

**The London School of Economics and Political Science**

*A Country of Trial:  
Islamic Reformism, Pluralism and Dispute Management  
in Peri-Urban Northern Mozambique*

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of the London School of Economics for the degree of  
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## **DECLARATION**

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## ABSTRACT

This thesis presents the results of 23 months of fieldwork conducted between 2010 and 2012 in Nampula City, northern Mozambique. It analyses the manifestation of Islamic reformism in the city's urban periphery where social organisation has historically been structured by principles of Makhuwa kinship and post-socialist citizenship, while religious life is dominated by Makhuwa ritual specialists, the Catholic Church and Sufi orders. Recently, however, the ranks of Sufi orders have been dwindling. The decline has been matched by a sharp increase in the number and influence of reformist mosques. With financial support from international Islamic donors, reformist mosques seek to bring local understandings of Islam in line with globally-oriented Salafi-inspired interpretations. The thesis describes the appropriation, contestation and impact of these interpretations.

There are three main findings. First, I found that Islamic reformism unsettles existing conceptions of personhood. The majority of city dwellers combine their religious and national sense of belonging with Makhuwa notions of relatedness and conceptualise the self as interdependent. In contrast, reformists define themselves in relation to the divine, and objectify the self as they seek to make it available for self-fashioning. Second, the significance of this reorientation lies in its epistemological ramifications. A variety of social forms in northern Mozambique, including neighbourly assistance, the administration of justice and political relations, are premised on the understanding that events in this world are structured by invisible forces. Attempts of Islamic reformists to orient themselves towards God lead them to perceive reality in more objective terms, and consequently, their participation in neighbourhood sociality changes. Thirdly, this reorientation is tentative. In a setting where many do not share the outlook of reformism, it produces dilemmas and uncertainties. People cope with these uncertainties using strategies of confrontation, negotiation and compromise. Islamic reformism and other dimensions of social life become, as a result, mutually constitutive.

These findings have several theoretical implications. The recent trend in anthropology has been to study Islamic reform movements through the lens of practices of ethical self-

fashioning. This thesis argues that this focus is too narrow. My data shows that the multiplicity and complexity of the life worlds of Muslims need to be considered, and that attention should be paid to questions of how Islamic reformism shapes social practice as a system of knowledge.

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## CHAPTER 1. INTRODUCTION

“This truly is a country of trial (*país de exame*).” Ali sighed to me in referring to Mozambique. We were sitting outside on the porch of his mother’s house. Small, made of concrete and with a bamboo fence around the tiled yard, the house was located in the crowded central part of Bairro Acordado. For the past twenty months, I had been studying the manifestation of Islamic reformism in this peri-urban neighbourhood of Nampula City, the provincial capital of Nampula province in northern Mozambique. It was late in the afternoon and a cool breeze swept through the yard to temper the heat of the final months of the dry season. I had visited a nearby mosque earlier in the day, and dropped by Ali’s on the way back for a chat. We had known each other since the start of my fieldwork, when I had rented a house next to his father and stepmother’s elsewhere in the neighbourhood. Ali had been eighteen years old at the time and lived there while he was finishing high school. We had both moved since – him to his mother’s, me to an apartment in the city centre – but we had stayed in touch.

Ali had just recounted to me how he had been the victim of an assault the previous week. On his way back from evening prayers at the mosque, two men had stopped him in the alleyway near his mother’s house. They had threatened him with a machete and taken his phone. It was something Ali had dreaded might happen. Assaults were common in Bairro Acordado. Local crime rates were high, and it was especially dangerous to be out at night, when people stayed in and men of the type Ali had chanced upon roamed the area. Having grown up in Bairro Acordado, Ali knew this, but he felt that he had little choice. As he had proudly announced on the day we first met, he came from a family of Sufi Muslims but, following his late brother, had become *Ahl as-Sunnah*. Literally meaning people of the *Sunnah* (the way of life of Prophet Muhammad), it is the term by which members of reformist mosques in Nampula City seek to distinguish themselves from Sufi Muslims. It signals both their desire to bring local understandings of Islam in line with what they consider the example of Prophet Muhammad, as well as their aspiration to emulate the Prophet in their own lives. As Ali explained to me, one of the recommendations of the Prophet had been that men say their prayers at the mosque rather than at home. He

therefore felt compelled to go, despite the danger, and whereas he normally left his phone at home when he went out in the evenings, he had inopportunistically forgotten to do so this time.

The assault had left Ali with a dilemma. Should he go to the police and file a report or not? On the one hand, he felt saddened by the loss of his phone. It had been his most valuable possession. He had used it to stay in touch with friends, listen to Nampula City's Islamic radio station, connect to Facebook and surf the internet. He dearly wanted it back and his relatives had urged him to register the case. On the other hand, he did not see the point. Like many others in Bairro Acordado, he considered police officers useless at best, as they rarely showed an interest in what happened in the neighbourhood. Mostly, he thought of them as corrupt. He had better chances of retrieving his phone by visiting the makeshift booths of second-hand phone vendors across the city to see if he could locate it himself. Besides, the preacher at his reformist mosque had recently counselled the congregation that if they could avoid it, they should not go to the police. The police, the preacher had lectured, do not abide by Islamic norms. It was sinful to seek their assistance. Rather, his listeners should try to resolve disputes as Muslims. In stating these views, the preacher had mainly been referring to disputes between members of the same congregation, which he thought best settled without outside intervention. For Ali, however, the message had contributed to his reluctance to report the case to the police.

In the end, Ali told me in describing the assault and its aftermath, he had relented and followed the advice of his relatives. He agreed with his family that it was better to act than to wait and do nothing, and he had informed the police of the theft. Who knew, perhaps something would come of it. But the whole affair had made him reflect on the difficulty of being a virtuous Muslim in Mozambique. As he said, living in Mozambique was a trial for Muslims like himself. Had he lived in Saudi Arabia or another country where Muslims were in the majority and where the government followed the precepts of Islamic law, going to the police would not have been an issue. Indeed, he argued, the theft itself might not have happened, for the deterrent effects of *Shari'a* law would have made people think twice about assaulting others on the street.

This anecdote illustrates the dilemmas of many of the reformist Muslims I met over the course of two years of fieldwork in Nampula City. It gives a glimpse of their experiences of participating in what has become a global phenomenon over the past few decades: the manifestation of Salafi-inspired Islamic reformism in Muslim contexts across the world (Kepel 1994; Roy 2002). The emergence of this brand of reformism has been relatively recent in Nampula City, but it has expanded rapidly. As in other African countries (Brenner 1993; Kresse 2009; McIntosh 2007; Rosander 1997; Soares 2004), its growth is funded by international Islamic donors such as the Kuwait-based Africa Muslims Agency (AMA) and the Sudan-based Munazzamat al-Da'wa al-Islamiyah (MDI), whose scholarships for Islamic studies abroad and financial support for the construction of mosques and *madrasas* (Islamic schools) facilitate the incorporation of Mozambican Muslims into the Salafi faction of the *umma* (the global Muslim community). In adopting Salafi interpretations of Islam, Islamic reformists favour scripturalism and criticise 'chiefly' and Sufi understandings of Islam as illicit innovations (*bidah*). Their aim is to return Islamic practice to the model provided by the first generations of Muslims, as well as for Muslims to take Islam as the primary frame of reference by which to negotiate every aspect of life (cf. Osella and Osella 2008: 2).

As Ali's account suggests, reformist mosques in Nampula City have been tremendously successful in transmitting these messages of reform to their members. Social organisation in Nampula City's peri-urban neighbourhoods such as Bairro Acordado has historically been structured by a mixture of principles of Makhuwa kinship and post-socialist citizenship, while in religious terms Catholicism, Sufism and Makhuwa ancestral beliefs predominate. In less than a decade, reformist mosques have managed to call these patterns of organisation into question and furnish Muslims with new horizons, ideas of virtue, norms and identifications, which take Salafism, the *umma* and the Middle East as their point of reference.

Yet, as the anecdote also indicates, this reorientation is not a straightforward matter. While Islamic reformism unsettles existing modalities of belonging, it also produces feelings of

uncertainty, insecurity and inadequacy. In Nampula City, these are frequently expressed in the form of lamentations of the sort voiced by Ali, namely that it is hard for Mozambican Muslims to attain virtue and meet the standards required from Muslims to be saved come Judgement Day. Crime, and the secular nature of the Mozambican state, are among the challenges reformist Muslims experience in their attempts to fashion themselves after the example of Prophet Muhammad. These further include poverty, other concerns referred to as worldly (*dunya*), as well as living in a place of religious plurality where, as reformist research participants put it to me, “Islam is not very developed.”

In this thesis, I will explore both the success of Islamic reformism and the uncertainty it generates in order to understand its appropriation, contestation and impact in Nampula City. I am specifically interested in two themes: the articulation of Islamic reformism in the context of pluralism, and its manifestation in the domain of dispute management. In the next sections of this introduction, I will further elaborate these themes, but first, I shall provide more background information on Nampula City.

### **1.1 Islamic reformism in Nampula City: historical background**

With a population of around half a million inhabitants, Nampula City is the third largest city of Mozambique (INE 2007). Located, as shown on the map in Figure 1, 250 kilometres from the Indian Ocean coast, it is home to Mozambique’s ethnic Makuwa population. Over the past decade, the city has become the centre of the country’s Islamic reform movement. Especially in the *bairros*, the sprawling peri-urban neighbourhoods surrounding the city’s ‘formal’ core of cement buildings, where between 30 and 50 percent of the population are Muslim, Islamic reformism has been growing in recent years, as evinced by such outward manifestations as changes in Islamic dress, and a surge in the construction of reformist mosques. The city also hosts Mozambique’s Islamic University and the country’s only Islamic radio station, both of which are associated with the city’s Islamic reform movement. Other salient features of Nampula City include its booming economy: recently it has become Mozambique’s second most economically important city, and as such is a critical contributor to the country’s annual economic growth of around eight percent. As Sumich (2009) notes, Nampula City’s economy

depends on trade and commerce, and mainly generates wealth for a small group of Indian merchants, local politicians, West African traders, Arab investors and well-connected business men from Maputo. The majority of people in the peri-urban neighbourhoods continue to live in poverty. An estimated 74.7 percent of Mozambique's population live below the poverty line of US\$1.25 a day (UNDP 2009).



Figure 1. Map of Mozambique (Koehne 2006). CC BY-SA 3.0.

The regional presence of Islam dates back to pre-colonial times when Mozambique was drawn into the evolving Indian Ocean trade network, connecting the East African coast with the port cities and trading posts of the Red Sea, the Persian Gulf and India. Shirazi traders from the Kilwa sultanate, claiming descent from the ruling family of Shiraz in Persia and identified by their use of KiSwahili and their adherence to Islam, settled in Sofala on the coast of central Mozambique around 1180.<sup>1</sup> From there, they dominated the maritime gold trade with the Kingdom of Mutapa and the Great Zimbabwe interior. Northern Mozambique became more actively involved in this trade network spanning the Swahili coast in the 15th Century. Two brothers called Musa and Hasan, members of the Shirazi aristocracy of the Kilwa sultanate, left Kilwa with their families and slaves following political and religious dissent (Hafkin 1973: 3-4). They settled in Zanzibar but later continued to northern Mozambique where they established sultanates on Mozambique Island and at the mouth of the river Angoche, both located in what is now Nampula province. When the Portuguese, led by Vasco da Gama, arrived in 1498 and occupied Mozambique Island in 1507 to establish a naval base and later their colonial capital, Shirazi families left the island to found settlements on the coastal mainland. A string of Swahili sultanates emerged along the coast of northern Mozambique, including Sangage, Sancul, Quitangonha and Moma, mutually connected through kinship and religious ties, and loosely operating under the overlordship of the Angoche sultanate (Bonate 2003).

Islam initially remained confined to these coastal settlements. The interior of northern Mozambique was inhabited by the Makhuwa, living in small, politically decentralised chiefdoms. Part of the Bantu matrilineal belt of South-Central Africa, these were organised along lines of matrilineal descent, as practiced by the Makhuwa. Clans (*mahimo*) traced their origins through the female line to male founders. The clans were

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<sup>1</sup> The term Shirazi, and the associated claims about aristocratic clans arriving from Persia to found settlements on the coast of East Africa, is contested for its historical factuality. According to Pouwels (1987: 17-18, 34-37), the term may have been developed for political purposes: it awarded Shirazi families first-comer status and served to distinguish them from both their African neighbours and 'Arab' migrants from Benadir, the Hadramawt and Oman. I use the term Shirazi here to signal that the early Muslim communities on the Mozambican coast identified themselves as such.



subdivided into lineages (*nloko*) of 400 to 1,000 people, and *nloko* consisted for their part of uterine groups (*irukulu*) of 50 to 150 people. *Nloko* had their own territories (*nttethe*) of about 200 to 250 hectares in size. *Irukulu* lived scattered across these *nttethe*, including in *nttethe* of *nloko* other than their own. Their domains (*ittoko*) provided enough land for one to four matrilineal households of women, their husbands, married daughters, sons-in-law and grandchildren to engage in subsistence farming and feed themselves (Geffray 1990). Political authority was in the hands of lineage elders, whereby the order of arrival to the area determined relations of seniority between lineages. In religious terms, ancestor worship predominated: the chiefs (*mwene*) and queens (*apwiyamwene*) of senior lineages were responsible for the wellbeing of the population and the fertility of the land through regular offerings of sacred flour (*epepa*) to ancestral spirits (*minepa*).

Over time, as some of the surrounding Makhuwa communities were incorporated into the coastal sultanates through intermarriage and exchange, Shirazi migrants gradually merged with their Makhuwa neighbours and a form of Islam developed which, following Bonate (2006, 2007), can be described as ‘chiefly’ Islam: it combined Islamic beliefs with Makhuwa notions of matrilineal descent and ownership of land to conceptualise the authority of Muslim rulers in terms of their status as ‘lords of the land’ and their inherited capacity for mediating between the worlds of ancestral spirits and the living. However, for several centuries, the coastal settlements and the Makhuwa of the hinterland continued to inhabit separate worlds. The former were oriented towards the Western Indian Ocean. They maintained contact with the ruling elites of the Swahili coast through trade, marriage and frequent dislocations, sent their children for Islamic learning to Zanzibar and the Comoros, and cultivated relations with Hadrami families of *sharifs* (claiming descent from the Prophet Muhammad), especially the Ba Alawi clans of Ibn Al-Alawi and ash-Shitiri (Bonate 2010: 575). The Makhuwa, meanwhile, focused on developments in the interior, from where invasions such as those of the Maravi in the 16th Century originated, and where Mount Namuli was located, identified in Makhuwa myths of origin and practices of ancestor worship as the birthplace of humanity (cf. Martinez 1989: 40-43). According to a

Portuguese report cited by Mbwiliza (1991: 65), both sides regarded each other with a certain disdain and suspicion, and considered the other of inferior status.<sup>2</sup>

Closer contact between the two groups followed in the 18th and 19th Centuries when new population movements such as the Ngoni migration pushed the Makhuwa towards the coast. Integration was thereby facilitated by changes in international trade patterns (Alpers 1999; Bonate 2007: 131-133; Mbwiliza 1991: 63-81). Northern Mozambique had become a major transit route for Yao caravans transporting ivory and slaves from the interior. The Makhuwa had long charged toll on these caravans while concentrating their own economic efforts on agriculture and the sale of food stuffs to agents of Gujarati and Portuguese merchants operating out of Mozambique Island. But as food prices dropped and Makhuwa clans residing near the coast obtained guns for slave raiding among neighbouring clans, the region descended into war, with a number of junior lineages splitting off from senior lineages to establish their own territories and villages. The upheaval intensified in the mid-19th Century after the Portuguese officially abolished the slave trade, and the sultanate of Angoche, intent on strengthening its position in the clandestine trade of slaves, embarked on a series of military campaigns to bring slave trade routes in the northern interior under its control and create its own supply base.

It was during this period that a number of Makhuwa lineages converted to Islam and the religion spread through the region. The leaders of the Angoche sultanate used Islam to build up alliances for capturing and selling mainland slaves, and establish the limits between allies and those to be enslaved. Makhuwa chiefs, for their part, saw in Islam a

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<sup>2</sup> According to De Castro (1950: 47-48), the term Makhuwa possibly originated in this era. It marked the boundaries between Maka ('civilised', 'Muslims', 'from Mecca') and Makwa ('savages', 'non-Muslims'), and as such, had a perjorative meaning. Later, under the influence of colonial classifications in the 20th Century, the term would have developed into an ethnic label applying to all groups sharing the eMakhuwa language and a number of cultural traits, even if they had until that point not considered themselves as of the same ethnicity (Alpers 1974: 44-45). Other theories about the origins of the term Makhuwa relate it to the eMakhuwa words *okhuwa* (to hide) or *ophuwa* (to raise a person or animal), or to the term Ma-Goa (people from Goa), used by Gujarati traders in derogatory fashion toward their Indian neighbours in Malabar and applied in the same manner to the Makhuwa (cf. Ciscato 2012: 20-21).

means to bolster their own authority vis-à-vis competitors, and it provided them with the knowledge and skills necessary to communicate with their coastal allies – letters written in KiSwahili with Arabic script were used to exchange trade information (Alpers 1972: 190). The results of these exchanges can be seen today in linguistic patterns: the eMakhuwa language incorporates a number of KiSwahili and Arabic words, whereby the semantic overlap with KiSwahili is more pronounced in eMakhuwa dialects of districts situated closer to the Indian Ocean coast. This is particularly evident in eMakhuwa terms associated with the religious domain, such as *xehe* (*shehe* in KiSwahili, *shaykh* in Arabic, meaning Islamic leader), *malimo* (*mwalimu* in KiSwahili, meaning Islamic teacher), *kitabu* (meaning book and referring to the Qur'an), *xris* (*hiriz* in KiSwahili, *tawiz* in Arabic, meaning amulets), but it also applies to a number of more general terms, including *mutthu* (*mtu* in KiSwahili, meaning person), *ehaya* (*haya* in KiSwahili and Arabic, meaning shame or modesty), *eroho* (*roho* in KiSwahili, *ruh* in Arabic, meaning soul or spirit), *mweri* (*mwezi* in KiSwahili, meaning moon or month) and *salama* (*salaam* in Arabic, meaning peace, and used in greetings).

In 1907 the Portuguese founded a military outpost on the land of a local chief called Whampula. This outpost was to become Nampula City. In northern Mozambique, the political influence of the Portuguese had until then not reached beyond Mozambique Island and the coastal mainland in its immediate vicinity. However, following the 1884-1885 Berlin Congress and pressured by the British in Nyasaland and the Germans in Tanganyika, the Portuguese leadership ‘scrambled’ to stake their territorial claim by establishing ‘effective control’ and consolidating colonial jurisdiction in the hinterland (Newitt 1995: 317-355). In and around Nampula City, after the Portuguese arrival, all the best land was soon taken up by settler farmers producing agricultural supplies for the market, such as rubber, cashew nuts, groundnuts, beans, sisal, and especially cotton. In 1930, the Portuguese opened a railway to the coast that would firmly establish the city as a regional trading hub (Araújo 2005).

Colonial expansion along the coast and into the northern interior precipitated a number of religious changes. On the one hand, it paved the way for the establishment of Catholic

mission posts, thus facilitating the spread of Catholicism. On the other hand, it caused a crisis of Islamic leadership, as the Portuguese asserted their dominance over the coastal sultanates. This crisis was deepened by the decline of Mozambique Island, following the shift of the regional nexus of economic development towards South Africa, and the relocation of the Portuguese colonial capital from Mozambique Island to Lourenço Marques (now: Maputo) in southern Mozambique in 1898. As in other parts of East Africa, the leadership crisis in Islam in northern Mozambique coincided with the arrival of Sufi orders (Alpers 2001). In 1897, the Shadhiliyya Yashruti order was brought to Mozambique Island by *shaykh* Muhammad Ma'ruf bin Shaykh Ahmed bin Abu Bakr, a *sharif* born into a Hadrami family in the Comoros and the founder of the order in East Africa. Around 1905, *shaykh* 'Isa bin Ahmad, also a native of the Comoros but residing on Zanzibar, arrived at Mozambique Island and founded a local branch of the Qadiriyya order.<sup>3</sup> The Sufi orders provoked religious changes by introducing new mystical practices and establishing the importance of Islamic learning. Their membership grew as Muslim chiefs from the interior and their subjects joined their ranks, and Muslims migrated from the coast to emerging towns in the hinterland to work on colonial construction projects (Bonate 2007: 137-141).

During the 1960s, northern Mozambique became the main theatre of Mozambique's eleven-year liberation struggle, with the socialist Independence movement FRELIMO leading the fight against colonialism from Tanzania. While the leadership of FRELIMO came from the South, the war was largely fought in the province of Cabo Delgado, north of Nampula, where the ethnic Makonde population took up FRELIMO's cause. The Makuwa remained largely on the side lines, and the Portuguese established their central military command in Nampula City. Independence was declared in 1975, which was initially warmly welcomed in Nampula as the majority of the Portuguese settlers left, and the businesses, houses, land and farms that became available were nationalised and, in a number of cases, placed under the control of cooperatives (Marshall and Roesch 1993).

