houses the grave of its founder, Mwakalia Ngwena.

Inside the hut lies a fingo believed to contain potent medicine that protects the Kaya from enemies.

There is also a memorial plaque (Kigango) for the founder and several other graves of his descendants.

"There is no conflict between the Kaya culture and other religions. We direct our prayers to God but also seek the blessings of our ancestors," says Mnyenze. Prayers in the Kaya are said in vernacular. The opening words are "Kambi similani..." (Brothers and sisters can you listen).

The prayers are usually led by an elder and attended by a crowd to ensure all understand what is being said.

"This is to avoid anybody saying anything ill against the other or making empty pledges during prayers. This way, we make a follow up and remind those who make pledges— such as slaughtering animals— to fulfil them or risk a curse," Mnyenze says.

Politicians at the Coast have quietly or publicly sought prayers at the Kayas. Some have acted as Kaya elders, giving the culture a new meaning and also kicking off controversy.

Former Cabinet minister Karisa Maitha was publicly installed as a Kaya elder at Kaya Fungo in Kilifi, the largest of these cultural sites of the Mijikenda community.

His "anointment" raised his status in the community.

Former Kaya Fungo custodian, Mzee Simba Wanje, shot to instant fame as Coast politicians sought his blessings.

Mvita MP, Mr Najib Balala, was dressed as a Kaya elder by the outspoken Rabai Kaya elder, Pekeshe Ndeje aka Simba Wanje, outside a Kaya forest.

But this sparked a controversy as other Kaya elders insisted that only individuals from the Mijikenda community can be made Kaya elders.

Last month, Transport minister, Mr Chirau Ali Mwakwere, was invited for blessings at Kaya Kinondo.

A group of Kaya elders from various districts flocked to the Kaya, slaughtered a black bull and prayed for him to be elevated to the post of deputy prime minister. The chairman of the Mijikenda Community Council of Elders Association, Mr Charo Menza Tuva, confirmed the ceremony.

Mnyenze says similar prayers were conducted for Mr Kassim Mwamzandi before he was elected MP in 1963.

When a Kaya elder dies, he is replaced with a relative — who must be a married man of sound mind.

For instance, Mr Said Mwarandani took over from his elder brother Omar Kuchi Mwarandani.

The Digo stopped burying people in Kayas a long time ago. Many elders prefer being laid to rest in their own farms.

Mnyenze says his grandfather, Mwinyikai Mwawandinda, was the last person to be buried at Kaya Kinondo in 1942.

It is taboo to cut down trees in the Kayas. Elders warn that a house built with a tree from the Kayas is likely to be struck by lightning. Firewood from the Kaya forest must be used only during ceremonies inside the sacred site.

Individuals found cutting down trees in the Kayas are fined a goat or a cow to be used in cleansing the shrine.

Among the Duruma, youths are restricted from important Kaya functions because they are still sexually active. Sex is discouraged among those who offer sacrifices in the shrines.

At a ceremony to install a new chairman at Kaya Gandini six years ago, vetting for those to attend the rituals at the centre of the shrine was conducted to bar those who had had sex the previous night.

A white researcher and a foreign journalist were barred at the Kaya entrance. The botanist had trouble with the local elders when he ventured in the Kayas to conduct research.

The Kaya traditions are closely guarded among the Giriama, and Rabai elders at times sleep in the sacred forests.

Mzee Wanje had a hut inside Kaya Fungo, the largest forest and most restricted. Each visitor has to throw a twig at a certain point to enable the elders determine the number of people who have paid homage.

The strict rules in the Kayas have come in focus as NMK introduces an ecotourism project in the cultural sites.

Kaya Kinondo elders, led by Mnyenze, have set up a nature trail project with less resistance.

Mr Philip Jimbi Katana, acting chief curator and head of Coastal Heritage Sites, says elders at Kaya Rabai and Kaya Kauma have resisted the idea of allowing tourists in the sacred forests.

Katana says Coast Province hosts more than 800 Kayas, including those in Taita District.

He says Kayas have attracted foreign tourists because of their cultural values and environmental conservation initiatives and could earn huge incomes for the communities, some of whom have accepted beekeeping projects in the Kayas.

"We are training tour guides and elders on how to manage the ecotourism and other income generating projects," Katana says.

He explains that the Government has gazetted Kaya forests since they are rich in biodiversity and medical plants.

NMK has embarked on efforts to have Kayas declared World Heritage Sites by Unesco. He says NMK, through its Coastal Forest Conservation Unit in Kilifi, is vetting the Kayas and the final proposal will then be forwarded to Unesco's World Heritage Centre in France next year.

Im: Mwakwere handed a tricky mantle to unite the Mijikenda

Published on 13/01/2007

By Caroline Mango

Two weeks ago, the Minister for Transport and Matuga MP Mr Chirau Ali Mwakwere was made the official spokesperson of the Mijikenda. This, going by the importance of the office, was a rare honour bestowed to the man who has just survived an election petition.

Bring the national cake

He filled a position, which for a long time was associated with the self-styled king of the Mijikenda, the late Emmanuel Karisa Maitha.

This position, that many say is privileged, will expose the otherwise diplomatic and quiet Mwakwere to public scrutiny among the Mijikenda.

His elevation to the coveted seat has elicited varied reactions from his foes and friends. His critics from the Mijikenda community are reluctant to accept him.

Mwakwere has serious hurdles ahead of him. He is expected to ensure that the Mijikenda community gets a fair share of the national cake.

As this year's general elections approach, Mwakwere will either make or break, succeed or fail, as he tries to navigate the nine tribes to the 'right direction' while at the same time campaigning for his re-election as Matuga MP, the seat he won with a margin of about 100 votes.

His is a daunting task and whether the Mijikenda community will accept his political way of leadership remains to be seen.

Critics are waiting to see whether his new position will positively boost his political career in the region.