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<sup>3</sup> Bonate (2007: 138) argues that it is possible that this *shaykh* 'Isa bin Ahmad is the same person as *shaykh* 'Isa bin Ahmad al-Ngaziji, mentioned by Martin (1976: 152-155) and Nimitz (1980: 60) as a student of *shaykh* 'Umar Uways bin Muhammad al-Barawi, then-leader of the Qadiriyya in East Africa.

The enthusiasm dampened in 1977 when civil war broke out between FRELIMO and the guerrilla movement RENAMO, resulting in a severe economic crisis. Supported by Rhodesia, South Africa and the United States, who feared that FRELIMO's Marxist-Leninist orientations would spread through the region, RENAMO managed to gain a foothold in large parts of the country (Dinerman 2006). FRELIMO was assisted by the Soviet Union and Cuba. It succeeded in retaining control of Nampula City throughout the war, but heavy fighting ensued in Nampula province from 1984. The city expanded as rural peasants fled to the comparative safety of the town. They settled in peri-urban neighbourhoods according to their places of origin.

Civil war came to a close in the early 1990s, when the end of the Cold War and the abolition of apartheid in South-Africa left both FRELIMO and RENAMO without international backing. Following the 1992 General Peace Accords, Mozambique was transformed into a multiparty democracy. RENAMO won the bulk of the provincial votes in Nampula in the first national elections of 1994, but FRELIMO won the presidency and a small majority in the National Assembly, which it has managed to retain in subsequent elections.

In the decade following the end of the civil war, many of Nampula City's plantations and factories of the colonial era were shut down because of structural adjustment policies: donor agencies such as the IMF and the World Bank, which provide half of the country's budget, have pressured Mozambique's government into reducing its fiscal imbalances by selling off state assets to the private market (Pitcher 1998). There has also been forced deregulation, the reduction of trade barriers and cuts in government spending on social welfare, education and public health. According to Hanlon and Smart (2008), one of the consequences of structural adjustment has been that the urban poor have become increasingly reliant on the informal economy. This is confirmed by a survey conducted by Tvedten and colleagues (2009) in two neighbourhoods of Nampula City, where 23 percent of male residents turned out to be unemployed, while 40 percent worked in the informal sector, selling small commodities on the local market. Another reported consequence is that theft and violence have increased, as have instances of mob justice and vigilantism

(Serra 2008), which is taken by some (Baker 2003) to indicate that the state, the judiciary and the police cannot cope with the increasing crime rates, due to understaffing, corruption and a lack of funds. The perception of Ali and others in Bairro Acordado of the police as ineffective and corrupt, mentioned above, needs to be interpreted against this backdrop.

The post-Cold War period was when Islamic reformism started to become more prominent in Mozambique. It had been introduced into the country in the 1960s by missionaries from Tanzania and a group of Muslim students from the South, and punctuated a shift in regional orientation from the Indian Ocean towards the Middle East: whereas several of the Sufi leaders of the late colonial era had received their religious training in the Comoros and on Zanzibar, including at the Muslim Academy of Zanzibar, the first leaders of the Islamic reform movement in Mozambique studied in Mecca and at Medina University in Saudi Arabia – some also completed courses at the Darul ‘Uloom seminary in Deoband in India (Bonate 2007: 142-145; Monteiro 1993). This shift towards the Middle East was given further impetus in the 1990s when a number of Muslim students from North Mozambique were awarded scholarships to study at Medina University, and at the International University of Africa in Khartoum, Sudan. The funding for these scholarships came primarily from the Kuwait-based Islamic charity Africa Muslim Agency which also provided financial support for the construction of mosques and *madrasas* in northern Mozambique. As the students returned from studies abroad and started preaching at reformist mosques, Islamic reformism attracted an increasing number of Muslims. There are no official numbers available, but, by my estimation, a quarter of the Muslims of Nampula City are now members of reformist mosques. The overall number of Muslims in the country has remained more or less stable at one quarter of the total population of 17 million, with Catholicism and Protestantism constituting approximately one third and one fifth, and the remainder being categorised as ‘holding other beliefs’ or as ‘not religious’ (INE 2007).

## 1.2 Pluralism, Islam and articulation

As mentioned above, the first theme of this thesis is the articulation of Islamic reformism in the context of pluralism. By pluralism, I refer to the heterogeneous nature of social life in peri-urban neighbourhoods of Nampula City where people of different social classes, religions and political affiliations live side by side, each with their own traditions and interests which may also overlap. In defining pluralism in this way, I use it as an analytical tool, rather than as a normative claim about people's acceptance of diversity or of their mutually exclusive positions as equally valid. In fact, as the anecdote of Ali illustrates, acceptance is often not what happens. While his account conveys a certain disenfranchisement from the Mozambican state, reinforced by his engagement with Islamic reformism, his relatives insisted on reporting the assault to the police regardless, leading him to feel torn between his various commitments. In this case, it led to compromise, but as I will show in the thesis, these confrontations also harden people's resolve and motivate them to persist in their differences. The negotiation of such disagreements and disjuncture, both at the personal and at the interpersonal level, constitutes an important topic of my enquiry into pluralism.

Pluralism is, in many ways, a classic concern in the anthropology of Islam. The research literature points to various aspects of pluralism as relevant for the understanding of Islamic reform movements. In early studies, the focus was on the intersection of Islamic reformism with so-called popular Islam, and on how the mutually constitutive dynamics between these different traditions were influenced by processes of social transformation, colonial modernisation and nationalist politics. In other words, the emphasis was on the shaping of Islamic reformism by its socio-cultural and political environment, and vice versa (Geertz 1957, 1968; Gellner 1968). In the 1980s, attention shifted to the epistemological embedding of Islamic reform movements. A number of studies (Eickelman 1978; Lambek 1990, 1993; Messick 1993) were conducted to explore the objectified definitions of Islamic knowledge of reformists in relation to alternative conceptualisations of knowledge, as well as the implications of changing attitudes for the constitution of authority, legitimacy and power.

Both bodies of scholarship feature accounts of the contingency, negotiation and uncertainty experienced by Ali and other reformists in Nampula City. For instance, Geertz (1957) describes the following incident in the Javanese community he studied in Indonesia in the 1950s. A young boy had died and, traditionally, it would have been the responsibility of the local Islamic officiant in the area to conduct the funeral. The officiant refused, however, on account of the political membership of the boy's uncle of a local Marxist group. Himself Islamic reformist in orientation, the officiant said that he was not equipped to oversee the funeral of someone who was not Muslim. His refusal created confusion and consternation among the mourners who were unsure about how to proceed. A number of ad hoc modifications were desperately introduced in order to get the funeral under way, and the officiant eventually consented to overseeing the ceremony when the grieving parents of the boy arrived and implored him to do so. By then, however, the ritual had, in Geertz' words, failed. It had heightened distress and tension, rather than resulted in a display of communal harmony and the detached acceptance of death that was popularly expected from Javanese funerals. As Geertz argues, this incident needs to be seen in the context of broader developments, including socio-economic differentiation, urban migration and rising nationalism. These contributed to the development of Islamic reformism as a political ideology articulated in opposition to Marxism, as well as to the reconfiguration of social life in Java along heterogeneous political lines. His example illustrates the importance of situating Islamic reformism in its local and national contexts.

Another illustration of pluralism and the contingent nature of Islamic reformism comes from the study of Lambek (1990, 1993) of Islam in Mayotte. According to Lambek, Islam in Mayotte must be understood alongside what he describes as alternate disciplines of knowledge: practical and social knowledge, cosmological knowledge of sorcery and embodied knowledge of spirit possession. While these types are generally treated as separate domains, Lambek observes that they frequently collapse into one another, for instance when Islamic experts are treated with suspicion, because their Islamic knowledge is thought to endow them with the capacity to cause harm by means of sorcery. In this setting, Islamic reformism does not derive its specific form from the socio-economic or



political context, but from its epistemological situatedness. Thus, when a local group of Islamic reformists cited textual evidence from the *Hadith* (traditions or sayings of Prophet Muhammad) to question the correct form of Friday prayers in one of the mosque communities of Lambek's research, the majority of mosque members responded by invoking social knowledge about the importance of following their ancestors and being loyal to their religious leaders. Neither group was entirely certain, however, about what constituted truth in their disagreement. As Lambek shows, it was precisely this uncertainty which structured the local actualisation of Islamic reformism: while reformists felt that they could not stray too far from public opinion, others tried to be accommodating by letting them participate in mosque prayers according to their own preferences.

There has been less interest from anthropologists in these issues during the past decade. The focus has shifted instead toward the study of ethical self-fashioning and the technologies of the self which Islamic reform movements propagate. The writings of Asad (1986, 1993, 2003) have proven a major point of reference for this trend. Following his suggestion to study Islam from within the genealogy of its discursive tradition, researchers have highlighted the distinctive character of the modes of reasoning, action and affect that come with engagement with Islamic reformism (Hirschkind 2006; Huq 2008; Mahmood 2005). While these studies have made important contributions to the understanding of Islamic reform movements on their own terms, the neglect of the plural character of the life worlds of Muslims raises questions about whether they overstate the effects of religious orientations on people's lives (cf. Soares and Osella 2009: 10).

This can be illustrated with reference to the work of Mahmood (2005) on Egypt's Islamic piety movement. In this study, Mahmood contrasts the life decisions of two women. One is an active member of Cairo's piety movement and engages in such embodied practices as veiling to cultivate her inner desires in accordance with Islam and develop Islamic sensibilities like *sabr*, referring to the Islamic virtue of patience. The other woman calls herself a 'secular Muslim' and accuses the piety movement of facilitating the predicament of Egyptian women by encouraging them to be patient and accept fate as it is. In juxtaposing these sentiments, Mahmood convincingly argues that both women hold

radically different self-models and that liberal understandings of agency in terms of domination and resistance do not apply to Islamic reformists. However, she provides little information about the similar life worlds of the women, and how their shared experiences structure participation of Muslim women in Egypt's piety movement.

Several anthropologists of Islam have recently argued for a return to the analysis of pluralism. Soares and Osella (2009), in commenting on what they refer to as the 'piety' turn in anthropology, criticise studies of ethical self-fashioning for their totalising nature. Muslims live in complex cultural, religious and political environments, the authors (*ibid.*: 10-12) maintain, and their engagements with Islamic reformism should be understood within the context of a variety of available and competing styles and practices. They propose the French term *islam mondaine* for the theorisation of people's experiences of being Muslim in contemporary societies. Translating this term as 'Islam in the present world', the authors state that "*islam mondaine* does not privilege Islam over anything else, emphasising instead the actual world in which Muslims find themselves" (see also Soares and Otayek 2007: 17-19). Kresse (2013) is similarly interested in the interrelation of Islam with other frames of reference. He focuses, however, on the worldly engagements of Muslims as part of their religious experience, rather than as distinct from it. Meanwhile, Marsden and Retsikas (2013) suggest a study of the articulation of Islam. The concept of articulation highlights how Islam is continuously produced, reproduced and transformed in its enmeshment with other domains of social life. These proposals come against the backdrop of various recent studies of Islam which detail the struggles of Muslims in different parts of the world to lead moral lives (Marsden 2005, 2009; Masquelier 2007), their experience of marginality (Kresse 2007, 2009), the capacity for inhabiting multiple senses of self and morality (McIntosh 2007; Schielke 2009), and their movements in and out of different forms of Islam (Janson 2013).

I will follow the proposal of Marsden and Retsikas in this thesis and study articulations of Islamic reformism. My interest in this concept is, however, slightly different from theirs. Marsden and Retsikas relate the notion of articulation to Cantwell-Smith's (1962) work on religion. Following Cantwell-Smith's claim that the 'religious' is not a universal category

of thought and action but a human construct, the authors argue that the concept of articulation provides researchers with a way of exploring how expressions of Islam are “mutually constituted in relationship to the quandaries and concerns of everyday social existence” (Marsden and Retsikas 2013: 4). Whilst I share their concern with the interplay between Islam and the everyday, I am also interested in articulation as an act that leaves its mark in people’s social surroundings. As both Ali’s account and the examples from Geertz and Lambek suggest, the articulation of Islamic reformism in contexts of pluralism goes beyond the engagement of reformist Muslims with the world. It influences others as well and causes them to reflect and sometimes adapt, including those who do not share the same beliefs. I shall include this aspect of articulation in my analysis of reformism in Nampula City.

### **1.3 Islamic reformism and dispute management**

The second theme of this thesis is the manifestation of Islamic reformism in the domain of dispute management. The latter is another area of anthropology where questions of pluralism have traditionally stood at the centre of analysis. This is evinced by its central paradigm: legal pluralism, indicating the co-existence of multiple normative orders within the same society or territory. In so-called ‘classic’ legal pluralism (cf. Merry 1986), the emphasis was on the sovereign operation of mechanisms of social ordering outside the purview of the state, often discussed under the rubric of customary law. Thus, researchers (Bohannan 1951; Gluckman 1965; Hoebel 1954; Schapera 1938) codified non-state norms of adjudication in colonial settings, which had supposedly been left untouched by state law. ‘New’ legal pluralists (Comaroff and Roberts 1986; Greenhouse 1986; Merry 1979; Snyder 1977) later criticised these studies by showing that state and non-state legal orders are interdependent, even if they function semi-autonomously (Moore 1973). Santos (1977), for example, demonstrates for a shanty town in Brazil that internal forms of legality in this place can only exist by virtue of the capacity of local authority figures to distance themselves from the state and pit social norms against state law.

Santos' findings resonate with the preacher's counsel in Ali's anecdote that mosque members should resolve their disputes without recourse to outsiders such as the police, whose identification with state law does not meet Islamic standards. This overlap suggests the applicability of the perspective of legal pluralism to the analysis of Islamic reform movements. Yet, although studies of Islam and dispute management have become dominated by concepts and insights drawn from legal pluralism, both in anthropology (Bowen 2000, 2003; Caplan 1995; Rosen 1989; F. von Benda-Beckmann 1979) as well as in other disciplines (cf. Shahar 2008a), Islamic reformism is rarely mentioned. Exceptions include the study by Rosen (1989) of *qadis* (Islamic judges) in Morocco, in which he raises the question of whether a growing movement of Islamic reformists might transform the work of *qadis* in the future. *Qadis* see it as their aim, according to Rosen, to return litigants to a position where they can negotiate their own relationships, and therefore incorporate everyday categories of meaning into their rulings. In noting that Moroccan reformists favour, among other things, the strict application of *Shari'a* law, separated from cultural influences, Rosen speculates that the boundaries between Islamic and other sets of norms are bound to become less porous with time. A similar example comes from Bowen's (2000) work on Islamic law in Indonesia. Like Rosen, he suggests that, due to the growing influence of local Islamic reform movements, there is a tendency among Indonesian judges to let scriptural interpretations of Islamic law prevail over local norms in their rulings of inheritance disputes. However, whereas Rosen attributes this development to the religious orientations of Islamic reformists, Bowen credits it to the interrelation of reformism with political centralisation and socio-economic differentiation (see also Messick 1993; Peletz 2002; Turner 2013).

There have been various criticisms of legal pluralism. Most prominently, Teubner (1992), Tamanaha (1993) and Roberts (1998) warn against the conflation of law and social norms; unlike norms, legal rules are positivised and written down by specialists within rationalised bureaucratic institutions for the purpose of social control. This has revived an old debate in legal anthropology concerning the definition of law, which started with Malinowski's (1926) proposal to extend the study of law to normative orders outside the context of centralised political authority. In an effort to move beyond the impasse, Wilson

(2000) has drawn attention to conceptualisations of state and society that have hitherto remained under-theorised in the work of legal pluralists and their critics. He shows for a township in post-apartheid South Africa that the manifold consequences of state formulations of human rights are functions of the multiplicity of interconnections between state institutions and township populations, with different groups cross-cutting state-society boundaries in order to articulate their own vision of justice. While popular courts collaborate with the police in circumventing human rights discourses, local churches work together with other state representatives to promote the implementation of human rights ideas. His point is that, rather than being monolithic, internally consistent and singular, both state and society should be understood as heterogeneous, context-dependent and emergent fields (see also Shahar 2008b).

Anthropologists of Islam and dispute management have addressed these concerns by applying the concept of legal pluralism to the behaviour of disputing parties and their discursive strategies in arguing cases and ‘shopping’ between different legal fora (cf. K. von Benda-Beckman 1981). Thus, challenging stereotypes of *Shari’a* law as a bastion of male privilege, Stiles (2009) analyses the opportunities Islamic law offers to women in Zanzibar for questioning male authority and for reconstituting gendered norms in a setting of patriarchy. She describes how Zanzibari women have historically found it difficult to obtain divorces because of *Shari’a* restrictions on the conditions under which they may initiate proceedings, as well as local norms concerning the repayment of dowry. Dowry compensation is locally referred to as ‘buying a divorce’, which, given their limited access to cash, is an option few women in Zanzibar have. Nevertheless, the local institution of *Shari’a* courts has opened up novel avenues, as Islamic judges tend to side with women in matters relating to dowry repayments, on the grounds that these are ‘un-Islamic’. Stiles gives various examples of how women actively procure such judgements. Her study highlights the agency of social actors and their role in shaping legal and normative orders as well as the boundaries between them, through processes of negotiation and contestation (see also Hirsch 1998).

Recently, there has also been more attention for issues of doubt and contingency, which, as discussed in the previous sections, are intrinsic to the experience of pluralism. For example, Shachar (2008) examines a controversy in Canada over Islamic courts, as a window into women's legal dilemmas that arise from their multiple allegiances to Islamic and state law. She argues that the decision of the Canadian government to ban family arbitration by faith-based tribunals has left Muslim women in the country uncertain and vulnerable. Civil divorce does not meet the conditions required of Islamic divorce, which prolongs and complicates proceedings, creates indeterminacy as it poses barriers to remarriage, and facilitates abuse by vindictive husbands. Writing about marital disputes in Egypt, Agrama (2012) makes the same point, but suggests that the conflicted nature of civil divorce proceedings is partly due to the workings of state law itself. He compares the authority of *fatwa* (Islamic legal opinion) councils with that of personal status courts and notes that while rulings of *fatwa* councils are generally followed despite their non-binding character, compliance with the binding verdicts of personal status courts often requires enforcement. This discrepancy, Agrama (ibid.: 127) claims, is the result of the structures of secular liberal power through which personal status courts operate. By constructing the law as "subsequent to an *a priori* free self and therefore a suspect mode of domination external to it", secular liberalism would cultivate sensibilities of vigilance and suspicion. These feelings would, in turn, deny personal status courts the authority of *fatwa* councils, thereby legitimating enforcement. I think that there is an element of circularity to Agrama's argument, but it points to something that transpires in the account of Ali as well, namely that religious affiliation is but one among several factors in structuring the hesitation of Islamic reformists in Nampula City to engage state agents.

The latter brings me to three observations about the anthropological literature on Islam and dispute management. Firstly, as mentioned, it is not clear how Islamic reformism factors into the above findings. Although most of the contexts discussed above feature Islamic reform movements, questions of religious transformation and how the presence of reform movements affects patterns of dispute resolution remain under-analysed. Secondly, the aforementioned studies focus either on Western countries or countries with a Muslim majority. They are also law-centred, in that they are framed around tensions between state

law, Islamic law and ‘customary law’. Much less is known about the interrelation between Islam and dispute management in countries such as Mozambique where, as the anecdote of Ali suggests, the salience of *Shari’a* law is limited and state law has little effectiveness, as social control is largely organised outside the state system through a variety of informal mechanisms. Instead, there is a complex interplay of reformist Islam, Sufi practices and Makhuwa kinship and community social codes. Finally, existing research on Islam and dispute resolution is predominated by explorations of family-related disputes. This is not surprising, given the analytical focus on the law and the fact that Islamic law has been relegated in many countries to the domain of civil affairs. However, the story of Ali indicates that Islamic affiliations also influence how people deal with other types of disputes, and this merits further investigation.

In light of these observations, I opt for a broad perspective on the entanglement of Islamic reformism and disputing processes. As has recently been suggested by Franz von Benda-Beckmann and colleagues (2013), religion pervades disputes through a variety of ways other than through religious law, including through sensibilities, normative repertoires, religious argumentation, considerations of how to live a good life, beliefs in supernatural forces, and so on. My focus is hereby on the manifestation of Islamic reformism, rather than its articulation. This is to convey that reformist-inspired ideas may enter disputing processes without necessarily being expressed as such in the context of disputes.

#### **1.4 Contextualisation and sub-themes**

My approach in this thesis is to focus on the domain of dispute management, and use this as a starting point for exploring the articulation of Islamic reformism in relation to questions of pluralism more generally. This is a pragmatic choice: I assume that the appropriation, contestation and impact of Islamic reformism is more salient and therefore more easily observed in disputing processes. Based on the ethnographic record on Mozambique and the research literature on contemporary Islamic reform movements, there are several sub-themes that guide the thesis. As I will detail below, these relate to the

topics of authority, decentralisation and normativity – i.e. the generalised rules of conduct towards which actors orient their behaviour.

#### *1.4.1 Authority and fragmentation*

Ali's classification of the police as ineffective and corrupt is a common finding in the research literature on Mozambique (Jacobs 2010; Santos et al. 2006). In cases of theft and physical violence such as Ali's assault, Mozambicans generally feel they have no other choice than to go to the police, especially when perpetrators are unknown, but if they can, people resort to family mediation or to other types of authority. The literature lists three basic authority types. Their actual instantiation often overlaps as individuals may embody characteristics of several forms, but I will separate them here for the sake of analytical clarity.

One type of authority is referred to as traditional authority. As mentioned above, it finds its roots in the country's pre-colonial past when power differentials were structured by an ideology of first-comers, according to which the first clan to have occupied a territory 'owned' it and was responsible for its allocation to others as well as for maintaining the well-being of the population and the fertility of the land through ancestral rites. Chiefs (*mwene*), the male elderly lineage heads in charge of settlements, represented lineages in socio-political affairs, presided over religious rites, organised community protection, resolved disputes within and between lineages, and distributed land. Their counsel came from a select group of advisors (*mapili*) and from a queen (*apwiyamwene*), normally their eldest sister, personifying the womb of the lineage, and acting as safe keeper of lineage traditions. In uterine groups, power was in the hands of male family elders (*ahumu*). They were responsible for negotiating marriages and for dispute resolution at the family level, whereby they took into account the advice of other elders, both male and female. A matrilineal kinship system facilitated the passing of office from maternal uncles to nephews (Newitt 1995: 61-78). After the coastal sultanates extended their reach from Mozambique's northern coast into the interior and spread their 'chiefly' form of Islam, the position of chiefs also came to be framed in Islamic terms.



Over the past two centuries, chiefly authority has gradually incorporated elements of both legal and charismatic authority (Weber 1963: 124-126). First, the Portuguese introduced a series of legal reforms at the turn of the 20th Century, through which chiefs came to be designated as *régulos*, and were put in charge of the collection of hut taxes (*mussoco*), the application of customary law, the organisation of forced labour and the mandatory production of cash crops, for which they were given a native police force at their disposal to enforce compliance (Trindade 2006). In Nampula province, starting from the 1930s, the main cash crop regime was that of cotton (Isaacman and Isaacman 1983). To some extent, this forced implication in colonial violence and the shifting of their function from redistribution to extraction undermined their support base. *Régulos* further saw themselves confronted with competing claims from others who presented themselves to the Portuguese as the ‘real’ chiefs, and with those from youths availing themselves of new avenues of social mobility such as conversion to Christianity or salaried employment in the Portuguese bureaucracy, which enabled them to establish their own household and which lessened their dependence on elders. At the same time, the office of *régulo* consolidated and reinforced chiefly authority. The Portuguese decreed for example that all of those who moved to cities where they might have wished to escape elders’ control, were to fall under the jurisdiction of *régulos* there; people also needed authorisation from *régulos* if they wanted to travel outside the districts where they were taxed (Newitt 1995: 471).

From a different direction, at a later date and initially not encompassing as broad a reach of the population, the Sufi Orders came to promote a new conception of authority during the 20th Century. Rooted in affection and personal devotion, this charismatic form of authority privileged power in its relation to religious knowledge, and was based on having lived and studied with a Sufi master who had given one a license to teach, and whose place in a sequence of Sufi masters could normally be traced back to the Prophet Muhammad. When a rising class of descendants of Muslim Indian immigrants and local African women, who had previously successfully been excluded from positions of prestige by chiefly elites as they lacked the necessary credentials in terms of kinship and territory,

moved to take advantage of this new opportunity, chiefs began to follow suit. Many started studying with a Sufi master in order to become head (*xehes*) of a local Sufi branch of their own, bringing along their following. As a result, ‘chiefly’ and Sufi Islam virtually merged in northern Mozambique.

Such legal and charismatic overtones notwithstanding, several authors (Geffray 1990; Bonate 2008) have established that the African population at large continues to associate the authority of chiefs primarily with real or imagined chiefly ancestry. Portuguese laws and Sufism have merely added extra layers of understanding to what has essentially remained a form of traditional authority.

A second form of authority, strongly contrasted to the traditional form, was introduced by FRELIMO during the anti-colonial struggles of the 1960s and 1970s (Geffray 1990; Harrison 1999; O’Laughlin 2000; Dinerman 2006; West 2009). FRELIMO’s leadership consisted of a group of then young students who felt that Mozambique’s perceived weakness and colonial subordination was partly a result of ‘traditional backwardness’ and ‘obscurantist’ practices such as divination and ancestral supplication rites that kept Mozambicans from recognising the root causes of their dependence. The solution was to be found in the prohibition of these practices and the setting up of a vast network of bush-based elementary schools and a community health programme in order to create a ‘new Man’ with new modes of thought. Upon Independence in 1975, a range of new local-level institutions was introduced nationwide. These included local militia for the maintenance of order, and neighbourhood secretaries for the day-to-day management of local areas. Specifically for dispute resolution, popular tribunals were set up. The objective was to let communities elect peers from within – and hence to govern themselves – but in effect most governing bodies came to be staffed by representatives appointed by FRELIMO party officials, thus making party affiliation mixed with legal norms the basis of this type of legal-rational authority (Weber 1963: 128-130). Chiefs and *régulos* were barred from obtaining positions within FRELIMO structures, associated as they were with colonialism and ‘tradition’. This led to the decoupling of political and religious authority. Islamic reformists benefitted; now that chiefs no longer had the power to restrict access to the

religious market of northern Mozambique to Sufi Orders, they began to establish their own mosques (Mocagno 2007).

A third type of authority, often entwined with the other two forms, derives its power from 'the invisible realm'. As West has documented for the Makonde living in Cabo Delgado, many Mozambicans feel that events in the visible world result from a morally neutral force operating in an invisible realm where it is employed by those who know how to use it for constructive purposes such as healing, or toward more sinister ends such as directing misfortune at others or creating zombies out of dead bodies in order to increase one's work force. Knowledge and power are intimately connected to this understanding, in that having more insight into how things work is thought to enhance one's knowledge of the invisible realm from which power can be derived, at the same time that holding a position of power is understood to be a strong indicator of one's superior knowledge. Thus, healers, chiefs and FRELIMO party officials have historically been feared for their apparent mastery of sorcery, as well as being respected because through their vision they have been able to 'see' sorcerers of evil whose threat they countered. Interesting in this regard is that West (2005: 61-68) notes that healers in the past used to draw their legitimacy from apprenticeships and kinship. Recently, they have come to put more emphasis on spirit possession, dreams, 'being called' and other tokens of charismatic authority (see also Luedke 2007).

This account of authority raises questions about the potential impact of Islamic reformism in Nampula City. One of the findings in studies of Islamic revival movements across the globe is that their rise tends to combine with modern mass education in transforming authority structures. In the Middle East, for instance, Muslims long associated authority with charisma, with having completed a long apprenticeship under an established man of learning, and with rote memorisation of Islamic scriptures. This changed when modern mass education was introduced. It enabled people to read the Qur'an by themselves, and brought Muslims from different discursive traditions together, who started questioning the veracity of each other's and their own beliefs. The result was that authority structures fragmented, with traditional and charismatic authorities losing ground, while those who

were able to distinguish themselves by their capacity for explanation and argumentation gained legitimacy. According to Eickelman (1978, 1992), contemporary Middle Eastern Islamic reformism both builds on and contributes to this fragmentation: with its emphasis on rational deliberation and the duty of believers to study the Qur'an and make up their own minds, it is representative of a broader epistemic shift from embodied, personalised conceptions of knowledge to disembodied ones, and facilitate the spread of rational and more egalitarian modes of authority. Brenner (1993) and Kane (2003) have forwarded similar analyses for the rise of Islamic reformist movements in respectively Mali and Nigeria. In this thesis, I will explore how these developments play out in peri-urban northern Mozambique.

#### *1.4.2 Decentralisation and dispute management*

The second sub-theme of the thesis is related to the topic of authority. It concerns the legislative measures which Mozambique's government has adopted in recent years to transform local-level governance structures. First, from 1992, popular courts were replaced with newly installed community courts. Most popular courts had stopped functioning by then, and the institutionalisation of community courts was meant to reinvigorate them, while also placing these courts at a greater distance from the formal justice system: community court judges were mandated to resolve conflicts of a civil nature such as divorces, domestic violence and inheritance disputes according to prevalent local norms, provided that these do not contravene state law. Additionally, in 2000, the first steps were taken towards the official recognition of traditional authorities, which comes with the requirement to assist the state in administrative tasks and law enforcement, in exchange for the trappings of state office and a small stipend. From 2004, the state has also launched local community policing forums to involve citizens in security and policing (Santos et al. 2006; Kyed 2007).

The motivation for these reforms comes from two developments that have compelled FRELIMO to reconsider its policy towards pre-colonial and colonial authority structures. First, the party realised that much of the popular support that its rival RENAMO was

receiving in provinces such as Nampula during Mozambique's civil war and the subsequent elections derived from widespread resistance to FRELIMO's attacks on 'obscurantism'. As an alternative, RENAMO presented itself as the protector of tradition (Geffray and Pederson 1986; Wilson 1992). Secondly, during the 1990s the international donor community began to push for decentralisation and local ownership, facilitating a reconceptualisation of 'traditional' authorities as vanguards of a nascent civil society, based on their supposed legitimacy, cultural embeddedness and cost-effectiveness (Manning 2002; Norman 2005; West 2005: 203-204).

Much of the current academic debate on the effects of this new legislation in Mozambique is focused on dispute management. Bertelsen (2003, 2009) argues in this regard that decentralisation results in the proliferation of explicitly antagonistic claims to power, with former *régulos*, descendants of settlement heads and neighbourhood secretaries now vying for recognition, thus creating ambiguity over who has the actual authority in a given locality to provide adequate legal and physical protection, or resolve disputes. West (2005), following on from his analysis of Makonde understandings of power, relates such antagonism to community expectations that state officials will use their greater power to protect communities from sorcery. In a neo-liberal climate where growing social inequality has engendered a sharp increase in witchcraft accusations, while decentralisation and the emphasis of neo-liberalism on individual rights prevent state officials from acting on these charges, the state is perceived not only to fail in this respect, but also to act selfishly. Keeping one's power to oneself is identified as sorcery of evil. As a result, people have felt compelled to take matters into their own hands. However, Buur and Kyed (2006) contest these claims. They show that decentralisation is creating a verticalisation of authority: formal recognition of traditional authorities effectively means that they become more visible to the state, as a result of which chiefs who, due to the limited capacities of the state, were previously able to act as sovereigns (cf. Hansen and Stepputat 2005), are made more accountable to state agents. This constrains the room for independent manoeuvre chiefs have when resolving disputes (see also Alexander 1997; Virtanen 2005; Orre 2007; Florêncio 2008).

Meanwhile, Obarrio (2007) focuses on the normative implications of decentralisation. Based on fieldwork in Nampula City's peri-urban neighbourhoods and rural villages of Nampula province, he claims that dispute management in Nampula has historically been structured by kinship norms. The key to these is a logic of debt, according to which the various members of a family or clan are understood to be mutually indebted, while their relations to other such units are governed by notions of compensation and retribution. In one instance, for example, a fight erupted between two men over a woman, with one wounding the other in his leg with a large butcher's knife, to which supporters of the wounded man responded by wanting to inflict a similar injury to the original offender. The case was eventually solved when a local authority intervened, and ordered the offender to pay the 'equivalent' to the wound in vegetables and other kind. This leads Obarrio to claim in a rather circular fashion that social interaction opens up circuits of debt in northern Mozambique, but through it the possibility of sociality itself, as counter-gifts come to flow in the opposite direction.

Obarrio's point (2007: 337-356) is that it is primarily these kinship norms that become more prominent as a consequence of legal reforms. He shows that newly installed community courts in Nampula City require disputing parties to bring along their families if they want their case to be heard, because judges reason that individual lives unfold in a context shaped by immediate kinship structures, which makes family members not only good witnesses, but also warrantors of a future agreement to be reached. Moreover, they see the individual as having been constituted by ancestral norms and ceremonies located in the past. This has the effect of pulling those who had initially wished to escape kinship norms back into the realm of their families. In one case, for example, a young couple had moved in together without asking their parents or uncles for permission, and without performing the 'traditional' rites. When they ran into trouble, their respective families used the trial to be formally introduced to one another and take the first steps towards a merging of their kinship structures. Other ways in which community courts reinforce kinship norms include judges forcing defendants to make public intimate affairs that they may have tried to keep from family members, and the strategic deployment of kinship terminology. By calling some 'mother' or 'father', and others 'son' or 'daughter', judges

set the stage for social interactions outside the court (see also Gundersen 1992). As Obarrio notes, kinship normativity is often redefined in the process; most judges are male elders, and they tend to privilege their own perspective vis-à-vis women and young men in their rulings on such cases as divorce or adultery.

Yet, Kyed's findings (2007) in a study of governance in southern Mozambique contradict Obarrio's interpretation of the normative effects of decentralisation. She describes how there is a second normative framework active in processes of dispute management, which consists of norms codified in law. In line with its conception of governance, FRELIMO envisioned these to be 'scientific': through impartial justice, rational procedures, reflection and the application of empirically validated principles, Mozambique was to modernise and become a classless and secular society (Sachs and Welch 1990: 111-124; O'Laughlin 2000: 26-28). As explained, what often happened in practice was that party membership became the standard for moral judgement and for participation in the public domain. During the country's civil war FRELIMO consistently referred to its opponents as "armed bandits" who ought to be excluded from society and to whom justice did not apply. RENAMO, conversely, challenged the legitimacy of this source of normativity, and sought to maintain kinship norms. The guerrilla movement frequently targeted teachers and medical staff in military campaigns, as its leadership associated such professions with 'science' and reasoned that they therefore must be supporters of FRELIMO (Wilson 1992: 533).

According to Kyed (2007), the impact of current decentralisation policies is that it is not kinship norms, but the political sensibilities that FRELIMO sought to create during the country's civil war that are reinvigorated. Local governance in the locality of Kyed's research was until recently controlled by traditional leaders supporting RENAMO. By manipulating ambiguity in the laws regarding decentralised jurisdiction, the police has been able to undermine RENAMO's authority. Firstly, whereas the legitimacy of traditional authorities used to be based on their capacity for resolving disputes promptly and enforcing justice in the form of monetary compensations, they have now been obliged by the police to refer most cases to the official legal system. Failure to do so will result in

charges being pressed against them and in imprisonment, which sometimes includes torture, thus inscribing the sovereignty of the state upon the bodies of those charged. Secondly, the police have set up youth groups who report directly to the chief of police and are free to submit those accused of crime to corporeal punishment. Prohibitions upon others inflicting similar types of punishment, and the arbitrariness of this, serve to mystify state power, reminding the local population of the state's capacity for suspending the law. This results in a redrawing of moral boundaries: cooperation with FRELIMO and the state becomes the main criterion for establishing whether something constitutes a crime or not, which leaves members of the political opposition as potential criminals.

These various interpretations of the effects of decentralisation policies largely ignore the influence of religion on dispute management. This is especially problematic for Obarrio's argument regarding the increased importance of kinship norms in northern Mozambique, for Meneses (2008: 82-88) has shown that these are mediated in this region by Islam. In Angoche, a coastal city of Nampula province, she found that in cases of *zina* (extramarital or premarital sex), Sufi Muslims normally follow a consensus model incorporating kinship norms, in which the family of the convicted man pays a financial compensation to either the husband of the convicted woman, or to the family of the woman if she is not married. Meneses' reformist informants forwarded a very different approach. They maintained that if it were not for Mozambican law, the accused should be stoned, lashed or exiled if found guilty, as is prescribed in the Qur'an and several *Hadith*. These arguments overlap with the ones articulated in Ali's anecdote. They also relate to the aforementioned findings by Rosen (1989) and Bowen (2000) that Islamic reformism generally involves forms of legal reasoning that leave little room for the accommodation of normative structures other than *Shari'a* law. In light of these observations, this thesis seeks to investigate how the effects of decentralisation policies and Islamic reformism intersect in Nampula City.

#### *1.4.3 Normativity and resistance*

The focus by Obarrio and Kyed on the normative implications of decentralisation policies brings me to the third sub-theme of this thesis: normativity and resistance. As pointed out



above, contemporary Islamic reformism entails a set of norms that can be distinguished from those of other Islamic traditions by their emphasis on the individual, their literalism, moralism, and by their totalising intent. Such norms are often linked in studies of Islamic reformism to desires to escape established modes of control. Abu-Lughod (1990: 55) for example, although careful to spell out that reformist norms have disciplinary power of their own, argues that the participation of Bedouin youth in Islamic reform movements in Egypt represents a kind of double resistance to the contradictory sets of demands of elders and of the national westernised and capitalist state (see also Abu-Lughod 1998). Likewise, Kresse (2003) shows that 20th Century Islamic reformism on the Kenyan coast initially paralleled European ‘enlightenment’ movements in emphasising rationality and self-authorship as the means to liberate the individual from the social dominance of a specific group of Islamic leaders. It later became dogmatic itself under the influence of religious doctrines from the Middle East, generating novel mechanisms of subjection and exclusion, such as denouncing as ‘blameworthy innovations’ everything that was not immediately logically explicable in relation to Islamic scriptures (Kresse 2003: 302-303). Other authors (Eickelman and Piscatori 1996; Eickelman and Anderson 2003; Eickelman and Salvatore 2004; Hefner 2000; Kaarsholm 2009) focus their interpretations more specifically on the state, and on the discursive aspects of the relation between the state and Islamic reformism, to argue that Islamic reform movements contributes to the emergence of public spheres where citizens resist or subvert anti-democratic pressures from governments.

Similar patterns have been identified in Mozambique. Firstly, with regard to the kinship norms analysed by Obarrio, Bonate (2006) observes that these stand in a historically ambivalent relation to Islam. As discussed above, during the initial spread of Islam, there appears to have been a rather smooth integration of Islam and kinship discourse. Upon their adoption of ‘chiefly’ Islam in the 18th and 19th centuries, chiefs included Islamic experts in their following to communicate with Islamic spirits, produce amulets and establish the guilt of those suspected of crime by making them swallow small rice balls containing Qur’anic inscriptions. Structural bases of kinship norms such as matriliney and ancestor worship, however, remained intact. This changed with the arrival of Sufism. Exploiting discursive tensions between Sufi beliefs and kinship ideology, Sufi *xehes*

sought to destabilise the authority of chiefs by denouncing attributes on which chiefs relied for part of their legitimacy as ‘un-Islamic’. As elsewhere in East Africa, they criticised the use of drums or loud voices during funerary rites, and to a lesser extent, matriliney (cf. Trimmingham 1964: 89). Conversion of chiefs to Sufism largely subdued such critiques, but by then ancestor worship and other chiefly practices had been pushed to the margins, while prayers and requests to Sufi saints had become more central (Launay 1992: 19; Rosander 1997).

Secondly, in relation to Islam and state discourses of citizenship, Alpers (1999) describes how the Portuguese colonial regime worried about Islam’s potential for rallying opposition to the regime in a manner that cross-cut kinship ties. A factor herein was the regime’s association with the Catholic Church: a 1940 concordat between the Vatican and Salazar’s *Estado Novo* placed the Church in charge of the colonial education system, and lent the colonial project with a sense of crusade, whereby Islam, as Vakil (2003) suggests, served as the ‘other’ in legitimising colonisation. In the 1930s, when African nationalism began to make itself felt across the African continent, these sentiments led to the violent repression of public manifestations of Islam. Mosques and *madradas* were closed in Cabo Delgado in 1937, and Islamic literature was seized. After the outbreak of the war for liberation in Mozambique, the Portuguese changed their approach: they opted for co-optation and divide-and-rule policies instead. A number of initiatives were organised to ‘win the hearts’ of the Muslim population. Studies were conducted to map Islamic hierarchies in Mozambique, a radio broadcast presenting the official greetings of the Governor-General of Mozambique was transmitted at Ramadan, the Qur’an was translated into Portuguese, and mosques were built and repaired. The colonial administration also financed pilgrimages to Mecca, and when Sufi Muslims complained in the early 1970s about emergent Islamic reformism, the Portuguese intervened on their behalf – they calculated that they had more to gain from supporting Sufi brotherhoods, as these represented the majority of Mozambican Muslims (Alpers 1999: 181-182).

According to Morier-Genoud (2000, 2007), these attitudes have continued to mark relations between the state and Islam in the postcolonial period. He distinguishes three key

moments in state-society relations since FRELIMO declared Independence in 1975. Initially, the emphasis was on prohibition. As the vanguard of the Marxist-Leninist revolution, FRELIMO asserted itself as moral guardian of the nation and claimed sole authority in securing and protecting the wellbeing of Mozambican citizens, materially as well as spiritually. When the party launched an anti-religious ideological struggle in 1977 on account of religion's perceived 'obscurantism', anti-Islamic sentiment was thereby one of the keystones. Morier-Genoud (2007: 237-238) attributes this to the fact that FRELIMO's leaders came from the Christian-dominated South and had been educated at Protestant mission schools, meaning that their understanding of Islam was limited.