But gone are the days when Kaya elders were respected and their views seriously taken by the Mijikenda people.

Just to grab seat

Observers say if Mwakwere is hiding behind the Kaya elders and his new position to increase his chances of capturing Matuga Parliamentary seat next year, "then he is very wrong and must go back to the drawing board'."

Mwakwere will be tasked to objectively deliver the Mijikenda, who constitute over 80 per cent of the Coast population, to a political grouping able to solve the region's economic woes.

These include landlessness, collapsed factories and poor education facilities and standards.

Mwakwere's new position demands that he acts as a voice of reason to unite a community with diverse religions and cultures.

Critics believe that it will be a matter of time before Coast people determine whether Mwakwere is a political sycophant out to take advantage of the Mijikenda or a focused leader ready to direct them to the right course.

Top secret

Mwakwere says his elevation to Mijikenda spokespersonship was a "top secret in the Kayas circles" and had been endorsed a long before it was recently announced at a Narc-Kenya function.

He says the votes of the Mijikenda will be guided by development.

"We are not looking back; if this Government is development focused for the good of the Coast, then we shall vote for it. Our decision as the Mijikenda community will pave way for our voting as a block in this year's general elections," says Mwakwere.

He says he is not a king, but only a spokesman appointed by elders to serve the Mijikenda community diligently.

"I do not believe in a one-man-show, I believe in being the leader of a team that can reason, make decisions and speak with one voice.

A team that cannot be bought or deceived. A team that will stay focused this year and make the right political move for the sake of the future of our people," he says. It all started when President Mwai Kibaki was at the Coast with the First Family on a working holiday.

Mwakwere, who is otherwise known to be a humble and diplomatic politician, was at the forefront, sorting out the specific delegations from the Mijikenda to have a 'date' with the President.

It was Mwakwere's idea, in close consultation with his most recent comrade and Cabinet colleague, Mr Suleiman Shakombo, to organise more than 140 Kaya and Mijikenda elders from all the 60 Kayas (holy shrines) to meet the Head of State.

The Transport minister took over Narc-Kenya activities at the Coast with his authoritative speech at the party's dinner party held at the Nyali Beach Hotel on December 29 2006.

Voice of reason

This after what Mijikenda MPs allied to Narc-Kenya termed as a "successful development meeting" with Kibaki at State House, Mombasa, which saw the Kaya elders, in their full traditional regalia, pour into Kibaki's private residence to discuss development.

Some of the Kaya elders are said to have blasted Kibaki's Government for failing to fulfil any of the past promises since he took over power in December 2002.

The elders presented their wish list and insisted that they are granted before the President officially begins his re-election campaigns.

And as if reading from their script, Kibaki is set to deliver most of Coast's wishes.

The President will be back in the Coast in March to begin what his allies call 'his official campaign to woo support from Coast for his re-election'.

This move analysts say, will see him rely heavily on Mwakwere and company.

The minister currently enjoys the support of several MPs — including Shakombo, Mr Gonzi Rai (Kinango), Mr Abdallah Ngozi (Msambweni), Mr Harrison Kombe (Magarini), Mr Joseph Kingi (Ganze), and Mr Ali Wario (Bura) — who have always been with him in public and even private functions.

But Malindi MP Mr Lucas Maitha and Kaloleni MP Mr Morris Dzero are reluctant to recognise Mwakwere as the leader of the Mijikenda.

Maitha is the ODM pointman at the Coast and comes from the large Giriama community. He says many people believe Mwakwere's elevation was a Narc-Kenya affair.

"The installation was performed at a Narc-Kenya function. Where does that leave supporters of ODM, Ford-People, Ford-Kenya and other parties? Does it mean he will only lead the Mijikenda flock that is in Government?" poses Maitha.

One-man-show

"Those efforts being made by Mwakwere and company are not enough, there are several other factors crucial to anybody's effort in uniting the Mijikenda. They include religion and culture diversities," says Maitha.

He notes that religion has in the past divided the Mijikenda people.

"His style might be different in that he is diplomatic compared to the late Maitha's force, which helped a lot in identifying the Mijikenda as a group. Both ways might work but only if the leader stays focused," he adds.

Dzoro, on the other hand, believes that the days of "one-man-show" leaderships are over.

"We need to co-ordinate more and we need to look at the economic satisfaction that the Coast people will get from supporting a political group," says Dzoro.

The Tourism minister says as much as he supports Mwakwere in his new position, a lot of focus must remain on the agenda of the Mijikenda community in this electioneering year.

He insists that the agenda must purely be economic-related.

Dzoro says the formation of the Mijikenda Community Association of Council of Elders (Micosea) is a good beginning in bringing together all the nine tribes.

He says Mwakwere would be better off as the link-person between Micosea and the Government.

"I have my reservations for positions like spokespersons but still, I support Mwakwere, he is one of us and we will support him as long as he has the interests of the Mijikenda community at heart," says Dzoro.

Mwakwere's political moves and actions are being watched closely by all the Coastal communities as Kenyans prepare to cast their votes at the end of this year.

In: Kaya elders present wish list to Kibaki

Published on 03/01/2007

By Caroline Mango

President Kibaki met Kaya elders from the nine Mijikenda communities who presented a list of demands they want met before the end of his term.

Top on the agenda from the 160 Kaya elders who arrived at State House, Mombasa, in full traditional regalia was land, collapsed factories and a public [university](#) for the region.

They were led by Transport minister, Mr Chirau Ali Mwakwere and his Heritage counterpart, Mr Suleiman Shakombo.

The Kaya elders also asked for a Seafarers' training college and a fishermen college to provide skills and expertise to the many seafarers at the Coast.

289 Mijikenda elders from the nine coastal communities attended the meeting that lasted a whole day.

Apart from the 160 Kaya elders, members of the newly formed Mijikenda Community Council of Elders Association (Micosea) also attended.