In the 1980s, co-optation and control became more central to state-society relations. A certain approximation between FRELIMO and reformist Muslim leaders could be noted in this period. This was influenced by the perceived elective affinity between FRELIMO's 'scientific' principles of governance, and the emphasis on rationality in Islamic reformism: FRELIMO leaders felt that they had more in common with Islamic reformists than with Sufi leaders, due to the former's 'modern' outlook. Consequently, when FRELIMO obliged religious groups in 1983 to organise themselves into umbrella-organisations, reformists were able to gain control of the Islamic Council created for Muslims by the state's initiative. Sufi Muslims subsequently decided to found their own organisation, the Islamic Congress. FRELIMO had little choice but to accept this division, as the Islamic Congress rallied more popular support.

The third moment came in the mid-1990s when, around the time of the country's first democratic elections in 1994, genuine inclusion of Muslims in the country's public sphere seemed possible. A number of Islamic organisations were given permission to establish offices in Mozambique. Muslim representatives appeared on radio and TV, while FRELIMO, keen to win the Muslim vote, included representatives of Muslim associations in its candidate lists. After the elections, they were allowed to swear allegiance on the Qur'an, and in 1996, Muslim Parliamentarians from different parties joined forces to draft a proposal for a law to turn the Muslim festive dates of Eid al-Fitr and Eid al-Adha into public holidays. However, as Morier-Genoud observes, these initiatives ended in

disappointment. First, the attempt to ‘officialise’ Muslim holidays failed. Although the bill was approved by Parliament, it was never signed into law. Among other reasons, the attempt met with opposition from the Catholic Church and elements within FRELIMO, who warned against the Islamisation of the state. There were also disagreements between Sufi Muslims and reformists about the correct methods of sighting the moon to determine the dates. Subsequently, FRELIMO broke its alliance with Muslim associations. The party removed their representatives from its candidate lists for the next elections, and replaced them with Muslims of secular orientation. Overall, Morier-Genoud concludes, FRELIMO has continued, like the Portuguese, to exclude Muslims from public participation through a combination of repression, co-optation and ostentatious support.

The analysis by Morier-Genoud raises the question of what has happened in relation to Islam, normativity and resistance since the 1990s. I am thereby specifically interested in dynamics at the local level, where, as mentioned, discourses of kinship, citizenship and Islamic reformism operate side-by-side.

### **1.5 Summary: themes and questions**

I have described in this introduction how Nampula City has recently witnessed a rapid transformation of the religious field. While ‘chiefly’ Islam and Sufism are dwindling, there are a growing number of reformist mosques advocating globally-oriented, Salafi-inspired interpretations of Islam. With the aid of international Islamic donors, these mosques seek to return Islamic practice to the model provided by the first generations of Muslims, and encourage Muslims to model their lives after the example of Prophet Muhammad.

As I have suggested, reformist mosques have been tremendously successful in transmitting these messages of reform to their constituents in the city’s peri-urban neighbourhoods. Yet, their interpretations of Islam also produce feelings of uncertainty and inadequacy, as reformist Muslims find it difficult to observe their faith under the conditions of religious and legal pluralism that characterise life in these neighbourhoods.

This raises questions about the appropriation, contestation and impact of Islamic reformism in the urban periphery of Nampula City.

The main themes of the thesis are thereby the articulation of Islamic reformism in the context of pluralism, and its manifestation in the domain of dispute management. In situating these themes in relation to the research literature on Mozambique, I have identified several sub-themes. These include the impact of Islamic reformism on authority structures, its intersection with decentralisation policies and the effects of Islamic reformism on issues of normativity and resistance.

In the next chapter, I will discuss my fieldwork and describe how I have explored the above themes and questions in one particular peri-urban neighbourhood of Nampula City, namely Bairro Acordado.

## CHAPTER 2. FIELDWORK IN BAIRRO ACORDADO

### 2.1 Introduction

*Dona* Jamila and I had just returned from our class at the women's *madrassa* (Islamic school) of the Anwar mosque. This reformist mosque was located in the heart of the peri-urban neighbourhood I call Bairro Acordado in this thesis. The latter constituted the primary site of my fieldwork in Nampula City, and the Anwar mosque was one of the locations of my research there. It was run by a local association of the same name, and *dona* Jamila, a large woman in her sixties, wearing a brown *hijab* (veil), was the wife of the founder of this association: *xehé* (Islamic leader) Abubacar.

“Come, sit down,” said *dona* Jamila as she handed me a chair. We usually chatted after class. Her house was located near the Anwar mosque. We often walked to the *madrassa* together and, upon our return, discussed what the *malimo* (Islamic teacher) had told the students before I continued on my way. Today, the *malimo* had talked about Eid al-Fitr (the Muslim holiday marking the breaking of the fast at the end of Ramadan). Eid al-Fitr was coming up next week, and as the *malimo* had explained, there was controversy about the date: some people broke their fast a day later than others, as they had also started later. It was regrettable, the teacher had commented, this lack of unity. When I asked *dona* Jamila what she thought, she bristled. She herself had started early, just like the other members of the Anwar mosque. But, many others in Bairro Acordado had begun fasting later. “I do not understand these people,” *dona* Jamila said about the latter. “There is a lot of ignorance in this neighbourhood (*bairro*).”

By “these people”, *dona* Jamila was referring to Sufi Muslims. The reason they had started a day later was because they had waited for the new moon (marking the beginning of the month of Ramadan) to be sighted locally in northern Mozambique. Reformist Muslims like *dona* Jamila herself, in contrast, had begun their fast after the first international sighting of the moon. This divergence is not unique to Bairro Acordado. It is a controversy which runs throughout Muslim communities across the world, and there are

many sides to it (cf. Kresse 2007). It is, at once, about the interpretation of Islamic scriptures, whereby different *madh'hab* (schools of Islamic jurisprudence) give different recommendations. It concerns the role of Saudi Arabia in the *umma* (global Muslim community): many Muslims, when they say that it is the first international sighting which counts, take their lead from Saudi Arabia and start fasting when the moon has been sighted there. In the case of Mozambique, there are also national-political dimensions to the dispute: as analysed by Morier-Genoud (2000), an initiative by Muslim parliamentarians to turn the Muslim festive dates of Eid al-Fitr and Eid al-Adha into public holidays failed, because, among other reasons, the Islamic associations they represented could not agree on the correct dates (see Chapter 1).

Yet for *dona* Jamila these broader issues and dimensions were of secondary concern. Instead, as her comment suggests, she interpreted the controversy about the sighting of the moon through the framework of the *bairro*. This Portuguese term means neighbourhood and it signals the whole of the neighbourhood of Bairro Acordado, as defined by its administrative boundaries.<sup>4</sup> *Dona* Jamila was irritated that Muslim residents of the same neighbourhood celebrated Eid al-Fitr on different days.

Her use of the framework of the *bairro* relates to a common dilemma in urban anthropology concerning the selection of the appropriate scale or unit of analysis. City dwellers such as *dona* Jamila are immersed, as the controversy demonstrates, in a variety of social, cultural and economic networks stretching beyond the physical boundaries of their immediate life worlds. The actualisation of these connections depends on everyday social interactions. However, given people's mobility and the complexity and overlapping scales of urban life, these can be multiple and various. The question is therefore on which level to situate the analysis: the individual level, the family unit, the mosque, the neighbourhood, the city or the region? While this dilemma applies to anthropology in general (cf. Gupta and Ferguson 1992), it is, as Hannerz (1980) observes, especially astute

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<sup>4</sup> Research participants sometimes invoked the notion of *bairro* with reference to the area in their immediate vicinity, but they tended to use a different Portuguese term for this: *área* (area).

in research in urban settings where boundaries between places are porous and there are no obvious links between people, socio-cultural patterns and space (see also Ocejo 2013).

In this chapter, I will describe how I have sought to resolve this dilemma by opting for a neighbourhood study, whereby Bairro Acordado constitutes the central unit of my exploration of the appropriation, impact and contestation of Islamic reformism in peri-urban Nampula City. In what follows, I will first set out the general characteristics of Bairro Acordado. This is followed by a description of my approach, the specific sites of my fieldwork and a discussion of the methods I used for data collection. I shall conclude with a chapter outline.

## 2.2 Bairro Acordado: general characteristics

Bairro Acordado is one of the 18 neighbourhoods of Nampula City. It covers an area of roughly 16 square kilometres. Like other peri-urban neighbourhoods of the city, it borders the city centre on one edge and stretches into the rural hinterlands from there, casting a scattered settlement pattern across the landscape.



Figure 2. Map of Bairro Acordado



As indicated on the map in Figure 2, the city centre is located south of Bairro Acordado. The border between the centre and neighbourhood is marked by a railroad track. This track was built during colonial times and it connects the eastern coastal city of Nacala to the western inland city of Cuamba, near the border with Malawi. Two main roads traverse the track into the neighbourhood. Leading north, the roads demarcate the western and eastern borders of Bairro Acordado, thereby separating it from the adjacent neighbourhoods. There are warehouses across the track, used to store imported goods. The residential areas come next, and housing is at its most congested in these parts. Halfway through, in the central part of Bairro Acordado, runs a side road, cutting across the neighbourhood horizontally to connect the two northbound roads. The neighbourhood's primary and secondary schools, the health post, the Sede (seat of the local government administration), the police post and the central market are all located along or near this side road. This also where the neighbourhood's river originates, which meanders through Bairro Acordado on its way North. In the dry season, the river appears a brook, easy to cross on foot. But in the rainy season, it swells into a current and people have drowned, caught while washing their clothes. Following the river north, the terrain slopes downward and the houses become sparser, until there are only fields, trees, bushes and red soil. The neighbourhood's northern limits are reached where the river flows into a larger river, and the *inselbergen* (isolated hills rising abruptly from the plain) appear, dotting the landscape around Nampula City.

Once, in the past, Bairro Acordado had a reputation for being uninhabitable, even dangerous. The stories I was told by research participants about this reputation spoke of violence and cannibalism. For instance, one story recounted how the area had been covered in woods during colonial times. No one had dared to live there as white people were rumoured to roam around at night to abduct the African population and consume their human flesh.

When I mentioned these stories to the *régulo* (chief) of Bairro Acordado, he started laughing. He was the 'traditional' leader of the neighbourhood, and had grown up in the area. We were sitting inside the *pwaro* (a round, freestanding pavilion, traditionally used

for receiving visitors) near his house. A short, soft-spoken man in his sixties, he wore a crisply ironed shirt and a faded, red baseball cap. He was relatively new to the job, having been named *régulo* only the year before. Following Makhuwa notions of matrilineal kinship, he had inherited the position from his late mother's brother, through the female line.

Those stories, responded the *régulo*, had their origins in the 1950s, when Nampula City grew and the Portuguese colonial regime claimed several tracts of the land in the area near the city centre for infrastructure projects. The land was occupied at the time by a small number of subsistence farmers, including by one of the predecessors of the *régulo*. When the farmers moved to more remote northern parts of the neighbourhood, they told the stories I had heard to their children, to prevent them from going near the project sites and getting into trouble. No, said the *régulo*, it was true that, in the past, Bairro Acordado had a reputation for being uninhabitable, but this dated back further in time. In the pre-colonial era, a caravan of traders had come upon the area. They were travelling from the interior of Nampula province to the coast to exchange tobacco for salt. Night fell and they needed a place to sleep. As there was not a single house in sight, they decided to pitch their camp near a water basin and put out sentries, wary as they were of a raid. The raid came, but not in the form they had expected; the next morning, they woke up covered in mosquito bites. Do not go there, they warned people as they continued their journey, it is infested with insects. "You see?" chuckled the *régulo*, "insects, that is why no one wanted to live here."

This reputation no longer applies. Today, Bairro Acordado is home to over 50,000 inhabitants. Some of them belong to the autochthonous population. The majority, however, are migrants from other parts of Nampula province. They present a diverse picture. To illustrate this, there were a few wealthy people among the residents I met over the course of fieldwork. They lived in large, air-conditioned houses with guards opening the gates for them as they rushed in and out in their 4-wheel drives. One man, for example, was the owner a number of businesses in the coastal city of Angoche. He had acquired local fame for holding his wedding in an airplane. There were also signs of extreme poverty. Only a block away from the above man lived a single mother with four

small children. She showed me the plant leaves she gathered every day near her house. Together with *xima* (corn flour), they constituted her family's only source of nourishment. There were similar contrasts in other domains. A university professor I knew lived next door to the mother of one of my research participants. She had never gone to school and was illiterate. Likewise, the leader of one of the reformist mosques where I conducted research looked out from his house onto a chapel. It was maintained by one of his neighbours, and twice a week, a Catholic prayer group met there for their religious service.

I have summarised the general characteristics of Bairro Acordado's population in Table 3. The data come from Mozambique's 2007 census (INE 2007) and demonstrate the socio-economic and religious diversity of the neighbourhood. For example, in terms of religion, the population is equally divided between Islam and Christianity: 46 percent of residents are Muslim, 40 percent Catholic, 7 percent Protestant, and 7 percent have none or a different religion. With regard to education, a fifth of the adult population has never gone to school. The same ratio applies to people who have frequented either secondary school or higher, meaning that primary school is the highest education level of 59 percent of adult residents. Meanwhile, three quarters of residents live in adobe or wooden houses, while one quarter live in houses made of cement. Less than half (41 percent) have access to running water, and only a third of households have electricity. The others use water from public and private wells, and gas lamps and candles for lighting.

Table 3. Demographic characteristics of Bairro Acordado (2007 Census)

<b>NEIGHBOURHOOD POPULATION</b>	
<b>Gender</b>	
Male	52%
Female	48%
<b>Age</b>	
0-19	57%
20-29	19%
30-39	11%
40-50	7%
50+	6%
<b>Place of birth</b>	
Nampula Province	91%
Another province of Mozambique	9%
<b>Born within Nampula Province</b>	
Nampula City	65%
Other	35%
<b>Religion</b>	
Catholic	40%
Muslim	46%
Protestant	7%
None/Other	7%
<b>Education</b>	
None	17%
Literacy course	2%
Primary school	59%
Secondary school	19%
Higher education	3%
<b>Literacy</b>	
Literate	64%
Illiterate	32%
Partial/No info	3%
<b>Everyday language</b>	
eMakhuwa	56%
Portuguese	42%
Other	2%
<b>Employment</b>	
State	16%
Private	14%
Informal	69%
<b>Light at home</b>	
Electricity	36%
Petrol/Paraffin/Kerosene	60%
Other	4%
<b>House material</b>	
Cement	25%
Adobe	59%
Wood	13%
Other	3%
<b>Water source</b>	
Piped water	41%
Public fountain or well	52%
Private well	6%

Diversity, similarly, is what characterises Bairro Acordado in terms of governance. On the one hand, there are the neighbourhood secretaries. Since 1975 Independence, when FRELIMO took over from the Portuguese, they have been in charge of Bairro Acordado according to the following hierarchy. The neighbourhood secretary (*secretário do bairro*) supervises affairs at the neighbourhood level. Together with the Director of Social Affairs, he answers to the superintendent at the administrative post, who is in charge of several neighbourhoods, and to the city administration. Directly under the neighbourhood secretary come a dozen section secretaries (*secretário da unidade comunal*). Each presides over an administrative section of roughly 3,000 inhabitants. The section secretaries, in turn, oversee block secretaries (*secretário do quarteirão*). Every block consists of 50 households, and it is their job to keep track of what is happening in their vicinity, inform their superiors where necessary, mobilise the population for government campaigns such as vaccination drives, and provide a number of services to residents, including the signing of statements of residence and good conduct. While there have been some changes in personnel, many secretaries have been in their positions since the days of socialism. The neighbourhood secretary, for instance, became involved in the running of the neighbourhood in the late 1970s. He used to combine his role as neighbourhood secretary with his job at Nampula's National Defence Secretariat, but has worked full-time as neighbourhood secretary since his retirement in 2001.

On the other hand, there are the neighbourhood's 'traditional' authorities. Their offices, including that of the aforementioned predecessor of the current *régulo*, had originally been abolished by FRELIMO after Independence. Recently, however, following FRELIMO's decentralisation policies (see Chapter 1), the 'traditional' authorities have been newly installed. The position of the *régulo* had been formally recognised by the government several years before I arrived in Bairro Acordado. The recognition of lower-ranking leaders (*cabos, chefes de povoação*) proceeded subsequently while I was in the field. They fall under the jurisdiction of the provincial government and are mainly active in the rural parts of Bairro Acordado. Among other responsibilities, they are in charge of the allocation of agricultural land, and carry out some of the tasks of the neighbourhood secretaries.

Meanwhile, there are several other structures involved in the governance of Bairro Acordado: the neighbourhood's community court, the community police, an advisory council of local business representatives and civil society leaders, and FRELIMO's women's association called *Organização da Mulher Moçambicana* (OMM) (Organisation of the Mozambican Woman). I will describe the workings of Bairro Acordado's community court in the following section.

### 2.3 Approach

I chose Bairro Acordado as my primary site of fieldwork during a preliminary field trip to Nampula City in early 2010. During this trip, I spoke with Muslim leaders and visited mosques in several neighbourhoods. Because Bairro Acordado had a strong Islamic reformist presence, I selected this neighbourhood as my base. Mozambique's census data does not distinguish between different groups of Muslims, but based on the proportion of reformist mosques in the neighbourhood – seven out of a total of more than 20 mosques – I estimated that a third of Bairro Acordado's Muslim population considered themselves reformist Muslims.

As mentioned in the introduction, I thereby opted for a neighbourhood approach. This was not something I had planned prior to fieldwork. Initially, when I settled in Bairro Acordado in November 2010, the idea had been to use the neighbourhood as my base and, following a multi-sited ethnographic approach (cf. Marcus 1995), incorporate other neighbourhoods into my research as I accompanied research participants on their journeys across the city. I did indeed go to other neighbourhoods for reasons of comparison, but I soon realised that many residents did not venture out of Bairro Acordado often: other than for reasons of work, to go to the hospital or attend to bureaucratic paperwork, their lives unfolded largely within the context of the *bairro*. On a practical level, the administrative boundaries of the neighbourhood structured where people went to school, which mosque or church group they belonged to, who their friends were, which markets they visited, and, frequently, also where they worked. Furthermore, in the domain of dispute management,

people referred to disputes as “matters of the neighbourhood” (*assuntos do bairro*) if no physical violence or objects of significant value were involved, and they preferred to resolve these with the aid of family, neighbours or neighbourhood authorities, rather than by going to supra-neighbourhood structures like the police or state courts. More generally, as *dona* Jamila’s anecdote suggests, the category of the *bairro* influenced how people made sense of the world, and it was the stage where their involvements with wider networks were actualised.

Neighbourhood study is a conventional choice in urban ethnography: from the famous studies by Whyte (1943) and Gans (1962) of street corner society and ‘urban villagers’ in Boston, to Bourgeois’ (1995) description of inner city life in New York, and Werthmann’s (2002) recent study of Muslim Hausa women in urban northern Nigeria, many researchers of city life have focused their analysis on a single neighbourhood. What distinguished my ethnographic approach from some of the earlier examples was that I was less interested in the neighbourhood as such: it was not my aim to develop an exhaustive overview of the various institutions, composition and socio-economic differentiation of Bairro Acordado, nor did I explore the production of the neighbourhood as a territorial or imagined entity. Rather, following Glick-Schiller and Çağlar (2009), I approached the neighbourhood as a system of social relations and a point of entry where broader social transformations become grounded in space and time. I was thereby aware of the methodological reservations expressed by, among others, Merry (1981: 15) that neighbourhoods are not coherent, integrated social systems, but a series of distinct networks occupying the same geographical space. In order to address these concerns I employed, as I will further discuss in the methods section below, a combination of qualitative and quantitative methods.

## 2.4 Field sites

My fieldwork in Bairro Acordado was divided into four phases. Each phase focused on a different aspect of neighbourhood life as well as on a different area of the neighbourhood. In practice, the transition from one phase to the next was incremental and there was substantial overlap, but in what follows, I shall describe the different themes separately.

### *2.4.1 Neighbourhood life*

I focused the first six months of research on the everyday aspects of neighbourhood life. In Bairro Acordado, I lived in the house of a family of four brothers, ranging in age between 17 and 26 years old. This house belonged to their father, an employee of the national airline company. He did not reside there himself, but visited every morning to leave his sons with a small amount of money to buy and prepare their own food. Featuring a yard and an annex, it was a large, concrete house, built by the father shortly before Independence when he moved to the city with his late wife for reasons of work. The room I rented in the annex was Duarte's, the second oldest brother, who was a university student at the time. His youngest brother was a student as well, finishing secondary school, while the other two brothers were unemployed. I moved in with the brothers while I was waiting for the house next door to be finished. This house was under construction when I had agreed to rent it from Abdul, its owner, who had arranged for me to stay with the brothers in the meantime. Abdul was a member of one of the reformist mosques of Bairro Acordado, where I had initially planned to do fieldwork. I had met one of the preachers of this mosque at Nampula City's Islamic radio station, who, after inviting me for a visit, had put us in touch. Eventually, the plan to do research at this mosque did not work out, but by then I was already settled in Bairro Acordado.

As indicated on the map in Figure 2, the house of the brothers was located in an area of Bairro Acordado colloquially referred to as Zona Melhorada (Improved Zone). Located about two kilometres from the city centre, it is, as the name suggests, known as relatively well-to-do. The urban settlement of this area dates back to the 1960s when it had been designated by the Portuguese colonial regime to become a new city core. This was at a time when Nampula City had been expanding, and the colonial administration selected this area for housing the Portuguese settler citizens who occupied the lower positions of the state bureaucracy: police men, teachers and the like. The colonial administration parcelled out plots and constructed dirt roads and a drainage system. It provided connections to the city's electricity and water networks as well as street lights, while banks gave out loans for house construction. A select group of African Mozambicans were



invited to apply for these loans alongside settler citizens. Coming from the interior of Nampula province, they had been educated at Catholic missionary schools, before landing jobs working for the government in the city, for example at the state-owned railroad company. Several accepted the invitation. They were joined, following Independence in 1975, by a second group of African Mozambicans, also from among the city's emergent middle class: civil servants, teachers, health workers, employees of state companies and FRELIMO party officials. The newcomers felt attracted to the area because of the public utilities, as well as by the houses vacated by the Portuguese when the latter were forced to leave the country.<sup>5</sup>

The area has undergone significant changes since those early days. With no money in its coffers, the city administration was unable to maintain public services in the years following Independence. The street lights were the first to be removed. Other utilities such as the roads and drainage pipes suffered a more gradual decline. The difficulties of governance were compounded in the early 1980s by the outbreak of civil war in Nampula province, when refugees flocked to the city and food products became scarce. Refugees were housed in camps, one of which was located on the borders of the neighbourhood, but a number of them settled in Zona Melhorada, having been helped by their relatives to find residential plots there. Their arrival added to the socio-economic diversity of the area, which was further increased as a result of the structural adjustment and economic privatisation programmes implemented by the Mozambican government in the late 1980s and after the post-1992 democratisation of the country. Many residents lost their jobs or were forced into early retirement as a result of these programmes. As their offspring were unable to find employment, households struggled to retain their middle-class status, and very few succeeded in doing so. In the meantime, they were joined by new residents, either pushed out of the city centre by high rents, or moving in from the province to take advantage of the opportunities that privatisation and economic growth offered to traders and entrepreneurs.

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<sup>5</sup> The decree ordering Portuguese nationals to leave Mozambique is referred to as the '24/20 order': they were given 24 hours to leave the country with a maximum of 20 kilos of luggage. It came from then-Minister of the Interior Guebuza who was the president of Mozambique at the time of my fieldwork.

Yet, despite these changes, by the time I moved there in 2010, Zona Melhorada continued to be marked by the original patterns of urban settlement. The roads were wide and among the few in the neighbourhood overall where cars could pass freely, provided that rain did not turn the dirt into mud. There was space between the houses because of the parcelled plots. Many houses were large, rectangular, made of concrete, with composite or galvanised iron roofs, and verandas out in front. In demographic terms, Catholics from the interior of Nampula province remained in the majority. They were comparatively well-educated and well-off in socio-economic terms.

Living with the brothers meant that I quickly became acquainted with the other residents of the area. The brothers' yard had a water well, and every morning, from early dawn, they received a stream of visitors from the surroundings, requesting to draw water. Some were neighbours. For example, there was Roxana, a single, unemployed mother of six, living across the street. She would send over one of her daughters, and used the fridge at the brother's house for keeping her drinking water cold. Others came from further away: members of the brothers' Catholic prayer group, and people unknown to the brothers who hailed from parts of the neighbourhood where the ground was too rocky for well drilling. Ali, the reformist Muslim youth featuring in the anecdote in Chapter 1, lived two houses over with his father and stepmother Rajah. He frequently came by, as he and the youngest brother were classmates at the neighbourhood's secondary school and did their homework together. Soon, neighbours started inviting me to visit them at their houses. We would sit in their yards and chat, or call out to each other in the early evenings, when people liked to sit outside to digest the day before they retreated inside, and this was how I gradually became integrated into the street life of the neighbourhood.

When Abdul's house was ready after three months, I moved, but I did not end up staying for long. About a month after I had moved in, I woke up in the middle of the night to find five men with machetes trying to force open the door. This was not entirely unexpected. By then, I had lived in the area long enough to know that this was a common occurrence, and that, being one of only three white people in Bairro Acordado, I was a likely target.

Normally, however, when victims of this type of break-in wake up, the assaulters flee. This did not happen in my case. I shouted, they shouted back and redoubled their efforts, and it was only after I started taking pictures of them and managed to alert the neighbours that they left. This was about a week before my wife arrived from the United States to join me in the field, and I was concerned for our safety. We spent another two months at the house without further incidents. However, when a friend living in the city centre needed someone to house-sit and my wife found a job there, the decision was readily made. We moved to the centre where we stayed for the remainder of fieldwork. From that moment on, interactions with research participants in Zona Melhorada took on the more deliberate rhythms of semi-planned visits, but throughout fieldwork, overall, the neighbourhood was where I spent my days.

#### *2.4.2 Community court*

Located at the edge of Zona Melhorada is, as shown on the map, the Sede. It was here – at the neighbourhood’s community court – that I conducted my research into patterns of dispute management. This institution had originally been founded in 1981 as a popular court, to operate under the auspices of Nampula’s Provincial Court as the lowest level of the city’s court hierarchy. However, by the early 1990s, it had largely ceased functioning, as several of the then-judges had either left or died. It was re-established as community court in 1997 as a result of the government’s decentralisation drive (see Chapter 1). No longer part of the formal court hierarchy, it since responded to Nampula’s Provincial Directorate of Registries, Notaries and Religious Affairs, and was charged with the adjudication of disputes according to local norms.

There were four judges – two men, two women – and a male scribe. The judge president, a short man in his sixties, was in charge of the proceedings. As he was frequently occupied with his work for the social security services in the neighbourhood, the other male judge led the hearings in his place. Blind and in his seventies, he had once been a manager at a local factory. After he lost his job over a labour dispute in the 1980s, he had volunteered as a section secretary, until he became judge. He was an articulate man and liked to

intersperse hearings with social commentaries and Makhuwa sayings or riddles. The two female judges were both members of the local chapter of OMM, FRELIMO's women's organisation. While the eldest of the two, a woman in her seventies, rarely attended, the younger judge took her job seriously and was regularly at the court. She was a large woman in her fifties who was especially vocal when it came to interrogating female disputing parties. The scribe, finally, was an excitable, bespectacled man in his fifties. His tasks were to oversee the registration and intake of cases, as well as the preparation of case files. All were neighbourhood residents and lay judges with no special training, save for the occasional seminar organised by the state, local NGOs and universities. They had served at the community court since 1997 when they were appointed in this capacity by the neighbourhood administration. Officially, they did not receive any payment, but they collected court fees and distributed these amongst themselves.

Hearings were held every Tuesday and Friday morning, from 7.30 am to 1 pm. Typically, on these days, a group of around twenty people gathered outside to present themselves to the court, either to collect summons, or because they had been summoned. People looking to have their dispute heard by the court passed by the scribe's station first. Seated at a small desk next to the entrance, he nodded in agreement as they explained their cases and told him of the wrongs they had suffered, encouraging them to be as explicit and detailed in their accusations as possible. They came from all walks of life and their accusations varied: unpaid debts, property, sorcery, physical aggression, insults and inheritance. The majority of cases, however, involved marital disputes such as marital abandonment, spousal eviction, domestic violence, divorce and adultery. When plaintiffs were finished with their statements, the scribe asked them to sign a written copy and handed them a summons with a date scheduled for a hearing. He emphasised that they should not go and give it themselves to the summoned parties, but leave this to the secretary of the section where they lived.

On the scheduled date, if the defendants showed up, the scribe heard their side of the dispute as well and wrote this down in a statement. He then directed the parties to the other side of the room where the judges were seated behind a large wooden table. The

judges heard and interrogated the parties, called family members and witnesses and deliberated their accounts. Depending on the complexity of the material, the participation of the parties and on the question of whether house visits were in order, hearings could stretch over several weeks or sometimes months before the judges reached their verdict. Verdicts consisted of reconciliation attempts, fines, the awarding of financial compensation to one party or the other, or proclamations of divorce. Both plaintiffs and defendants had the option to appeal the verdict at Nampula's City Court.

On average, the community court judges heard around 150 cases per year. This number is similar to the case load at other community courts in Nampula City, yet it is arguably a limited amount: the cases represented only a fraction of the disputes people experienced in their everyday lives in Bairro Acordado. I found, however, that participant observation at the community court provided a useful starting point for developing a sense for the sort of disputes neighbourhood residents engaged in, how they reasoned and how they went about resolving disputes. The detail and the perspectives relayed in court proceedings offered clues on which I followed up in interactions with research participants in other settings. The court was also a point of entry into the matrix of the various figures and institutions involved in the resolution of disputes in Bairro Acordado. Many disputing parties had unsuccessfully tried mediation by family members and neighbours before they approached the court, or they had been referred by section secretaries or, sometimes, the police. The community court judges frequently involved these others as expert witnesses in hearings, and for their part, when they felt unable to resolve a dispute or decided that it lay outside their competency, referred the matter elsewhere, to the police, the City Court or to healers.

It was thus, by following disputes as they progressed from the community court to other fora for dispute management, that I became acquainted with the formal court system. In Nampula City, this is essentially comprised of two courts: the City Court and the Provincial Court. The former handles minor disputes and crimes, the latter processes what are classified as major offences: homicide, illegal possession of fire arms, and so on. Both are located in the same building in the city centre. There are other courts as well, including

administrative and civil courts, but these are small and rarely consulted by residents of peri-urban neighbourhoods such as Bairro Acordado.

Cases at the City and the Provincial Court involve a range of other actors: the police, prosecutors and lawyers. The latter are often state-appointed, as people cannot afford lawyer fees. Recently, there has also been the emergence of several legal associations in Nampula City. With financial aid from international development organisations, they offer legal aid and services to city dwellers. Their mandate is, however, unclear, and as I will discuss in Chapter 3, there are tensions between these associations and neighbourhood institutions such as community courts.

#### 2.4.3 *The Anwar mosque*

The Anwar mosque, mentioned in the introduction, was the location of my third period of fieldwork. Although reformist Muslims participating in my project belonged to several other reformist mosques in the neighbourhood, and I frequented most of these over the course of fieldwork, this mosque was the principal site of fieldwork in relation to the topic of Islamic reformism. Built in 2007, it was a rectangular building, painted in bright white and green colours, which featured two large prayer rooms for men and women, a separate block of two classrooms at the back for *madrasa* classes, a sound system for broadcasting sermons and the *adhan* (Islamic call to prayer), as well as a large pump used by worshippers for performing *wudu* (ablution). *Xehe* Abubacar, the founder of the Anwar association in charge of the mosque, had invited me to do research there. I knew him from his involvement with the neighbourhood administration: he served as president of the aforementioned advisory council of Bairro Acordado. The latter is an organ of consultation, set up by the city government for local business representatives and civil society leaders to advise administrators.

The Anwar mosque is located in the heart of an area called Centro. This area lies immediately next to Zona Melhorada, but despite the physical proximity, the contrasts are substantial. Residents of Centro are generally Muslim and a number of the

neighbourhood's Islamic reformists live here: apart from the Anwar mosque, two of the other six reformist mosques of Bairro Acordado are situated here. As the map shows, Centro can be reached from Zona Melhorada by means of two roads: either via the road bordering the two areas at the South-end, past small shops and motorcycle workshops, or via an inner road leading by the market and the Sede. The distance is about half a kilometre. I would often access Centro from the South, through one of the narrow alleyways wedged between the houses. Following the twisted alleyways, I often lost my sense of direction and had to ask for help to find my way out. A child would obligingly interrupt her play to lead me back to the main road.

The urbanisation of Centro dates back to the same period as that of Zona Melhorada. It was, however, not included in the urban planning scheme drawn up for the latter area by the colonial government. Parts of the area suffered from erosion, and one section served as graveyard for some time. The African Mozambicans who built their houses on the edges of the area did so on their own accord. They were manual labourers from the coast, employed at the bottom ranks of colonial state companies. Occupation of the inner parts followed after Independence, gradually, when the travel restrictions imposed by the Portuguese on the indigenous population were lifted. Carpenters, tailors, mechanics and merchants took their trades from the coast to the city in search of better lives and settled there. Although the civil war slowed this migration during the 1980s, it sped up again in the late 1990s, when Nampula City became a magnet for foreign investment seeking to benefit from Mozambique's economic boom. The influx of money into the local economy meant that crafts and trade were in demand: forms of livelihood in which coastal Muslims historically specialise, due to their longstanding involvement in Indian Ocean trading networks. The trickle-down effects of this new growth were manifest in the renovation projects undertaken by residents of Centro. Whereas houses in this area used to be built of mud, many were refurbished and made of cement during my time in the field.

I will describe the Anwar mosque in more detail in Chapter 7, but let me mention here that my experience of starting research at the mosque was not unlike that of Michael Lambek in Mayotte. Lambek (1993: 21) writes that, after arriving and explaining his "rather vague

request to learn from the inhabitants”, he soon found himself at the *madrasa* every morning, learning sequences of Arabic syllables, sounds, words and prayers, along with the other students. It did not take long before he grew restless and frustrated: he had not come to memorise Qur’anic passages but to understand why this learning was important. He also wanted to learn from everyone in the community, not just from a single *madrasa* teacher. Explaining this to the teacher, he brought an abrupt end to his brief career as a Qur’anic student. Nevertheless, he found that the experience had a profoundly positive effect on his broader concerns, because long after, his introductions to other people were facilitated by their requests for him to recite for them, and his competency in this regard was a source of pride for the community. In my case, studying at the Anwar *madrasa* had been on my own initiative and my career there was not as brief, but the other dynamics mentioned by Lambek were the same: the restlessness, the pride of others in my recitations, and my immersion in the mosque community and the lives of its members through Qur’anic learning.

#### 2.4.4 *Fundo*

Fundo (meaning: End) was where I did my fourth and final period of fieldwork. As indicated on the map, it is located in the northern section of Bairro Acordado. To get there, one follows the main road bordering the eastern side of Centro, for three kilometres, all the way down to the edge of the plateau on which Nampula City is built. The road, and the neighbourhood with it, travels down several kilometres further, but the urban land uses of Bairro Acordado end here, to give way to its exclusively rural zones of its northern section – hence, the name Fundo. This was the area – virtually uninhabited at the time, except for a nearby Portuguese-owned plantation and warehouse – where the aforementioned predecessor of the *régulo* moved with his entourage in the 1950s. Other local matrikin groups, seeking to maintain their distance from the encroaching city, followed suit, building small clusters of houses in amongst the trees, dispersed at irregular intervals, with ample space and no formal road layout. Several of the men worked in the colonial economy, as manual labourers, mechanics and factory workers, while a few, having been educated at missionary schools near the city, were employed in the colonial



administration. Women tended plots in the vicinity of their homes, to supplement the family income. The residents brought along their Sufi beliefs, evident in the fact that the oldest mosques of the neighbourhood are located in Fundo.

After Independence, men held on to their employment, working as colleagues alongside residents of the other sections. When state companies were privatised in the 1990s and workforces cut, these inhabitants of the northern section lost their jobs, just as their neighbours did. Agriculture has been their primary source of income since that time. The fields, however, are no longer as close to the houses as they were. Some of the open space has been marked out as road by an urban planner from the city administration. A football pitch was laid out and other plots were sold, piece by piece, to newcomers. Especially in recent years, as land has become scarce and houses expensive in the areas near the city centre, more people have found their way to Fundo. Migrants from various parts of Nampula province live there cheek-by-jowl with couples from Bairro Acordado or other peri-urban neighbourhoods of Nampula City, unable to afford housing elsewhere. The arrival of migrants has meant that the autochthonous families are now a minority in the area. Nevertheless, it is still common find members from the same family living close together, whereas in Zona Melhorada and Centro this is relatively rare.

It was my interest in the history of Islam in the neighbourhood which led me to Fundo. My trajectory was thus moving against the reformist clock: backwards from a form of religion thought of as purified in search of its original roots in a more traditional idiom. I interviewed *xehes* and mosque members in Fundo, and participated in events at one mosque in particular, the second oldest of the neighbourhood, a concrete, rectangular structure with a flat roof and decorated windows, rising from an open patch of sand at the far-end the inhabited area. It was a Sufi mosque, associated with the Shadhiliyya order, and had been built in the late 1950s by a carpenter. This carpenter came from one of the families from the area and had moved to Fundo with his wife and relatives when the city centre expanded. He had since died, and his son called *xehé* Yasin had taken over. *Xehé* Yasin was a retired railroad worker. When he was a child, he had studied in the province of Niassa with an Islamic teacher who had crossed Fundo upon his travels to recruit

students. While *xehé* Yasin led prayers and oversaw ritual proceedings at the mosque, one of his younger brothers assisted with the day-to-day affairs, such as the running of the *madrassa* for children and the organisation of collective *dhikr* (ecstatic prayer) performances of the mosque's women's group. Another brother of *xehé* Yasin lived nearby as well and worked as *curandeiro* (traditional healer). He invited me to observe the consultations and healing sessions he performed in the hut next to his house, and introduced me to several other healers living and working in the area.

Fundo was also the place where I met with several of the 'traditional' authorities of the neighbourhood: the *régulo*, *cabos* and *líderes tradicionais*. Based on the research literature (see Chapter 1), I had expected to study the effects of decentralisation policies on their involvement in the domain of dispute management, but this proved limited. While it did happen that people turned to them for dispute resolution, the cases were relatively few and infrequent, and mainly concerned matters within or between the autochthonous families of Fundo. This may have been due to the peri-urban character of the northern part: in the outermost rural zones of the neighbourhood, traditional leaders appeared to have more prominent roles in this regard. My interactions with traditional authorities in Fundo focused on two of their other functions. Firstly, they were responsible for the organisation of ceremonies to request the blessing of ancestral spirits for bountiful harvests and successful construction projects, and secondly, they organised initiation rites. I participated in two of the male rites organised by traditional leaders, and our conversations became points of reference for broader enquiries into the history of the neighbourhood and patterns of Makhuwa culture.

#### 2.4.5 *Three areas compared*

To complement this overview of my field sites, I have summed up the population characteristics of Zona Melhorada, Centro and Fundo in Table 4. The table lists the results of a household survey I conducted towards the end of fieldwork with the help of assistants. It covered a total of 336 households, meaning that the results, as I will discuss

in the methods section below, are more or less representative for the population of the three areas.

As the table shows, Islamic reformists constitute the religious majority (45 percent) in Centro. Their numbers are smaller in Zona Melhorada (15 percent) and Fundo (12 percent). Catholics (52 percent) are the largest religious group in Zona Melhorada, while Sufi Muslims (60 percent), most of whom are associated with the Shadhiliyya order, predominate in Fundo.<sup>6</sup> The data additionally shows that 77 percent of the residents of Zona Melhorada have attended secondary school, versus 53 percent in Centro and 39 percent in Fundo. In terms of wealth, measured by the materials used for house construction, house characteristics and household assets, the residents of Fundo are the poorest, while Centro has, on average, the richest residents. The fact that Centro outperforms Zona Melhorada in this respect demonstrates, in light of the historical trajectories outlined above, the degree of upward mobility residents of Centro have experienced in recent years.

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<sup>6</sup> According to the data from the household survey, each area also hosts a small percentage of ‘other Muslims’. These are either survey respondents who did not want to identify themselves exclusively with either Sufi or reformist Islam, or Shi’a Muslims who, as I will discuss in the final chapter of this thesis, have a minor presence in Nampula City.