Other Coast MPs who attended were Mr Gonzi Rai (Kinango), Mr Ananiah Mwaboza (Kisauni), Mr Morris Dzoro (Kaloleni), Mr Abdallah Ngozi (Msambweni), Mr Harrison Kombe (Magarini) and Mr Joseph Kingi (Ganze).

The Kaya elders were dressed in black, red and white traditional regalia, complete with traditional Mijikenda hats.

Also in attendance were the Lands acting minister, Professor Kivutha Kibwana and Co-operatives and Marketing minister, Mr Njeru Ndwiga.

The Kaya elders and Mijikenda representatives also had their Chief Economic Adviser, Mr Jonathan Mturi, who is a former Kenya Ports Authority chairman.

The two ministers said the President promised to fulfil the requests by the elders as he stressed that most of them especially the collapsed factories were on the road to revival.

Shakombo said the President promised to fulfill all the demands from the elders in what he termed a "successful development meeting."

"The meeting between the Head of State and the Kaya elders was the first of its kind. The elders have tasted the honour and privilege to visit and talk to the President, something that has never happened in the past," said Shakombo.

Mwakwere, who was made the official Mijikenda spokesperson whose elevation was witnessed by Kaya elders last Sunday, said the President promised them a public university and tourism college.

"The concept papers and the proposals are with the Education minister. He should be reporting to the President on what needs to be done to implement the establishment of a university," said Mwakwere.

"The issue of land was well tackled by the President and elders are happy. All those eligible to own land will be settled soon," said Shakombo.

Shakombo added that Kibaki would return to the Coast in February, to officially launch his re-election campaign.

The President and his family have spent the last two weeks of the Christmas festive season at the Coast, from where he also gave his New Year address to the nation.

10: Kibaki to hold talks with 60 Kaya elders

Published on 02/01/2007

By Caroline Mango

President Kibaki is set to meet Kaya elders from the nine Mijikenda communities.

Traditional Mijikenda elders from close to 60 Kayas (holy shrines) are expected at Mombasa State House on Wednesday.

The President's move has been seen as part of his strategy to win Coast Province's support in this year's General Election.

The nine Mijikenda tribes make up for over 80 per cent of the population at the Coast.

This is the first time Kibaki is inviting the traditional Kaya elders to State House since he took over power in December 2002.

The Kaya elders are considered influential due to the respect they are accorded by the Mijikenda communities.

Several opposition leaders have been spotted with Kaya elders in ceremonies that include seeking blessings and prayers.

Kaya elders have blessed Orange Democratic Movement-Kenya leaders, including Raila Odinga, Kalonzo Musyoka, Najib Balala and Uhuru Kenyatta.

The agenda of the meeting is not yet clear, but land issues, especially the 10-mile Coastal strip and the yet to be revived factories, will definitely feature.

According to the Mijikenda tradition, prayers, blessings or curses from a Kaya elder are 100 per cent effective.

Kibaki will meet the elders in the company of Mijikenda MPs, including Transport minister, Mr Chirau Ali Mwakwere, his Heritage counterpart, Mr Suleiman Shakombo and Tourism minister, Mr Morris Dzero.

Other MPs expected to attend the meeting include Gonzi Rai (Kinango), Abdallah Ngozi (Msambweni), Joseph Kingi (Ganze) and former Magarini MP, Mr Harrison Kombe. Shakombo confirmed that Kibaki would meet the elders from all the seven districts before making a decision on the constituencies to visit.

"He might visit a constituency or two and then fly back to Nairobi because of his tight schedule," said Shakombo.

Shakombo added that Kibaki would return to the Coast 'in a big way' to launch his campaign and vision for the General Election.

The President and First Lady Lucy Kibaki have been at the Coast for the past two weeks for Christmas and New Year celebrations.

1p: The search for an elusive king

Published on 15/10/2006

By Athman Amran

Coast has been struggling to produce a leader who the whole province can rally behind.

The region is striving to produce a serious presidential candidate, 30 years after the death of political icon, Ronald Gideon Ngala.

Although Ronald never vied for the presidency or expressed an ambition to become president, his political stature still overshadows most of those who at one time or another have wanted to be spokesman of the region or have vied for the presidency.

Since independence, there have only been two presidential candidates from the Coast. They fared miserably and were not even elected in their constituencies. Dr Chibule wa Tsuma made history as the first Coast politician to vie for the presidency in the first multi-party elections of 1992. Chibule, who stood on the Kenya National Congress (KNC) party ticket, only got only 15,393 votes nationally. He was the fifth after former President Daniel arap Moi who won the elections with 1,927,640 votes. He managed to beat Mr John Harun Mwau, George Anyona and Mukaru Ng'ang'a. However, Chibule lost the Kaloleni parliamentary seat to the late Mathias Keah.

In the 1997 General Election, Prof Katama Mkangi, then a professor at the University of Nairobi and a renowned author, also vied for the presidency and failed. He was seventh in a crowded field of 15 candidates. Mkangi got 23,484 votes nationally with the winner, Moi, getting 2,445,801. He only managed to beat Prof Wangari Maathai, Anyona, Mr Kimani Wanyoike, Mr Koigi Wamwere, Dr Munyua Waiyaki, Mr Geoffrey Kaibiria M'Mwereria, Mr Stephen Omondi Oludhe and Mr David Waweru Ng'ethe.

Keah defeated Mkangi in the battle for the Kaloleni seat . He got 1,127 votes compared with Keah's 17,165 votes. The two politicians who vied for the presidency were nowhere near the status of Ngala. Shariff Nassir, former President Moi's main Kanu mouthpiece at the Coast and the self-declared "King of the Coast". Karisa Maitha did not express any presidential ambitions.

Ngals's son, Mr Noah Katana Ngala, whom the residents of the Coast thought would rise to the stature of his father and salvage the sorry political situation, turned out to be a disappointment. He joined the race to be Kanu's presidential candidate in 2002 but pulled out of the race just before Kanu delegates met to endorse Mr Uhuru Kenyatta. The retreat, Ngala said, was to avoid splitting Kanu down the middle as Moi had already chosen Uhuru. The move cost him the Ganze parliamentary seat, which he had held on to for 28 years.

Ngala has never been a politician ready to sacrifice his political appointments to fight for the welfare of his people. He quietly enjoyed several Cabinet positions, which he never used for the benefit of the Coast people or his Ganze constituency, which is one of the poorest in the country. He was appointed to key ministries like Lands, Tourism

and Roads and Public Works. He failed to address the perennial squatter problem in the region or improve infrastructure to boost the tourism industry. Once, while his constituents were stranded following floods that affected the badly maintained roads in the area, Ngala was evacuated from the area in a helicopter.

Several Coast MPs who tried to rally the residents of the region around themselves have failed. These include Garsen MP Mr Danson Mungatana, who has been accused of associating himself with the wrong political groupings and failing to read the signs of the times. Another is Cabinet minister, Mr Morris Dzero, who has never managed to fit into the shoes of Maitha after being appointed to the Ministry of Tourism.

Transport minister Mr Ali Mwakwere is lacklustre. Assistant minister and Kisauni MP Mr Ananiah Mwaboza has tried to get closer to the people by using the squatter problem as an anchor, but this has been in his constituency only. His efforts to sell Narc-Kenya at the Coast have not made him to cut the image of the Coast political leader.

Most of the ministers even tried to rally the Mijikenda community around them by being blessed by Kaya elders but the bid failed. The leaders in the region seem either to lack the charisma or the talent to rally people behind them. This brings us to Mvita MP, Mr Najib Balala, who is among ODM-Kenya leaders seeking the party's presidential candidacy next year. He has to go fight it out with other political giants like Mr Raila Odinga, Mr Kalonzo Musyoka, Mr Musalia Mudavadi and Mr William Ruto. He stands little chance of nomination.

ODM-Kenya's choice of Balala as the representative of the Coast region has not gone down well with some politicians, especially those from the Mijikenda community. Bahari MP Mr Joe Khamisi is one of them. Khamisi has been unsuccessfully trying to be the face of the Coast through the Coast People's Forum. He was ousted as the Coast Parliamentary Group chairman and replaced by Mwatate MP, Mr Marsden Madoka.

Balala is pitted against former Mombasa mayor and Mvita Kanu branch chairman, Mr Taib Ali Taib, who wants to vie for his Mvita the seat. The Mvita MP was defeated by little known Afya Rama in the Liberal Democratic Party (LDP) grassroots elections early this year. Rama became the Mvita LDP chairperson although Balala refused to concede defeat.

This was a big test to his grassroots support in the constituency.

1q: Police hunt for minister's brother over Kwale oaths

Published on 02/04/2005

By Caroline Mango

Police have launched a manhunt for Foreign Affairs minister Chirau Ali Mwakwere's brother in connection with the recruitment and illegal military training of over 300 men in a Kwale forest.

Mwakwere

Police sources said they were hunting down Major (rtd) Ali Bafuta Warrakah, who has been on the run for almost three weeks.

Led by deputy Criminal Investigations Department (CID) director Peter Kavila, police have already arrested 15 people, including the group's self-styled president of the Republican Council, Omar Mwamnwadzi.

Yesterday, Mwakwere avoided commenting on his brother's alleged involvement in oath-taking.

Contacted by *The Sunday Standard* on his cell phone, the minister immediately hung up after realising he was speaking to a reporter. His phone went unanswered for the rest of the day.

Recently, Mwakwere caused waves when he declared that the youths in custody were innocent.

He complained early this week that the Digo community was being harassed and challenged the top security chiefs to resign over the killing of "five innocent people".

However, a day later the Police Commissioner, Major General Hussein Ali Mohamed, asked Mwakwere to "tell the police more" following his scathing criticism without checking with the police.

"If he knows more, let him tell us. It is sad that he is complaining and yet the residents around the area where the training has been going on and where five people were shot have not made any noise," he said.

Ali added that no political intimidation or statements would deter the police from carrying out their investigations and bringing the perpetrators to book.

Warrakah

Heavy

The government deployed a big security team, including the General Service Unit (GSU), to track down the secessionist group that has caused tension in Kwale and other parts of Coast province.

The group is reported to have been training secretly in the forest, 10 kilometres from Diani, for over three months.

It now emerges that recruitment and oathing had begun way back in April 2004.

After security personnel were alerted, they cordoned off several villages and forests and closed in on the oath administrators.

Warrakah was then arrested along with three other suspects — a former councillor identified as Taib Mwabavu, Masoud Juma Konganinga (ex-private), and a village elder.

They were taken to a Kwale court where they were bonded to keep the peace for two years.

Police claim that by the time of their arrest, they had recruited and administered oaths to some 1,500 youths from all over the province over a period spanning several months.

According to intelligence sources, last year's oathing was conducted at different strategic locations in the bush in Tiwi, Lunga-Lunga, Diani, Matuga and Ng'ombeni.

Warrakah has previously denied any connection to the exercise and claimed that his arrest was part of a wider scheme to politically destabilize his brother.

He said in a press statement: "My arrest is a political witchhunt and a smear campaign against my brother Mwakwere.

"I have never co-ordinated any oath taking in Kwale. I was arrested on April 9 after holding a meeting with some soldiers to organise the launch of the local Kwale branch of the Kenya Armed Forces Old Comrades Association

(Kafoca), which looks after the welfare of retired soldiers."