Table 4. Demographic characteristics of respondents of neighbourhood survey, by section

	NEIGHBOURHOOD SECTION		
	Zona Melhorada	Centro	Fundo
<b>Number of people in household</b>			
1-2	6%	5%	9%
3-5	42%	35%	43%
6-8	41%	46%	32%
9-12	6%	9%	4%
Unspecified	5%	5%	12%
<b>House material</b>			
Cement	68%	62%	18%
Adobe	25%	31%	70%
Wood	5%	7%	10%
Other	3%	0%	2%
<b>House characteristics</b>			
Galvanized iron roof	82%	81%	43%
Electricity	84%	94%	56%
Water	44%	30%	23%
Latrine	78%	83%	28%
<b>Household assets</b>			
Radio	50%	62%	53%
TV	83%	86%	54%
DVD	71%	82%	53%
Cell phone	92%	91%	70%
Computer	8%	11%	0%
Car	10%	15%	3%
Motorbike	26%	40%	17%
Bicycle	14%	16%	9%
<b>Religion</b>			
Muslim	38%	79%	74%
<i>Sufi Muslim</i>	17%	27%	60%
<i>Reformist Muslim</i>	15%	45%	12%
<i>Other Muslim</i>	5%	6%	2%
Christian	58%	20%	23%
<i>Catholic</i>	52%	16%	19%
<i>Protestant</i>	6%	4%	4%
Unknown/No religion	4%	1%	3%
<b>Education</b>			
Primary	13%	34%	43%
Secondary	77%	53%	39%
Advanced	5%	9%	2%
None/Not specified	6%	5%	17%
<b>Where born</b>			
Nampula City	57%	42%	42%
Other	43%	58%	58%

The numbers in this table make for an interesting comparison with the data from the 2007 census for the general neighbourhood population, presented earlier in this chapter. The household survey I conducted shows higher results for three of the indicators of socio-economic development: education levels, materials used for house construction and the number of households with connections to the electricity network.<sup>7</sup> To an extent, this reflects the focus of my fieldwork on the urbanised parts of the neighbourhood. In rural parts, I would have found lower numbers. I think the differences are also indicative, however, of the rapid socio-economic changes that residents of Bairro Acordado have experienced since 2007 when the national census was held. For example, it was only relatively recently that the secondary school in the neighbourhood started offering evening classes and tuition at higher grades. Previously, neighbourhood residents had to go to the city centre for these services, meaning that many dropped out. Now that access to secondary education has increased, education levels are higher.

A final notable comparison is that between the three main religious groups covered by the household survey: Catholics, Sufi Muslims and reformist Muslims. The results are presented in Table 5. Clearly, these numbers are influenced by selection of areas of the neighbourhood, and thus not representative of the population of Bairro Acordado in general. They illustrate a pattern, however, which I will describe in Chapter 4 of this thesis, namely that Islamic reformists tend to be relatively well-educated and socio-economically better-off first-generation migrants to the city.

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<sup>7</sup> One indicator does not fit the trend of increased socio-economic development: access to running water. This appears to have decreased, from 40 percent according to the census results for 2007, to an average of 32 percent in the three areas covered by the household survey in 2012. This matches my observations in the field. Citing shortages, the provincial water company interrupted the water supply to Bairro Acordado and other neighbourhoods of Nampula City for months between 2010 and 2012. During these periods, customers kept receiving bills for minimum usage, leading many to cancel their connections.

Table 5. Demographic characteristics of respondents of neighbourhood survey, by religious group

	<b>RELIGIOUS GROUP</b>		
	<b>Catholic (97 respondents)</b>	<b>Sufi Muslims (116 respondents)</b>	<b>Reformist Muslims (82 respondents)</b>
<b>Sex</b>			
Male	43%	43%	52%
Female	54%	50%	46%
Unspecified	2%	7%	2%
<b>Age</b>			
18-24	32%	33%	31%
25-34	33%	27%	35%
35-44	13%	13%	17%
45-54	5%	7%	10%
54+	5%	8%	2%
Unspecified	11%	13%	5%
<b>Number of people in household</b>			
1-2	4%	8%	6%
3-5	40%	44%	33%
6-8	44%	34%	46%
9-12	5%	8%	7%
Unspecified	6%	6%	7%
<b>House material</b>			
Cement	58%	37%	49%
Adobe	36%	53%	41%
Wood	5%	10%	9%
Other/Unknown	1%	0%	0%
<b>House characteristics</b>			
Galvanized iron roof	76%	55%	74%
Electricity	88%	64%	87%
Water	40%	22%	34%
Latrine	68%	44%	83%
<b>Household assets</b>			
Radio	56%	50%	68%
TV	81%	62%	87%
DVD	72%	59%	83%
Cell phone	85%	79%	95%
Computer	11%	2%	9%
Car	14%	4%	12%
Motorbike	27%	16%	50%
Bicycle	15%	7%	21%
<b>Education</b>			
Primary	13%	43%	30%
Secondary	72%	42%	57%
Advanced	9%	1%	7%
None/not specified	6%	14%	6%
<b>Where born</b>			
Nampula City	58%	45%	35%
Other	42%	55%	65%

## 2.5 Methods

As indicated above, I have used a combination of qualitative and quantitative methods during fieldwork. One of the incentives for using quantitative methods came from the aforementioned lack of statistical data about reformist Islam in Mozambique. Participant observation at reformist mosques in Bairro Acordado suggested that Salafi interpretations of Islam were particularly attractive to a specific group of Muslims; I wanted to find out whether this impression could be generalised. A more general reason for using mixed methods was that each method, as Bernard (2011) observes, has its weaknesses and yields only a partial picture of the social phenomena under study. By combining data from different sources and triangulating results, I sought to find converging evidence (cf. Kaufman and James 2001). Specifically, my implementation of a household survey was intended to address the concerns discussed above about neighbourhood studies. As Mitchell (1966) argues, household surveys enable urban researchers to map how the lives of urbanites are structured by a range of extrinsic factors such as socio-economic differentiation and mobility, thus avoiding the pitfalls of approaching urban communities as bounded entities.

### 2.5.1 Qualitative methods

The main qualitative methods were participant observation and informal conversations. Thus, I participated in neighbourhood life and encountered people “in the midst of things” (Keane 2010) to understand the dynamics of social organisation in Bairro Acordado, how residents interacted with each other, their concerns, their religious beliefs, and the articulation of those beliefs in everyday social life. At the community court, I sat in on hearings, spoke with litigants, accompanied the judges on house visits, conducted legal case studies and followed up on disputes to analyse patterns of dispute management, as well as the manifestation of Islamic reformism in this domain. I also observed the work of other authority figures involved in dispute resolution, including neighbourhood secretaries, the community police and the City Court, and spent time with traditional authorities and *curandeiros*. At the Anwar mosque, I studied at the *madrasa*, participated

in Friday prayers and other mosque activities in order to map notions and ideas associated with Islamic reformism. I visited mosque members and other reformist Muslims at home in order to study the appropriation and impact of these ideas.

Other qualitative methods included interviews. Some of these focused on people's life histories. As Ortner (1989) has demonstrated, life histories constitute valuable sources of information regarding people's appropriations of broader socio-cultural and political forces. Other interviews were of a topical nature and addressed specific questions relating to Islam and dispute management. Interviewees were research participants from Bairro Acordado, as well as outsiders to the neighbourhood such as judges from other community courts, representatives of Islamic associations and functionaries of legal associations and institutions. I used both open and semi-structured formats, and digitally recorded a number of interviews, depending on whether people felt comfortable with this or not. Interviews were supplemented by archival research at Nampula City's Municipal Council, the City Court and the Provincial Court to track historical patterns of adjudication. Additionally, I analysed the content of broadcasts from Nampula City's Islamic radio station and textual and audio-visual materials produced by reformist mosques to study and compare local reformist teachings. During fieldwork, I regularly worked together with a research assistant. My assistant was a woman in her mid-twenties from Zona Melhorada, who helped me with translations from eMakhuwa, arranged introductions and interviews, aided archival research and coded some of the archival material.

In applying these different methods, I relied on case studies and have drawn inspiration from the extended case method. This method was originally developed by Gluckman (1961), Van Velsen (1964) and others (Epstein 1958; Mitchell 1956; Turner 1957) associated with the Manchester School to counteract some of the perceived shortcomings of structuralist approaches in anthropology. As Van Velsen (1967) argues, while structural-functionalism, as exemplified by the work of Radcliffe-Brown (1952), Fortes (1945) and, to a lesser extent, Evans-Pritchard (1940), had been effective in highlighting the importance of fieldwork and participant observation vis-à-vis evolutionism, it tended to privilege a bird's-eye perspective: it focused on structures, regularities and the



abstraction of general principles from observed behaviour and interpersonal relationships, at the neglect of individual variation, actual behaviour, conflict and historical change. The extended case method was designed to address these issues: it documented and reported the co-existence of conflicting sets of norms within the same society, the ambiguous and multiple interpretations of, and people's choices in relation to, these norms, as well as the consequences of their choices for social relations and the dramas and events causing changes in general principles. Proponents of the Manchester School thereby often focused on select groups of named individuals, whose aspirations and relations were tracked over a period of time as they engaged in disputes over norms and deviations. Thus, while Mitchell (1956) explores a sequence of witchcraft accusations in a Yao village to demonstrate their implication in a widening cleavage between lineage sections in the village and its ultimate split into two separate villages, Turner (1957) describes the integrative function of ritual in a Ndembu village by analysing the political struggles of a man called Sandombu who aspires to the position of headman (cf. van Velsen 1967: 147-148).<sup>8</sup>

The extended case method has acquired a more varied usage since these initial formulations. For example, Burawoy (1998) – who was a student of Van Velsen – employs it to study tensions and conflicts surrounding the promotion of African workers to the managerial ranks of a large mining company in Zambia after the country's Independence; the management of the company had previously been the exclusive domain of white expatriates. Burawoy is less interested in the experiences of one specific person or group, or in people's choices between alternative interpretations and the development of their social relations beyond disputes. Rather, he compares disputes occurring at different divisions of the company to establish broader patterns. He also 'extends' cases by contrasting the conflicts he and his research assistants observed during fieldwork with a historical analysis of the results of a programme for the promotion of African workers

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<sup>8</sup> Notwithstanding their shared commitment to the extended case method, there were substantial differences between proponents of the Manchester School in terms of its operationalisation. Notably, as Englund (2002a: 29) observes, Van Velsen (1964) studied social life and conflict from a utilitarian and individualistic perspective, while Turner (1957) paid more attention to social constraints and obligations.

instituted by the mining company prior to Independence. In other words, Burawoy's conceptualisation of the extended case method focuses not on sequences of cases involving the same set of actors but on the comparison of cases across space and time.

In my research and in this thesis, I have used case studies in two ways. Firstly, I have studied disputes and followed their development over time to analyse both the choices of disputing parties between competing sets of norms, as well as their negotiation, and the implication of various social fields and authority figures in dispute management.

Secondly, like Burawoy, I have compared and contrasted cases involving different sets of actors in order to contextualise Islamic reformism and highlight continuities and ruptures in its articulation in the pluralist context of Bairro Acordado.

### *2.5.2 Quantitative methods*

In terms of quantitative methods, I implemented three surveys: a factorial survey<sup>9</sup> on moral reasoning, the household survey mentioned above, and a community court survey.

The former was a pilot consisting of 24 short descriptions of moral violations, adapted from a similar instrument used by Shweder and colleagues (1997) and several moral psychologists (Haidt et al. 1999). For each 'violation', respondents were asked to indicate on a nine-point Likert scale how wrong they thought the violation was.<sup>10</sup> My reason for conducting the survey was that one of the aspects of dispute management by which Islamic reformists could be distinguished from others in Bairro Acordado were their

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<sup>9</sup> The factorial survey is a quasi-experimental vignette method, used to measure social and individual determinants of people's judgements or attitudes. The survey consists of descriptions of fictive events, which respondents are asked to judge. The descriptions are designed to systematically target potential determinants of the judgement or attitude of interest.

<sup>10</sup> Likert scales are unidimensional scales used for measuring attitudes. Typically, respondents are asked to indicate their level of agreement with a statement using a set number of levels ranging from "strongly disagree" to "strongly agree". In the survey I used, respondents were asked to indicate levels of wrongness on a scale ranging from "not wrong at all" to "very wrong".

reactions to offensive behaviour: reformists took offence in relation to specific violations of public decency, which other people did not seem to mind. By testing this difference among a larger group, I intended to investigate whether it was systematic or the result of chance. Furthermore, the pattern I had found was based on people's explicit behaviour and statements, and I was curious whether it was matched by similar differences at the level of implicit moral reasoning. As I will discuss in Chapter 5, current theories in the anthropology of ethics predict the latter to be the case, but work in psychological anthropology casts doubt onto such claims. Upon analysis of the results, it emerged that the design of the pilot survey had a number of shortcomings, and I am also aware of the pitfalls of combining data obtained through everyday encounters with results from experimental procedures from psychology (cf. Astuti 2001). Yet, as I will argue in discussing the results in Chapter 5, I maintain that it was a useful exercise, as it led me to rethink some of the significance of Islamic reformism in Bairro Acordado.

The factorial survey and the household survey were implemented together. I recruited and trained four local interviewers to conduct the combined surveys. They visited a total of 336 households during the months of November and December 2012, spread across Zona Melhorada, Centro and Fundo. With each section of the neighbourhood consisting of approximately 600 households, this means that the survey covered 19 percent of each section, making it roughly representative for their population. Households were selected via systematic sampling: the interviewers approached one in every 10 houses, counting nine houses from the house where they had just interviewed to the next. If no one was home at the tenth house, they returned later, with a maximum of three attempts, after which they moved on to the neighbouring house. Data collection was concentrated during the weekends and the holiday season to increase the likelihood of people being home. One adult respondent was selected per household. Interviewers were given a list of how many men and women of five age groups they should interview, matching the composition of the neighbourhood population according to the 2007 census, to provide for an additional measure of representation. Interviews lasted, on average, an hour. At the start of each interview, interviewers established whether interviewees preferred to conduct the interview in Portuguese or in eMakhuwa. They then proceeded to read out a consent form,

asking interviewees for their verbal consent, and completed a practice round to ensure that interviewees understood the questions and were at ease with the Likert scale. Respondents received no compensation for their participation.

The community court survey was the third of my quantitative methods which was conducted between December 2011 and February 2012 at seven of Nampula City's 10 community courts. It was organised in collaboration with the Directorate of Registries, Notaries and Religious Affairs of Nampula Province, with the objective of getting a better picture of the work of community courts and establishing what kinds of disputes they process. The survey consisted of 14 questions, recording types of cases, their prior trajectories and the personal characteristics of plaintiffs and defendants. For the classification of case types, I relied on the categories community courts use in their own registries of case files. Every court was asked, after a general training and with on-site support in the form of follow-up visits, to fill out one survey per case they received. The courts were given a small financial fee for their participation. In total, they submitted data for 199 cases. The results are presented in Chapter 5.

### *2.5.3 Fieldwork languages*

The two main languages of Nampula City are eMakhuwa and Portuguese. Both are spoken by virtually everyone in the city's peri-urban neighbourhoods. My proficiency in Portuguese was advanced, and with a few exceptions, I conducted all of my interviews and conversations in Portuguese. Archival records reviewed for this thesis and Islamic reformist materials such as shows of the radio programme *Islam in Focus* were also in Portuguese.<sup>11</sup> *Madrassa* classes I observed were generally conducted in Portuguese, as were around half of the hearings of cases at the community court of Bairro Acordado; the other half were held in eMakhuwa, depending on the individual preferences of disputing

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<sup>11</sup> Radio Haq, Nampula City's Islamic radio station, featured eMakhuwa broadcasts as well, but most of its programmes were in Portuguese. The same applies to the availability of Islamic pamphlets and booklets in Nampula City: except for one or two collections of Hadith (traditions or sayings of Prophet Muhammad) in eMakhuwa, produced by the Islamic charity Africa Muslim Agency, these were written in Portuguese.

parties. Given that my proficiency in eMakhuwa was basic, I relied on translations provided by my research assistant and others in situations and settings where people spoke eMakhuwa. These included initiation rites and a proportion of conversations among friends and neighbours. According to the above results of the 2007 census, 56 percent of residents of Bairro Acordado use eMakhuwa for everyday conversation, while 42 percent use Portuguese, although in my experience, the latter percentage was higher in the urbanised areas of the neighbourhood where I conducted fieldwork. eMakhuwa has a number of dialects such as Central eMakhuwa, Xirima, Meto, Nahara, and it is closely related to eLomwe. The population of Bairro Acordado spoke a variety of these dialects. In terms of orthography, I have followed Busi (2008) when transcribing eMakhuwa terms in the thesis.

#### *2.5.4 Positionality*

An important point of consideration concerns my position in the field, and the question of how the fact that I am male, white, non-Muslim, relatively rich and highly educated affected data collection. Bähre (2007: 11) claims in line with Devereux (1967) that limitations resulting from such issues of positionality may be constructive, as they reveal how people relate to each other, and underline some of the anxieties and hopes that structure social relations.

I had a somewhat similar experience. Based on my contact with a reformist preacher from Bairro Acordado prior to fieldwork, I had anticipated to do research at his mosque when I moved to the neighbourhood. However, as mentioned in the above description of the field sites, this did not materialise. What happened was that after I had settled in Zona Melhorada and was ready to start fieldwork at the mosque, the preacher in question informed me that he had changed his mind and no longer wished to accommodate my project. His decision came as a surprise, and while his reasons never became entirely clear to me, it had something to do with the fact that I am not Muslim and with people's fears that I might be a spy working for the British government.

After I was given an accreditation by Nampula's Islamic Council and started fieldwork at the Anwar mosque, these difficulties subsided. Although I did not make any further attempts to gain access to the preacher's mosque, a number of members of this mosque participated in my research on an individual basis. The episode, however, delayed my exploration of questions pertinent to Islamic reformism. While this may have resulted in my overlooking several of its intricacies, I think that the impact on my research was, as Bähre suggests, largely constructive: it encouraged me to study the pluralist context of Islamic reformism in more depth. The same can be said about my moving out of Bairro Acordado after six months of fieldwork. Living in the city centre meant that I missed out on a number of events in the neighbourhood, yet, it also made me more mobile and contributed to the incorporation of different parts of Bairro Acordado into my research, which broadened my perspective.

On a different level, however, I am less confident about the impact of issues of positionality on my research. As many other anthropologists (cf. Hastrup 1993) have noted, interactions with research participants can be influenced by the specific position researchers occupy within the social matrix of their field sites. In my case, several of my key research participants were associated with FRELIMO: *xelhe* Abubacar, the founder of the Anwar association, was a known FRELIMO supporter, as were, to a lesser extent, the community court judges by virtue of their past and present implication in the neighbourhood administration. At first, this was not an issue. Many of the members of the Anwar mosque and litigants at the court did not support FRELIMO, while a number of the people I interacted with in other field sites supported opposition parties, including RENAMO and Movimento Democrático de Moçambique (MDM).<sup>12</sup> Yet, as fieldwork progressed, I began to wonder whether my association with the former inadvertently restricted my access to information about the political dimensions of neighbourhood life.

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<sup>12</sup> MDM is a recent split-off from RENAMO. The split-off was prompted by a dispute between RENAMO leader Dhlakama and MDM's founder Simango. Simango had been the mayor of the city of Beira in Central Mozambique for RENAMO since 2003, but Dhlakama refused to allow him to run for a second term in 2008. Simango ran as independent instead and won, after which he founded MDM.

My doubts in this regard were precipitated by two political events. First, in March 2012, there was a shoot-out between the police and ex-fighters from RENAMO in the centre of Nampula City. These ex-fighters had been demobilised after the 1992 General Peace Agreements and had come from the province to Nampula City in December 2011 at the request of RENAMO leader Dhlakama to participate in anti-government protests to demand electoral reforms. Dhlakama had been calling for these protests for months, and when they did not materialise, more than one 100 ex-fighters had stayed in the city, waiting. They lived in encampments outside the RENAMO headquarters and Dhlakama's house in the city centre, until the police intervened and the ensuing tension resulted in both sides firing shots, leaving one dead and several injured. There was a meeting between President Guebuza and Dhlakama following this incident, in which Dhlakama reiterated his demands for electoral reforms, which President Guebuza agreed to consider. Things quieted down after the meeting.

In a second political development, FRELIMO's political hegemony was challenged from another direction. MDM won the mayoral by-elections in the northern city of Quelimane in December 2011. This was an unexpected upset, and FRELIMO was afraid that MDM might repeat the feat in the country's municipal elections of November 2013 and win in other urban centres such as Nampula City.

Both of these events happened while I was in the field. When I tried to explore whether they bore any relation to the dynamics of social life I observed in Bairro Acordado, I found some evidence for this (see Chapter 7), but it was not much. In my conversations with neighbourhood residents about the incidents, many commented on the general need for change, yet it was not something that they felt personally invested in, or that strongly influenced their relations with others in Bairro Acordado. People, to put this differently, displayed indifference towards politics, at least at the neighbourhood level. This is where the specificities of my position in Bairro Acordado are relevant. While I think that the indifference I found accurately represented people's attitudes, there is the possibility that it was coloured by their perceptions of my association with FRELIMO figures.