This time around, Warrakah is being linked to the illegal training and oathing at Mulungunipa forest where police accompanied by journalists found makeshift camps that were allegedly used by the group.

The camps, built on a one-acre piece of land, were designed for various purposes. There was a parade ground, a dining camp, the "President's Camp", rest rooms and the oathing chambers.

Police also recovered maps with sketches of a G3 rifle that the suspects allegedly used for theory lessons on handling.

Police say when they confronted the group about two weeks ago, the men were chanting Mijikenda war songs and were about to leave Mulungu nipa for a raid mission at Diani Police Station.

Officials of the "Republican Council" had in their possession a "revolutionary document" which outlines the history on the coastal strip and its "yet to be achieved independence" and a "constitution" which police are still searching for.

Yesterday, a senior security officer told *The Sunday Standard* in confidence that Mwakwere had refused to visit the Mulungunipa forest to see the camps where the training had taken place.

"He refused to go there last Saturday and on Sunday, and instead held a public meeting to hit out at security personnel," said the source.

Cabinet minister Morris Dzoro has said that a section of MPs led by himself, Mwakwere and Ananiah Mwaboza, were planning to hold a secret meeting with the suspected raiders and act as arbitrators with the Government. Dzoro says the meeting could take place early this week and they would listen to the "rebels'" grievances. Dzoro said they have already tried to contact the members of the group through elders in various areas. They had also invited Kaya elders and some religious leaders to be present during the meeting, which will exclude the media and police.

Ir: Minister's brother sought over Kwale training camp

Published on 31/03/2005

By Caroline Mango and Philip Mbaji

Police were yesterday in hot pursuit of a brother of a Cabinet minister said to be one of the ringleaders of the 300 youths who were caught training in the Mulungunipa Forest in Kwale District.

The suspect has been described by police as an ex-soldier said to have been interdicted from the armed forces on disciplinary grounds. He is alleged to have spearheaded the training on rifle handling.

The minister's younger brother has been in hiding since the arrest of the self-styled 'President' Omar Mwamnwadzi over a week ago.

Police believe the suspect is taking refuge in the home of a top politician in the area that they intend to search.

So far, 15 suspects have been arrested in connection with illegal training and oath taking in the forest.

The same man was arrested mid-last year alongside three others after he was suspected of spearheading oath taking in various Kwale forests. They were then bonded by a court to keep the peace for one year.

Coast Provincial Commissioner Cyrus Maina yesterday said the hunt was on for the man following new leads regarding his whereabouts.

Maina said an operation was on to arrest more officials of the so-called "Republican Council" that had brought the youths together in Kwale.

Bodies of the five men who were shot by police are still lying unclaimed in Kwale District Hospital mortuary.

Meanwhile, Tourism and Wildlife Minister Morris Dzero was yesterday organising a team of elders to accompany him to Mulungunipa Forest to broker peace between residents and the Government.

Dzoro said he would lead the team of religious leaders, Kaya (traditional shrine) elders and fellow Coast MPs to talk to Kwale elders on the need to rein in youths believed to have been recruited into a group bent on disrupting peace in the area.

The minister is expected to tour Kwale as early as tomorrow or Sunday.

"I am personally going to lead the team to listen to grievances of the elders and I intend to deliver their complaints to the Government. At the same time I will encourage elders to preach peace to youths," Dzoro said.

Is: Coast has experienced clashes since 1997 polls

Published on 16/07/2007

The 1997 Likoni clashes in Mombasa ushered in recurrent violence that was hitherto unknown in Coast Province. A vicious cycle has now formed where clashes occur every election year, writes Mathias Ringa.

For many years, Coast Province had been a haven of friendly people, who welcomed visitors with open arms.

It is for this reason that people from diverse racial and cultural backgrounds have over the years been finding the Coast their favourite destination.

Whenever the General Election drew near, residents would vote for leaders of their choice without fear of skirmishes.

But the good record of peace in the region was thrown out of the window during the 1997 clashes in Likoni, Mombasa. The vicious attacks left more than 100 people, including 10 police officers, dead.

The pre-poll clashes also left many maimed for life. Massive looting and destruction of property was also witnessed.

Hell broke loose on the night of August 13, 1997, when a group of youth believed to have undergone military training at Kaya Bombo forest in Kwale raided Likoni Police Station.

The clashes spilled over to parts of Kwale District with Kaya Bombo forest being the focus of the illegal training for youth to unleash terror on upcountry people.

Likoni has been a violence hotspot

The wave of violence was believed to have been triggered by some influential individuals who felt Coast people were being marginalised in terms of land, employment opportunities and positions in the Government and parastatals.

They called on the youth to fight for their rights. Since then, Likoni has been a hotspot of violence whenever a General Election draws near.

Impact of the continued pre-election violence has been disruption of voting following exodus from affected areas.

Although the 1997 violence left a huge trail of destruction, the Likoni skirmishes could be traced to the return of multi-party politics when hundreds of people living in Likoni were displaced close to the 1992 General Election.

The victims fled to other parts of the country or took refuge in local churches to avoid being killed. Peace, however, returned after the elections.

Prospects of General Elections now send chills down the spines of many Likoni residents. Some residents abandon their homes to avoid being caught up in violence.

Feuds between the local communities

Apart from Likoni in Mombasa District, Kwale and Tana River districts have over the years experienced clashes during election years.

For many years, the cause of clashes in Tana River has been linked to the scramble for pasture and water during drought.

In recent years, however, the district has seen clashes attributed to feuds between the local communities with each seeking to have "their own" people in Parliament.

Since November, last year, there have been on and off attacks between some communities in Tana River, with one attempting to drive away another to enable their aspirants win the parliamentary seats in the forthcoming General Election.

The clashes in Tana River have left more than 20 people dead, with the bandits killing innocent villagers with AK-47 assault rifles.

And in Kwale District, a youth was on June 18 shot dead by police and more than 20 people arrested for allegedly engaging in illegal military training at Mulungunipa forest.

Youth planned to raid police stations

Among those arrested were two suspected witchdoctors who had allegedly been administering oaths to more than 100 youth.

The youth were said to be plotting to raid some Kwale police stations to steal firearms.

Their move was thwarted when police got wind of their mission and stormed their hideout.

Reports indicated that the youth were planning to revolt against the Government for allegedly not addressing the squatter problem in the region and high rate of unemployment.

But Coast PC, Mr Ernest Munyi, said the illegal military training at Mulungunipa forest was part of a plan to cause chaos against "non-indigenous" people.

Munyi said the Government had names of some politicians suspected to be behind the illegal military training.

Government on high alert

Said the PC: "We have information that registration of the youth has been going on in several other districts. But we are looking for the individuals behind these illegal activities."

The PC assured investors in the region that the Government was on high alert, adding that it would deal firmly with anybody attempting to disrupt peace.

Kwale DC, Mr Moffat Kangi, said calm had returned in the area.

He assured investors and called on them to conduct their businesses without fear.

"The Government has rooted out the gang that was engaging in illegal training. Residents and investors should not live in fear. Regular and Administration police are keeping vigil at Mulungunipa forest," said the DC.

It: The repeat Kwale violence and issues of land and unemployment that dog Kenya's coastal communities

Published on 04/04/2005

By SWALEH MDOE

Recent reports that a terror gang was training in Kwale's Mlungunipa Forest with the aim of causing mayhem, brings to mind the chilling August 1997 ethnic-based violence in the same area, which were then popularly known as Kaya Bombo clashes.

The Kaya Bombo clashes broke out on the night of August 13, 1997 when it was alleged that a group of youth armed with crude weapons were spotted being dropped off from a lorry at the Likoni side of the Mombasa south mainland. Immediately they hit the ground they attacked the tourist police booth at the entrance to the ferry and killed a police officer.

Simultaneously, the Likoni Police Station, about a kilometre away, was attacked and six police officers killed, the armory was broken into and about 50 G-3 rifles and about 5,000 rounds of ammunition stolen.

The gang then opened the police cells and freed several inmates before burning down the station and fleeing into the darkness.

Within minutes of this raid and escape, the gang attacked non-coastal people, killing them by shooting or slashing them with crude weapons.

Within a few days the violence had spread to other areas further south and later on in north coast. Hundreds of thousands of frightened people fled to other parts of Mombasa and the Likoni Catholic Church and the Catholic Holy Ghost Church of Mombasa island, became temporary refugee camps.

The violence which lasted for over three months and ceased just before the 1997 General Election, was widely believed to have been an attempt to cleanse the upcountry people from the area to give the then ruling party an upper hand in the upcoming polls.

But there was another theory to the saga — the contentious issue of land and unemployment. The locals were demanding a share of the economic resources to benefit the indigenous people.

According to the Kwale District Development Plan (1997-2001) most of the fertile land in the area is still classified as unregistered or Government owned, making it easy prey to politically connected grabbers.

After the violence in which the Government reported that at least 98 people were killed or permanently maimed, although independent records indicate a higher figure, the Government set up the Akiwumi Inquiry whose report, like numerous others before it, was swept under the carpet.

And like conventional wisdom would have it, the truth of what happened may remain shrouded in secrecy for many years to come.

The discovery of a guerrilla-like training camp on March 17, 2005 in Mlungunipa Forest, with 100 or so shadowy youths said to have been undergoing combat training after taking *Kiapo* (an oath believed to be a protection from live bullets), is unsettling, to say the least.

With minds of Kenyans still fresh with painful memories of the 1997 violence, the Government should try to answer a few questions.

Who in 1997 were the engineers of the mayhem in this otherwise serene and peaceful community? Who are the organisers of the current violence? And what are the motives? How were youths recruited without the knowledge of the intelligence apparatus?

Perhaps the investors of \$350 million tourist hotel industry at the Coast who suffered huge losses in 1997 and were only beginning to recover, need an assurance from the Government that all is well and they can still do business here.

And residents of Kwale have the constitutional right to be protected by their Government. And so when cases of impending mayhem erupt in their locality, they cannot go on with their daily activities.

They live in perpetual fear of the gang and the security personnel looking for the attackers, which increases the levels of poverty.

Talking about poverty, as members of the wider Mijikenda community, the Digo, the indigenous locals, have long felt politically and economically marginalised.

This marginalisation has ironically given rise to a saying that "the only thing owned by the Digo is the street sign in Mombasa town centre."

Sources privy to the Kwale incident say that the rowdy youth, as was the case with the 1997 clashes, want to drive upcountry people out of the area. The locals say it is the upcountry people who own chunks of land and other fixed properties.

* *The writer is KTN's Kiswahili news anchor*

Iu: Sacred Kayas awarded world heritage status

Published on 14/08/2008

By Patrick Beja

There are cheers in Coast Province following the elevation of the Kaya Forests to World Heritage Status.

The forests were last month included in the list of renowned heritage sites. Located on the Coastal plains, they are a living legacy of the people's history, culture and religion.

Because of the forests' protected status, they are repositories of biodiversity, and a home to rare species of plants and animals.

Prayers in forests

Mr Ali Abdalla Mnyenze, 75, has been a leader of the Mijikenda Kayas for 20 years and has led prayers in the sacred forests.

"We have conserved the forests for worship and we really value their existence," he says.

Prayers are said at the central part of the forests where the "portent and most revered charm" locally known as 'fingo' is planted.

Strangers are not allowed to the sacred site where all worshippers must speak the local language. Mr Pekeshe Ndeje, also a Kaya elder, says conservation of forests is at the centre of the Kaya institution, which covers Mijikenda homeland of lower Coast Province.