I left the field in December 2012. Nampula City and Mozambique subsequently witnessed several further political developments. In October 2013, after months of silence, RENAMO declared the 1992 peace accord void. This declaration resulted in several violent incidents in rural areas of Nampula province and Central Mozambique where Dhlakama had gone to live following the shoot-out in Nampula City. Sporadic violence erupted in Central Mozambique in subsequent months, while teams of FRELIMO and RENAMO negotiators met to discuss proposed solutions. Talks continued throughout 2014, until an agreement was reached in August 2014, two months before the presidential elections of 15 October 2014. Dhlakama participated in these elections as the RENAMO candidate, but lost to FRELIMO's candidate Nyusi. Meanwhile, in November 2013, with a turn-out of 25 percent, MDM won the elections for mayor as well as a small majority in the municipal assembly of Nampula City. The party was also re-elected in Beira and Quelimane, and had a strong showing in Maputo and Matola. Its electoral success at the local-level did not translate in national results. Although the party doubled its parliamentary seats from eight to 17 in the 2014 presidential and parliamentary elections, this number was minor compared to the seats won by FRELIMO (144) and RENAMO (89).

These developments happened after fieldwork, and I was unable to follow up on their ramifications in neighbourhood life. I have therefore not included them in this thesis.

#### *2.5.5 Research ethics: confidentiality and anonymity*

One specific ethical dilemma I encountered during fieldwork concerned the question of how to ensure the confidentiality of research participants. In light of the sensitive nature of the topic of dispute management, I put several measures in place to facilitate this, but as Pettigrew et al. (2004) argue, these have their limitations. By way of illustration, one reformist leader expressed his hope during an interview that I would use the name of his mosque in my thesis, in the hope that it might attract financial donations. He thus implicitly urged me to prioritise the article on fair return in the guidelines from the Association of Social Anthropologists of the United Kingdom and Commonwealth (ASA



2011) over the article on anticipating harms. In the end, I found other ways to assist the mosque leader and I have followed the general suggestion from ASA that researchers should let their obligation to protect research participants prevail in such cases: in order to protect the anonymity of research participants, I have changed the names of people and a number of locations in this thesis, including the name of the neighbourhood.

## **2.6 Chapter outline**

In this thesis, I describe the appropriation, contestation and impact of globally-oriented Salafi-inspired understandings of Islam in Bairro Acordado. As outlined above, life in this peri-urban neighbourhood is marked by religious and legal pluralism: Islamic reformists, Sufi Muslims, Catholics and others share the same social space, and have a variety of fora and mechanisms at their disposal for dispute resolution. The focus of the thesis is on the articulation of Islamic reformism in this context of pluralism, as well as on the manifestation of reformist ideas in the domain of dispute management. Specifically, I explore both the success of Islamic reformism and the uncertainty it generates in the urban periphery of northern Mozambique.

There are five chapters in the thesis. Each chapter explores a different aspect of the themes of Islamic reformism, pluralism and dispute management. While the emphasis of the first chapters is on the broader socio-cultural environment of the neighbourhood and on the doubts and dilemmas Muslims experience when they become involved with reformist mosques, later chapters concentrate on Muslims who are further along the path of reformism, and on the uncertainty their statements and Islamic understandings produce in others in their social surroundings.

In Chapter 3, I study the relevance of Makhuwa understandings of matrilineal descent for patterns of social organisation. By analysing the significance of the marital home in separation and divorce cases, I demonstrate that the model of the nuclear family promoted by the state has become increasingly important in ordering social relations in peri-urban households. Nevertheless, in a context of decentralisation, principles of descent continue

to hold relevance as well. The manifestation of Islamic reformism raises new questions about the importance of descent and citizenship in Bairro Acordado. While reformist mosques actively encourage their members to shape family relations in accordance with reformist interpretations of Islam, their interventions in this domain are constrained by people's existing social engagements, as well as by disagreements between reformists over the correct interpretation of Islamic texts.

In Chapter 4, I continue to explore the nexus between patterns of Makhuwa kinship and Islamic reformism, but with a focus on urban migration and perceptions of sorcery. I show that sorcery fears in the urban periphery are structured by Makhuwa notions of relatedness and interdependence, which lead urbanites to feel vulnerable to the use of sorcery by rural kin as well as by neighbours. Islamic reformism offers a break from these notions of personhood by introducing individualised understandings of the self focused on God. This break makes reformist mosques particularly attractive to urban migrants whose experience of migration and social mobility has led them to worry about sorcery attacks by their rural kin. At the same time, I demonstrate, once people become more actively involved in reformism, it may also increase their fears of sorcery.

Chapter 5 analyses how the adoption of the aforementioned reformist self-understandings affects people's normative commitments. I present two findings. On the one hand, Islamic reformists can be distinguished from others in Bairro Acordado by their explicit reactions to offensive behaviour and their attitudes towards Makhuwa initiation rites, which evince distinct ethical preferences. On the other hand, in people's responses to a pilot survey designed to test for similar commitments at the implicit level of embodied morality, the differences largely disappear. This disparity has implications, I argue, for the anthropology of morality and ethics. It leads me to wonder whether the deliberate actions of Islamic reformists and their reflections on morality are structured by other factors than their moral commitments.

In Chapter 6, I turn to one of these other factors: the epistemological dimensions of reformist self-understandings. In analysing the decreasing role of oath taking ceremonies

in dispute management in northern Mozambique, I show that Islamic reformism represents and contributes to broader epistemological shifts. Whereas Sufi Islam, in line with Makhuwa conceptions of reality, conceptualises truth as located in the workings of an invisible realm, the uncovering of which requires specialist knowledge, perceptions of reality are becoming increasingly objectified under the influence of truth regimes introduced by the state and Islamic reformism. This process of objectification influences people's attitudes to accountability. Due to their individualised conceptions of personhood, Islamic reformists see action as structured by intentions, which increases their willingness to hold others individually to account.

Chapter 7 analyses the political implications of the epistemological shifts identified in Chapter 6. I demonstrate that reformist attitudes to knowledge and personhood imply a duty on the part of Islamic reformists to pronounce the truth. Such attitudes result in the emergence of novel forms of mutuality and public engagement that collide with existing modes of relating to authorities in northern Mozambique, which are characterised by understandings of dependence. This leads to confrontations between reformists and authority figures of various types, both at the local and the national level. While these confrontations expose the socially isolating and disuniting tendencies intrinsic to Islamic reformism, they also show its powerful effects and its capacity to upset existing configurations of power in ways previously unseen in Mozambique.

## CHAPTER 3. PERI-URBAN MATRILINY

### 3.1 Introduction

In this chapter I explore how lives in Bairro Acordado trace a complex path between Makhuwa matriliney, modernity and reformist practice. I thereby focus on the changing significance of the marital home in separation and divorce cases: from a symbolic representation of people's position in networks of kin exchange, the home has come to be associated with freedom. This change in meaning reflects the increasing importance of notions of citizenship and the model of the nuclear family in ordering social relations in peri-urban households. The domestic unit, to put this differently, has become people's primary point of reference. Nevertheless, in a context of poverty and decentralisation, principles of matrilineal descent continue to hold relevance as well.

Makhuwa matriliney and the question of its transformation in the face of socio-cultural and political-economic changes has been a key topic of interest for me – as for many other researchers working in Nampula province. Writing about a village located about 150 kilometres from Nampula City, Kottak (2002: 271-275) observes that while matrilineal descent continues to provide a primary axis of social membership in disputing processes and the socio-political domain, it is dissipating in other spheres of village life such as the economic sphere where Makhuwa increasingly inherit farms from their biological fathers. He attributes the latter to state policies crafted by FRELIMO elites from southern-based ethnic groups practicing patrilineal descent, as well as to economic pressures resulting from land scarcity. Arnfred (2011) makes a similar observation about a rural district next to Nampula City, where she found that the increasing involvement of young men in the cash economy results in changing residence patterns: instead of residing with the wife's matrikin, married couples prefer to live on their own, away from their respective families. This tendency is reinforced, Arnfred suggests, by the promotion of the model of the nuclear family by the Mozambican state. Meanwhile, Bonate (2003, 2006) analyses the historical implications of the arrival of Islam for patterns of social organisation in the coastal regions of Nampula province. She observes several changes: Islam has contributed

to the spread of polygamy and to the emergence of mixed forms of matrilineal and patrilineal inheritance. At the same time, Bonate shows, Islam has been accommodated and structured by matrilineal traditions. She gives the example of positions of Islamic authority, which have historically been occupied by ‘chiefly’ elites and passed on via the female line.

These studies are part of a broader anthropological interest in matriliney. Although it no longer attracts the sustained analysis it once did (see Colson 1958; Richards 1950; Schneider 1961), matriliney continues to serve as a productive, if specialised field of enquiry. The analysis is dominated by the question of whether matriliney is ‘doomed’ in Africa. Douglas (1969) famously posed this question in her essay of the same title, to argue that socio-economic differentiation and state-driven modernisation initiatives put pressure on matrilineal kinship systems, because the resulting economic scarcity and devaluation of labour lead men to concentrate their responsibilities on their nearest kin, including their sons. Matriliney is thereby not necessarily doomed, according to Douglas. Under the right conditions, it is flexible enough to allow for the building of creative entrepreneurialism (cf. Poewe 1980).

Below, I shall explore the question raised by Douglas in relation to the context of Bairro Acordado. I thereby take into account Peters’ (1997) point that matriliney comprises a conjunction of concepts, including descent, residence and inheritance. As she observes, these aspects are differently affected by changes in socio-cultural organisation and the political economy. Rasing (2001: 60-77) makes a similar observation in her study of matriliney and migration in urban Zambia. She found that, while the matrilineal unit has lost its importance vis-à-vis the domestic unit in her field site, tensions between spouses often resulted from the conflicting demands wives and matrikin placed on men with regard to their property and financial resources. This led Rasing to conclude that matrilineal notions of descent continue to influence social relations within urban households.

I will first contextualise Makhuwa matrilineal patterns of social organisation through a historical reconstruction of a particularity I encountered in the archives of Nampula’s

Provincial Court: cases of men in the countryside burning down their own houses upon discovering that their wives had committed adultery. I shall then explore how these patterns have been mapped onto discourses of citizenship and adapted to the context of peri-urban Nampula City by describing the separation of a young couple living in Bairro Acordado. In the third section of the chapter, I will analyse the impact of decentralisation policies on the patterns of social organisation through a case study of a marital dispute set at the neighbourhood's community court. Finally, in the last section of the chapter, I shall discuss how the manifestation of Islamic reformism raises new questions about the importance of descent and citizenship in Bairro Acordado.

### **3.2 A retrospective on matrilineal marriage**

The first case of this chapter comes, as mentioned, from my archival research at Nampula's Provincial Court. This court was instituted during colonial times by the Portuguese regime and, until the 1990s, the only state court in Nampula City. Going through old case files in the archives, I discovered a number of arson cases involving men setting fire to their marital homes after finding out that their wives had slept there with other men. I later asked Dr. Chico, a retired judge president of the Provincial Court, about these cases. He had been one of the first judges to be appointed after 1975 Independence and I was interviewing him about his experiences. As we were sitting in his office and I explained to him what I had found, he blinked in recognition, sighed, and took a moment to formulate this response:

It is like this. Here... during colonial times and the years after... The woman was always considered, when she married, the husband's property... And the symbol that she is the woman of that man is the house. He builds the house where he is going to live with that woman. So, marriage is protected by the house and customs... Now, if another man comes to sleep in that house, right, he is violating the matrimonial fidelity, a very rigid concept, protected by the clan itself... So as negation, as a strong negation... the owner of the house sets the house on fire... A show of anger, of punishment... But in the law this is punishable.

The uneasy look on his face suggested that, as a judge, he found arson cases of this type difficult to adjudicate.

We discuss this a lot, us magistrates, because the concept of the house... Who wrote this law, it was written in Europe. However, a house in Europe is something solid, isn't it?... It takes time to construct... It is serious business... Here, I can construct my house in a week's time.

In this explanation, Dr. Chico made three important observations about historical patterns of Makhuwa social organisation, which can be summarised as follows. Firstly, marriage used to be, in the first instance, a contract between kin groups rather than between spouses, and as such it was protected by the clan. Secondly, houses represented people's positions in networks of kin exchange constituted by their marriage. Thirdly, these arrangements were affected by the colonial legal regime. In the remainder of this section, I will explore these three observations with reference to the anthropological and other literature on the Makhuwa. There are, of course, dangers in using such literature to reconstruct what might seem like a set of timeless and primordial tribal institutions, and doubly so when these are refracted through the official visions of state officials in a post-Independence society. But, this is a necessary exercise in that it lays out some background to the material presented in the later sections of this chapter, and lists some of the most obvious effects which colonial intervention had upon the practices of marriage and domestic life.

To start with the first point that marriage was a contract between kin groups, this is an anthropological commonplace, but it is said to have taken particular forms in this setting. Geffray (1990), Ciscato (1989, 2012), Martinez (1987), Macaire (1996) and Medeiros (1995) show how Makhuwa marriage was exogamous, and its first step was betrothal. This traditionally took place after a boy had been initiated at about 17 years old. Following uxorilocal marriage patterns, the *humu* (male elder) of his family and his male relatives accompanied him to the house of the prospective bride, herself 12 or 13 years of age and also a recent initiate. Sometimes, the marriage had been arranged at birth between *ahumu*, but the initiative could also come from the betrothed taking a liking to each other

and asking their families for approval. In the latter case, there was an extensive process of negotiation, involving *ahumu* and, at a later stage, also the mother and other relatives of the betrothed. The purpose of these negotiations was to establish whether the arrangement would be mutually beneficial for the kin groups involved. It was understood by both parties that the kin of the groom would provide the family of the bride with reproductive force and labour power. The former wanted to know that they would derive future benefits in return for their approval. For example, the kin groups could agree to exchange brides and grooms in the next marriage in the opposite direction.

When the boy and his relatives arrived at the house of the girl's family, they were welcomed at the doorstep. The relatives said their goodbyes and the boy was led inside. A trial period of two to five years followed. The groom needed to pass two tests to show that he could keep up his kin group's end of the contract. First, he had to prove his fertility by making the bride pregnant. An impatient mother-in-law would attempt to speed up the process by planting a banana tree in the yard and telling the groom to return home if he did not succeed before the tree bore fruit. Meanwhile, he had to demonstrate his capacity to provide. Every day at dawn, the groom sat outside the house of his wife's parents, his posture submissive, a hoe in hand, ready to accompany his father-in-law to the family plots. The fruits of his work contributed towards the food stored in the granary of his mother-in-law. In his spare time, the mother-in-law and the wife's sisters demanded that he swept the yard, fetched water or chopped up wood, and he was expected to oblige willingly. With his labour, he performed bride service, in lieu of the payment of the bride price that patrilineal groups normally demand. If either of the parties involved were, at any point during the trial, unhappy with the proceedings, they were free to annul the marriage. The groom would go back to his family's *ettoko* (territory), without recrimination and regardless of whether the bride was pregnant or not. Only upon successful completion of both tests, generally after the couple's first child was born, did the groom acquire a plot of his own and would he be given permission to marry the bride.

It was at this moment that the marriage transformed from an impersonal agreement between kin groups into a personal contract between spouses. Both partners, from there



on, had specific duties towards each other. It was the duty of the husband to prepare the fields, assist his wife with the harvest and provide her with children. Meanwhile, it was the wife's responsibility to sow the fields, clear them and harvest. She was also in charge of food storage, raised the children and, to show her appreciation for the husband's contribution towards the reproduction of her family, looked after his needs, both in terms of cooking, cleaning and by sexually seducing him. The wife's latter duties were held to be exclusive, and it is in this sense that Dr. Chico asserted that Makhuwa historically consider wives the exclusive property of their husbands.

Marriage approval was also the moment that the spouses, embodying the exchange between their respective kin groups, experienced a rise in spiritual and social status. Whereas, before, they had relied on others such as their relatives to make requests to ancestral spirits (*minepa*), they were now free to make their own requests. Furthermore, following Martinez (1989), marriage made for a degree of socio-economic autonomy. With a plot of land of their own and no longer dependent on the wife's parents for food, husband and wife had more control over their everyday lives than they had before. The latter change was gradual. As Geffray (1990) writes, for years, until the couple's children were old enough to take over, the husband continued to work at least one day a week on the plots of his mother-in-law, and his wife submitted part of the harvest to her mother: the house of the wife's mother was where children spend most of their time, and where they were fed. According to Geffray (1990: 60-68), such food redistribution worked to make the contributions of the father to his children's' upbringing invisible, tying them to their maternal kin group.

Finally, the permission to marry was the moment when the house gained its significance as the symbolic marker of the married status of its inhabitants, which was Dr. Chico's second observation. All the while, during bride service, the betrothed had been sleeping outside in the central kitchen area of his prospective wife's family's homestead or in the *pwaro* (a round, freestanding pavilion, used for receiving visitors) – hence the name *anapwaro* (children of the *pwaro*) by which they were addressed during this period. Once the groom had been given approval to wed his wife, he could start building a house for

himself and his family at some 20 metres distance from that of his parents-in-law. The construction of the house was a joint effort: the husband built the round wooden frame and put on the thatched roof, the wife plastered the walls with clay. The support beams of the house were set in protective potions, and spells were secured to the roof and walls to guarantee the couple's wellbeing and spiritual protection. The couple moved into the house on the day of the formal publication of their marriage, a communal feast involving offerings to *minepa*, the conspicuous consumption of food and the drinking of maize beer. The *munamuku* (the ritual celebrant) led the newly-weds inside and offered them a final reminder of their marital responsibilities. The link between marriage and house was thereby so strong that if a couple moved, their house moved as well: they demolished the marital home, took the materials with them and used these to build a new house elsewhere. Due to shifting cultivation, this might happen several times during a person's lifetime.

This brings me to the third observation of Dr. Chico, about the impact of the colonial legal regime on Makhuwa social organisation. The wife's adultery, in the above context, represented a violation of the marriage contract. The breach was worse, as Dr. Chico suggested, when the act was performed inside the marital home. Built by the husband to represent their marriage, it made the violation manifest and tangible. There was the option to demand financial compensation from the male adulterer, as historical studies (Cota 1946; Weule 1908) of customary law in northern Mozambique indicate. The payment of compensation allowed the married couple to continue together. But to many husbands, adultery was a sign that their marriage was over, and that divorce was in order.

Setting the marital home on fire was thereby, following Dr. Chico, a show of anger and of punishment. It was a visible demonstration of the annulment of the contract of marriage. I think, however, that there was an element of purification and rebirth involved as well. This is a common motif in Makhuwa culture. When people are released from prison, for instance, the first thing they do is walk to a nearby river or the sea, without looking back, to take a bath and burn the clothes and possessions they had with them. Similarly, initiates burn their camp and clothes as they leave the forest and return home as adults. The idea is

that one needs to make a clean break with the past when faced with something destructive. If not, one will continue to carry its destructive force. The husband, then, released himself as the flames of his anger consumed the marital home. He was free to start over, unsullied by the thought that another man – possibly, the adulterer – might come to take advantage of his work and live in the house he had built.

The Portuguese colonial regime, by defining the burning down of the marital home as arson and thus criminalising it, prevented such rebirth. It forced upon married couples a certain continuation of their personal relation, beyond marriage and beyond the rescission of the contract between their kin groups. In doing so, it undermined matrilineal patterns of social organisation, if only in a minor way: the house gave children a visible reminder of their biological father after the divorce.

This minor change came against the backdrop of broader interventions by the colonial regime in the social domain of northern Mozambique. Most prominent among these was the so-called *Indigenato* regime. This regime referred to the racialised system of dual citizenship the Portuguese imposed on Mozambique and their other colonies, formally from 1921 to 1961, when they expanded their territorial presence from the coast. As an instance of what Mamdani (1996) calls the “bifurcated state”, the regime distinguished between settler citizens and native subjects (*indígenas*), assigning each their own spatio-legal sphere. Europeans, South Asian traders and those of mixed descent lived in the newly established urban centres where state law, citizens’ rights and liberties applied. *Indígenas* were not allowed inside, except for reasons of work and with the relevant documentation to show for it. Rural areas were divided into chieftaincies (*regulados*), and this was where *indígenas* lived. Chiefs (*régulos*) were in charge of *regulados*. Sometimes they were *mwene* (Makhuwa chiefs) with historical claims to leadership, in other cases the Portuguese picked lower-ranking *ahumu* better suited to their agenda. Among other tasks, *régulos* were charged with tax collection, the control of movement and the resolution of minor disputes according to customary law. *Régulos* were aided in their work by subordinates (*cabos, chefes de povoação*) and by a native police force (*sipaios*). It was the *Indigenato* regime which structured the classification of the above type of cases as arson

and facilitated their prosecution at Nampula's Provincial Court: arson, similar to offences such as homicide, was considered a major crime, and therefore adjudicated according to state law.