Mnyenze, founder chairman of the Kayas committees that works closely with the Government, is happy the State has embraced partnership in conserving the endangered forests.



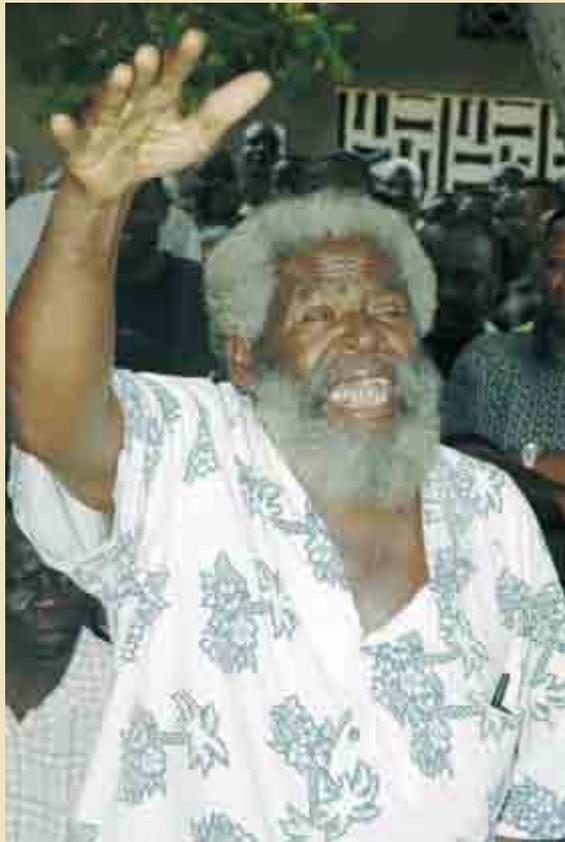
One of the Kaya Forests in Kindondo.

He says the gazettement of Kayas as national monuments in 1992 was a milestone in the conservation of the sacred forests.

The Kaya institution is upbeat following the inscription of the traditional forests as World Heritage Sites last month at a meeting of the World Heritage Committee in Quebec, Canada, on July 10.

The Kenyan delegation to the meeting was National Heritage PS Jacob ole Miaron, Kenyan Ambassador to Unesco Mary Khamulu and Permanent Representative at the World Heritage Committee, Dr George Abungu

Outstanding value



Kaya elder Pekeshe Ndeje. PHOTO: OMONDI ONYANGO

cultural and natural significance.

Kenya had presented a list of 36 Kayas, but the world heritage committee advisory board asked for fewer Kayas with outstanding value. Last year, Kenya presented 11 Kayas, 10 of which made it to the prestigious list.

The inscribed Kayas were Kaya Giriama (Fungo), Kaya Jibana, Kaya Kambe, Kaya Mudzimuvya (Rabai), Kaya Bomu (Rabai), Kaya Ribe, Kaya Kauma, Kaya Fimboni (Rabai), Kaya Gandini (Duruma), and Kaya Mtswakara (Duruma).

Kayas now become the fourth Kenyan site to grace the World Heritage Site list. Others are Lamu Town for its unique culture, Mt Kenya for its undisturbed natural look and Sibiloi Park in the Rift Valley for both

The listed Kayas were carefully selected from 60 Mijikenda traditional forests at the Coast.

Acting Chief Curator at Fort Jesus Museum and head of Coastal heritage sites Philip Katana said tourists visiting Kenyan Kayas could triple. He said the sites could attract more financial and technical assistance from across the world.

After the listing of the Kayas, the focus would turn to the Rift Valley, which has been proposed for listing as a mixed site.

The Rift Valley stretches from Mozambique to Israel in the Middle East.

Kenya has also been campaigning to have Fort Jesus listed as a cultural heritage site.

According to officials, the 10 are only the first lot of Kaya sites, as other sites would follow.

1w: Legislators call for a Coast party

Published on 22/08/2005

By Caroline Mango

Three Coast MPs yesterday supported the formation of a new political [party](#).

They said a coastal people's political party was necessary following the marginalisation of the region by the Narc Government.

The MPs declared that they would accept nothing less than a Majimbo system of government in the new constitution.

The MPs, Danson Mungatana (Garsen), Anania Mwaboza (Kisauni) and Lucas Maitha of Malindi were speaking at a cultural fete at the Reef hotel.

They said the community had been used by past regimes due to division among leaders and cowardice.

Leading the attack on the Government, Maitha and Nyonga wa Makemba blamed the Mijikenda for failing to unite and demand for economic rights.

Amid applause, Maitha lamented that the Kayas (holy shrines) were being misused and that Mijikenda eldership was being dished out to people who do not qualify.

"Former Presidents Jomo Kenyatta, Daniel Moi and the current president have all been installed as Mijikenda elders... " said Maitha. "This trend should stop. Even President Kibaki does not qualify to be a Mijikenda elder. We must stop belittling the culture of Mijikenda," he said.

1x: Churches were wrong, Kaya elders should have buried Maitha

Published on 20/09/2004

I found it hypocritical of the mainstream churches to have threatened to withdraw from Karisa Maitha's funeral programme just because Kaya elders were being accommodated. The question that comes to mind immediately is how the various churches came into the picture in the first place. Was Maitha a member of their various congregations? Would they have made available the very cream of the church hierarchy if Maitha were still the councillor for Utange?

It is within public knowledge that just a few months ago, Maitha had submitted and had been inducted into the Kaya fraternity. If the Kaya traditional beliefs and practices are viewed as being incompatible with Christian teaching, it can then be surmised that Maitha had abandoned Christianity and opted for the former. Nobody seems to remember the last time the late minister went to church for the purpose of worshipping other than in the company of the President.

On that score alone, the Kaya elders ought to have been afforded a prominent part in the burial proceedings. What the church and the Kaya elders sought to do at the burial had many similarities. One is a derivative of western pagan rites while the other is an unadulterated African pagan rite. The so-called Christian burial rites have no bearing on Judaism or the biblical teachings. When Jesus died on the cross, his body was interred immediately and without ceremonies or even prayers. It does not help that Mosaic laws consider a dead body unclean.

Jesus' counsel that the dead be left to bury the dead, though impractical, seeks to distance the living from the dead. In performing their rites, both Kaya and the church purport to retain a communication line with the dead person. Indeed, many Protestant ministers prefer to refer to the person they are burying as 'sleeping' rather than as

dead. Somehow, they see the absurdity of praying for the dead. A dead person does not need prayers. He cannot hear the prayers and neither can the prayers change his situation. The dead body is an inanimate object, just like, say, a rock or a piece of wood.

Mbugua Muchuku

Via e-mail.

Iy: Now Michael Ranneberger is a Mijikenda elder???? - 09-24-2008, 04:54 AM



Wrapped in white, blue and red lesos and wearing headgear made from colobus monkey skin, US ambassador Michael Ranneberger was bestowed the rare honour of being made a Mijikenda Kaya elder. In Giriama tradition, the ceremony was more symbolic than it was binding, but embracing the American could be an indicator of how much the coastal communities need foreign donor support to conserve the Kaya forests. Giriama elders, apparently aware of the potential support the envoy can

command, broke tradition at the Kaya Fungo in Kaloleni on Monday, when they made Ranneberger an elder, even though, statistically, he does not qualify. He is not a Mijikenda and strict Kaya rules do not even allow Kenyans from outside the community to enter the culturally sacred forests. The envoy, on the other hand, showed willingness to reach out to local communities and Muslims and went to great lengths to comply. He had to endure a rough ride from Mombasa to the remote forest in Kaloleni district, about 70km away. His convoy was stuck in the mud for a while on the way to the ceremony. Two elders, Mr Samson Vidzo Mwaro and Mr James Kombe, dressed the ambassador in the lesos and headgear before proceeding to the centre of the Kaya. Ranneberger was asked to remove his shoes before he was decorated with the traditional Kaya regalia amid drumbeats and dance. "This is amazing. It is an honour to be made a Giriama elder," he remarked. He could barely conceal his amazement as Giriama words, which have no English translation, were uttered during the initiation.

<http://www.mashada.com/forums/kenya-2008/89362-now-michael-ranneberger-mijikenda-elder.html>

Iz: Even Kayas are not safe

Published on 19/10/2008

By Patrick Beja

The dust has barely settled since the celebrations to mark the listing of the ten Mijikenda Kayas as world heritage sites.

Outside the community, the Kayas may have little significance, but the intactness of the forests is a successful tale of cultural preservation and conservation.

The site is inscribed as bearing unique testimony to a cultural tradition and for its direct link to a living tradition.

However, according to Unesco that bestowed the honours, the shrines are under threat both externally and from within, through the decline of traditional knowledge and respect for old practices. According to the UN body, the integrity of the Kayas relate to the intactness of their forest surroundings, and that has been compromised.

Poverty, especially among the Kaya elders has been the greatest culprit.

The elders say they are unable to protect the forests since they have been forced to spend less time in the Kayas to fend for their families.

From the south to the north Coast, elders who are peasant farmers and pensioners have the same tales of misery.

Like many other Kenyans, they say they have been hit hard by the high cost of living.

This, they say, is undermining their conservation efforts.

At the largest coastal sacred forest, Kaya Fungo, the elders' huts are almost crumbling to the ground.

Out of the five grass-thatched huts for the senior Kaya elders (Vaya) that stood intact last December, three have collapsed and elders said they were unable to erect new ones.

The only Kaya for the Giriama lies in ruins as family matters take attention away.

Kaya Fungo council of elders chairman, Mr Fundi Mramba, says most members are scattered due to hunger and poverty.

"We are facing one of the worst times here. The cost of maize meal is just too high and instead of reconstructing their huts in the Kaya, the elders are struggling to feed their families," Mramba, 80, explained. He works with a committee of 28 elders (Mavaya).

Upkeep

The elders have asked the Government to pay them salaries like forest guards and assist them to rebuild the huts.

The have also asked for assistance from other organisations to start eco-tourism projects to generate income and fund conservation efforts.

Kaya Fungo caretaker Samson Vidzo Mwaro says if there is no intervention, the forests may disappear due to logging and destroyed biodiversity.

Others are Kaya Jibana, Kaya Kambe, Kaya Mudzimuvya, Kaya Bomu, Kaya Fimboni, Kaya Ribe, Kaya Kauma, Kaya Gandini and Kaya Mtswakara.

Mwaro says the Kayas are symbols of the communities' beliefs about the origin of the Mijikenda and worship.

The Mijikenda believe they descended from four people- two men and women created by God from clay, under a fig tree. The men are Gwale, Toro and the women are Mbodze and Matsezi. A former police chief inspector and instructor at Kenya Police Training College in Kiganjo, Mwaro, 75, joined the Kaya when he was still in the force.

After working for 36 as a police officer, Mwaro became caretaker of Kaya Fungo in 1988, a year after retirement.

He rose from the lowest rank of Mrisa (messenger) to Kambi (assistant elder), Nyere (elder) and Vaya (equivalent of a minister).

Mwaro explained that in the past, Kaya elders would also carry out the roles of the cabinet, parliament and court. But they currently retain the spiritual and advisory roles in society.

Mwaro has appealed to Unesco and Government to assist the elders to fence Kaya Fungo, start a beekeeping project and construct a dam and a cultural centre in the area to support conservation and encourage tourism.

The Kayas are some of the few areas of undamaged forests around Diani and in the south coast.

Other sites on the world heritage list are Mt Kenya, Lamu Old Town and Sibiloi Park.