As suggested in Chapter 1, the *Indigenato* regime had diverse effects on matriliney. At the political level, matrilineal patterns were simultaneously reinforced and undermined: the offices of *régulos*, *cabos* and *chefes de povoação* strengthened the chiefly authority of male elders, but their forced implication in colonial violence and tax collection also reduced their support base. Meanwhile, within households, the *Indigenato* regime ruptured the gender complementarity that characterised the production process in Makhuwa society. As Mamdani (1996) and others (Dinerman 2001; Isaacman and Isaacman 1983; O'Laughlin 2000; Penvenne 1995; Pitcher 1996) observe, the rationale behind the *Indigenato* regime was economic exploitation: the Portuguese required from *régulos* that *indígenas* paid their hut taxes (*mussoco*) through compulsory cash cropping, and that those who could not pay were, on account of being considered unemployed, signed up for six month stints of forced labour (*chibalo*) on the construction of railways, roads and bridges, and on the plantations which constituted the backbone of the colonial economy. Low wages ensured that *chibalo* workers returned the next year. While men carried the burden of these tax duties, they became increasingly involved in the cash economy and managed to monopolise its access, leaving subsistence farming to women. They also became more mobile. Women, with a few exceptions, stayed, fixed at home in their respective *regulados*. Although they were exempt from *chibalo*, they had less time and land available for farming, due to compulsory cash cropping, and to their husbands being away for extended periods of time. This sowed the seeds of female economic dependence and, as I will describe in the next section, contributed to the spread of the nuclear family model.

### **3.3 Maura's unhappiness**

The above patterns of social organisation continue to hold sway in large tracts of Nampula province, where agriculture constitutes the primary source of livelihood. In peri-urban

neighbourhoods of Nampula City, however, a number of differences were evident. People in Bairro Acordado often did not know the names of their lineages, especially if they were young, second-generation urban migrants. Consequently, exogamy was not a major concern. This sometimes led to situations whereby spouses were alerted by knowledgeable others that, from a lineage perspective, they were related to each other and their marriage was considered incest. I knew of one case where this discovery led the couple in question to undergo a purification rite. Mostly, however, such news was met with amusement.

A more important difference was that families were less involved in marriage decisions. It remained the norm for prospective spouses to ask their families for approval, especially if it concerned their first marriage, but people generally found and chose their own partners. *Ahumu* might herein be consulted, but increasingly, approval was given by parents. Again, this depended on people's age and whether they were first- or second-generation migrants. One man in his fifties who was a first-generation migrant explained to me that he himself contacted his family's *humu* from time to time to ask for advice, but he could not imagine his sons doing the same. "That illiterate? What is he going to tell us?" he laughed as he mimicked his sons' reaction.

Residence patterns constituted perhaps the clearest difference with the patterns analysed in the previous section. There was a strong preference in Bairro Acordado for spouses to leave their families and form a nuclear family upon marriage. It remained thereby the husband's duty to provide housing for the couple. If, however, he lived with his family and, for reasons of unemployment or because of the expensive housing market of Nampula City, was unable to set up a new marital home independently, the expectation was, in an inversion of the matrilocal residence pattern found in Nampula province, that his family would take the wife in. These situations were considered far from ideal and best avoided, but they did happen with some frequency in Bairro Acordado, especially in cases of pregnancy. "You are the owner of this belly (*dono dessa barriga*)," the woman's family would tell the father of the child and his relatives, "she is your responsibility now, we do not have the means."

Taken together, these differences suggest the demise of matriliney as a model for social organisation in Bairro Acordado, and its substitution by the nuclear family. However, as the following case of Maura and Duarte illustrates, principles of matrilineal kinship continue to hold relevance in the neighbourhood as well.

Maura was the partner of Duarte, the second of the four brothers with whom I lived during my first months of fieldwork in Bairro Acordado (see Chapter 2). When I got to know her, she was a cheerful girl of 18 years old. She had come to Bairro Acordado from the coastal city of Nacala sometime earlier, in search of “something new”, she told me. Her mother had died when she was a child and she had been raised by an aunt in Nacala, a sister of her mother. Her father lived elsewhere in Nampula province, and Maura said that she did not have much contact with him.

In Bairro Acordado, she moved in with a niece, in a small mud house in the central part of the neighbourhood. The two women eked out a living by selling *fritos* (fried dough balls) from home. Maura had met Duarte at a local bar, not long after her arrival in the neighbourhood. They started seeing each other, she became pregnant and, following a meeting between her maternal kin and Duarte’s father, the idea was that she would move in with Duarte and his brothers after the delivery of the baby. This living situation was not what they wanted, Maura explained to me, but the couple had no choice. Duarte did not have the means to buy a house, and for the couple to stay with Maura’s niece would be asking too much of her. Compared to the niece’s small mud house, the house where Duarte and his brothers lived was large, and it offered plenty of space for Maura and the baby. What was more, moving in with Duarte meant that it would be easier for him to support his wife. Her sale of *fritos* did not generate enough money to provide for the child, and Duarte, being an unemployed university student, had no income of his own. Living together, they could share in the meals Duarte and his brothers prepared from the money their father gave them every morning, and if she needed something extra for a dress or medication for the child, he would be able to ask his father for assistance.

Maura went to her aunt's in Nacala for the delivery of the baby. When she came back, Duarte welcomed her in his room, freshly painted and with a new bed and toys for the child, just as she had requested before she left. The couple had numerous plans. Duarte, whose university studies had suffered after he had taken to drinking, promised to focus on finishing his degree, so that he could find a job and earn an income. Maura, for her part, signed up for evening classes at the neighbourhood's secondary school. In a few years, Duarte said, he would have a job and they could save up enough money to buy a house and marry.

Their plans, however, did not materialise. A couple of months after she had moved in with Duarte, Maura dropped out of school. She found that she could not combine her studies with the double task of raising a child and managing the household. Before she moved in, the brothers had divided the household chores amongst themselves according to a rotating schedule, whereby a different brother was in charge of going to the market, cooking and cleaning, each day. Increasingly, however, they left these duties to Maura. This was not something that had been openly discussed, and when Maura complained to Duarte, he berated his brothers, but there was no improvement. He showed little motivation for chores himself. Whereas earlier, while she was still living at her niece's and paying regular visits, Duarte had prohibited her from doing anything around the house and fretted over not having a chair for her to sit on, he began to disappear when it was time for food preparation. She told me that she worried that he had started drinking again, and she became increasingly unhappy. It was not that she minded the housework. Like most women in northern Mozambique, she had been involved in household duties from an early age. What she did not like was the pressure the brothers, implicitly, exerted upon her. It made her feel unwelcome and vulnerable, as if she were a strain on household resources and might be told to leave if she did not repay the favour.

Eventually, after six months, Maura took the child and left Duarte to return to her aunt in Nacala. When I talked with her friends about what had happened, they told me that she could not take it any longer. "No woman wants to live in that situation," they explained, "she did not feel free (*livre*)." *Livre*, a quality here notable by its absence, had several

connotations. First, it referred to Maura's lack of privacy: around the house, the brothers were watching her every move and she had to be constantly on guard to show her best side. Secondly, it indicated Maura's desire to make the place her own and decorate it to her own taste. Most importantly, however, freedom meant having rights. Maura and her child were there on sufferance, and she felt under constant threat of eviction. If she and Duarte had their own place, she would have more security, and she would not feel that she had to compensate for her presence. The solution was simple, said Maura's friends. If Duarte wanted his relationship with Maura to work, he should buy or rent a house for the two of them and their child alone. Otherwise, they predicted, she was unlikely to return. Maura did, in fact, return, after her family had been in touch with Duarte's family and they had persuaded her that her place was with Duarte. But several months later, the child of Maura and Duarte became critically ill. Maura returned, once more, with the child to her aunt in Nacala. When the baby died, Maura and Duarte separated for good.

This case, as well as being unbearably sad, bears out some of the points about the effects of socio-economic and political changes on matriliney. First, there is Douglas' (1969) question whether matriliney is 'doomed' in settings of economic scarcity. Maura's preference for the nuclear family and, when that proved impossible, for moving in with Duarte, appears to validate this prediction. As Maura explained to me, to stay with her niece or for Duarte to move in with her would place an unacceptable burden on her family's limited means. Maura, I found during research in Bairro Acordado, was not alone in her thinking. Many people I spoke with gave me similar reasons for why they expected women to move out when they married or became pregnant. In a context of high unemployment rates and poverty, where people depend on the cash economy for their livelihoods and where living conditions are cramped, sons-in-law and children are no longer perceived to be the additional and future labour reserve they would have been in the agricultural economy of Nampula province. Rather, every extra mouth to feed presents a challenge, leading people to prioritise the links between biological fathers and children. The aforementioned economic dependence of women on men is herein an additional factor: in a cash economy dominated by men, there are fewer opportunities for women to feed their children and families themselves.



Secondly, the case lends support to Kottak's (2002) and Arnfred's (2011) claims about the disruptive impact of state policies on matriliney in northern Mozambique. This is particularly evident in Maura and her friends' perception that, compared to alternative family models, nuclear family arrangements provide better security. This association carries the imprint of several decades of state engineering. In the period immediately following 1975 Independence, FRELIMO launched a number of campaigns to promote the nuclear family model. For instance, the party encouraged people to adopt the first names of their fathers as last names, while references to ethnic identities were condemned as *tribalismo* (tribalism) (cf. Kottak 2002: 276-277). Party meetings and public rallies typically started with the shouting of slogans against alternative family models such as polygamy. The latter was a common phenomenon in the Islamic coastal regions of northern Mozambique as well as in the Christian South, and FRELIMO deemed it detrimental to family life and an obstacle to the country's development (cf. Arnfred 2011: 30-36). Meanwhile, extended kin and single women were discouraged by state agents from settling in cities, and in some cases deported to labour and re-education camps in the countryside, because they were perceived to be 'unproductive' and to 'leech off' the work of nuclear families (cf. Marshall and Roesch 1993). These campaigns have since been discontinued. However, several of Mozambique's laws continue to be premised on the nuclear family model. The patrilineal bias in Mozambique's inheritance law is an example, but, as I will further discuss in the next section, this applies as well to divorce regulations in the country's Family Law, which provide spouses with more adequate legal protection if they live in a nuclear family arrangement.

At a more general level, the explanations by Maura and her friends for her unhappiness indicate that state policy has also undermined matriliney from a different direction. Their valuation of having access to citizen's rights reflects the pervasiveness of notions of citizenship and rights discourses in Mozambique. Specifically, their appraisal of feeling *livre* and their references to notions of freedom, privacy, sovereignty and individual rights attest to the growing influence of political liberalism. Initially, when FRELIMO extended citizenship to the population at large, abolished the offices of *régulos* and other political

kinship structures, and mandated local-level governance structures such as neighbourhood secretaries to oversee the implementation of its Marxist-Leninist agenda (see Chapter 1), the party emphasised collective socio-economic rights and the duty of citizens to contribute to national development. However, in the second half of the 1980s and the early 1990s, the focus shifted to political and civil liberties: under pressure from foreign donors, FRELIMO carried out a series of legal reforms aimed at economic and political liberalisation, and adopted international human rights as the cornerstone of rule of law (Pitcher 1996; Sumich 2008). Just as elsewhere in Africa (cf. Engelke 1999; Englund 2006; Wilson 2001), liberal notions of freedom, defined as autonomy, independence, and the absence of social constraints and other forms of subjection, were key to these reforms. For example, Mozambique's revised 1990 Constitution affirmed principles of equality and enshrined in law the freedom of speech, assembly, association and movement, as well as the right to strike and other individual rights; these liberties have since been expanded (cf. Trindade 2006). In rejecting Maura's living situation on the basis of its perceived lack of freedom, Maura and her friends can be seen to voice their commitment to these liberties. They thereby arguably invert the Makhuwa understandings of kinship and marriage analysed in the previous section: instead of defining themselves and their rights in terms of their relative positions in kinship networks, Maura and her friends assert their independence and their intrinsic value as rights-bearing individuals.

Yet, there are important caveats to this analysis. With regard to the latter point about claims to freedom, Englund (2014) has documented for the case of Malawi that these need not necessarily imply the refutation of modes of social organisation premised on kinship. He recounts how, following the introduction of liberal human rights discourses in Malawi in the 1990s, such discourses were initially the exclusive preserve of politicians and human rights activists who interpreted freedom in terms of civil and political liberties, personal autonomy and individual rights (cf. Englund 2006). However, one decade after the country's democratisation, Englund found that the same notions had also been appropriated by rural villagers, albeit with a different interpretation: villagers invoked constitutional freedoms in the context of village politics to force district administrators and chiefs to accept candidates of their own choosing – who were, generally, selected

from their own kin groups – alongside state-appointed headmen, which resulted in the split of villages into separate political and administrative units along kinship lines. Englund maintains that this did not, as some liberal observers claimed, constitute a case of misappropriation of the concept of freedom. Rather, a specific kind of freedom was involved in the villagers' campaigns: they nominated headmen from their own groups because they perceived them to be more amenable to their claims and demands, and the freedom they thus sought was achieved through kin relations, not by means of separation from these. Englund's findings offer a reminder that researchers need to exercise caution when studying expressions of freedom, and analysing these exclusively in terms of desires for autonomy and independence. This applies to Maura's case as well. The statements made by her and her friends suggest that she did not necessarily aspire to autonomy and individual rights as ends in themselves when she deplored her living conditions. Instead, she valued these rights for the control they promised to give her over her social relations: the security of having her own house would enable her to engage with others, including kin, on her own terms. As such, she voiced her commitment to civil liberties alongside a commitment to discourses of kinship, not to its mutual exclusion.

Furthermore, with reference to people's preferences for nuclear family models, Maura's case shows that these operate largely at the normative level. In practice, despite their attractiveness to women and their ideas of domesticity, the realisation of state-sponsored ideals of the nuclear family often proves unattainable, and principles of matrilineal descent orient behaviour alongside less group-oriented notions of citizenship. For instance, Maura was raised by her maternal aunt rather than her father after her mother died, and the arrangement for her to move in with Duarte was negotiated between Duarte's father and her maternal relatives. When she was unhappy and when the child became ill, she turned to her family for support, and although they felt that Duarte's family should take care of them, her matrikin were there for her.

This continued relevance of matriliney pervades the social domain of Bairro Acordado. Children generally reside with their mother after their parents' divorce. Similarly, in the domain of dispute management, I found that parties were frequently accompanied by their

brothers or mother's brothers, instead of their fathers, and while people would first turn to their parents when they were in need of support, matrikin were next in line. It is possible that the model of the nuclear family, given the difficulty of its realisation, in fact contributes to the durability of matrilineal kinship patterns, at least in terms of residence. I witnessed several cases over the course of fieldwork, which were comparable to Maura's. Women, in these cases, moved in with their partners' families when they became pregnant, because their partners did not have the means to buy their own house or support them otherwise. Before long, however, they returned to their own families, alleging maltreatment, and after several further attempts at reconciliation, they ended up staying there until they met other men. It led to a residence pattern not unlike that found in rural areas of Nampula province, with extended families of mothers, daughters and grandchildren living together in households of changing compositions. Seen from this perspective, economic scarcity does not undermine matriliney, as Douglas (1969) suggests. Matriliney can also – as she indicated – be adaptive: in this case, furnishing a way to survive in a harsh economic environment.

### **3.4 “Here in the North, we have a tradition”**

As mentioned in Chapter 1, a number of novel developments in recent years have affected the social organisation of peri-urban neighbourhoods of Nampula City such as Bairro Acordado. Specifically, the Mozambican government has implemented a series of legal reforms and decentralisation policies, aimed at increasing the effectiveness of the state and designed to enhance FRELIMO's legitimacy by outsourcing state power to local-level institutions. In the case of Bairro Acordado, these reforms have given renewed impetus to the neighbourhood's community court. This court was largely defunct by the time of its revitalisation in 1997. Whereas in its earlier version it had been part of the formal court hierarchy, the newly installed community court was placed at greater distance from the state apparatus and given more autonomy to adjudicate disputes in accordance with local norms (see Chapter 2). More recently, decentralisation has also resulted in formal recognition for so-called 'traditional' authorities in the neighbourhood. Meanwhile, several legal associations have emerged to fill the gap between state and society. These

run offices in Nampula City where city dwellers can go to request legal aid and mediation. They operate at the national and provincial levels, generally with the aid of international development agencies.

In this third case of the chapter, I focus on the consequences of these developments for the patterns analysed in the previous sections. The setting is Bairro Acordado's community court and this case was presented to the court on the very first day of my fieldwork there. It involved a young Muslim couple in their mid-twenties, who had formed a nuclear family, but were now seeking divorce.

"Come," said the judge president after I had arrived at the court, "you might want to see this." He led me to the table of the judges and presented me with a photograph. It showed a woman wearing a bikini, standing on a beach with a child next to her. I gave the judge president a questioning look. He nodded in the direction of the woman sitting in front of the judges' table. She was Belinda, the woman in the picture. Dressed in a white *hijab* (veil) and holding her three-year old daughter on her lap, she returned a defiant look. Next to her sat Salimo, her husband, sporting a *djellaba* (tunic worn by Muslims in Bairro Acordado) and a *kufi* (prayer cap), with an aggrieved expression on his face. Salimo had pressed charges against Belinda. He had found the picture and suspected adultery.

As the hearing commenced, it turned out that there was a complicated backstory to the case. Salimo and Belinda had met after he had migrated from the province to the city several years earlier to work as a taxi driver. They married and he had built a house for the two of them in Bairro Acordado, not far from the house of her mother where she had grown up. Their marital problems began after she had given birth to their daughter. There had been complications during the delivery, and it took Belinda over a year to recover. During this time, she worried that Salimo was seeing other women and the couple had arguments. Later, Salimo was jailed on charges that he had stolen from his employer. It was upon his release that he discovered the photograph and accused her of adultery. Belinda denied the accusation, saying that it was an old picture. Salimo, however, decided that he wanted to divorce her. After consulting his friends at the reformist mosque where

he prayed on how to go about this, he repudiated her according to Muslim practice and returned her to the house of her mother. But it had not gone as Salimo had anticipated. He thought that the marital home was his to keep. Belinda did not agree with this suggestion. She had no income, she had their daughter to take care of and refused to move out. Her mother, brother and other relatives living in the vicinity exerted pressure upon Salimo to leave the house to her, saying that since he had been the one to seek divorce, he should be the one to go. As Salimo's relatives lived in a rural area of the province, he was unable to muster the same level of social support, which was why he had turned to the community court.

The case carried on over several hearings. The couple were required to register their child with the state, another compromising photograph was produced – of Salimo this time – and relatives were invited to give their views on the dispute. Among other issues, there was debate about whether or not Salimo had divorced Belinda. His confrontation with Belinda's relatives had left him feeling insecure in this regard, and he initially did not want to confirm or deny the divorce, afraid as he was to lose his entitlement to the couple's marital property. The judge president said that it did not matter. As far as he was concerned, they had not yet divorced: only the community court had the authority to grant divorce, other procedures such as Islamic divorce by repudiation carried no validity, at least not in legal terms. Another topic of debate was the question of blame and its impact on property rights. Here, the judge president clarified that, contrary to what Belinda's relatives believed, it was irrelevant who had initiated the divorce. Neither, for that matter, did Salimo's adultery accusations carry weight. Waving his copy of the country's Family Law, the judge president indicated that Mozambique operates a no-fault divorce regime. This means that considerations of responsibility or wrongdoing influence neither the dissolution of marriage nor the allocation of marital property. There were only two questions of import, explained the judge president in reference to the Family Law. One was: whether Salimo and Belinda wanted to continue living together, or separate and divorce. Two was: when their property had been acquired. If it had been acquired during marriage, it counted as marital property and was to be divided equally.

Eventually, the case resulted in divorce and a compromise was reached. The couple would sell the house. They were to split the proceeds, and while Ali would move out, Belinda could continue living there with their daughter pending its occupation by the new owners. There was one provision: she was not allowed to receive other men at the house. This compromise had been suggested by the judge president, and neither party had been happy with it. For Belinda, her half of the proceeds was not enough to buy her own place, meaning that she and the daughter would have to move back in with her relatives after all. Salimo, for his part, considered the proposal unfair because he blamed Belinda for their problems. He was also opposed to her staying at the house, because he feared that another man would move in with her. But nor he nor she had been able to come up with a better solution, and they had accepted the judge president's suggestion. It was a hot Saturday morning when I accompanied him and one of the female judges to Salimo and Belinda's house, to administer the division of their moveable property. Their relatives were present, and item by item, the two partners chose what they wanted to keep. When the last item had been allocated, the judge president told Salimo to come to the court once he had found a client for the house, to request authorisation for the sale. He gave Salimo a reminder of his duty to assist Belinda with the expenses of child rearing, and the matter seemed settled.

Except that it had not been settled. The next day at court, the judge president came in late, looking bleary-eyed, to announce that he was sick, that he was angry. He related how, following the division of property at Salimo and Belinda's, he had been summoned to the offices of the *Associação das Mulheres Moçambicanas da Careira Jurídica* (AMMCJ) (Association of Mozambican Women in Legal Careers), which is one of the legal associations mentioned in the introduction. Upon arrival at the office, he had found Belinda there with a representative. The latter informed him that the agreement to sell the couple's house was "illegal". While the Family Law did indeed state that marital property should be divided equally, it also specified that fathers had a legal obligation to provide their ex-partners and children with financial support and housing. This was in the best interest of the child. The representative announced that she would go to the couple's house

in Bairro Acordado and personally see to it that the division of the marital home was revised.

The judge president felt offended, saying that the AMMCJ representative had embarrassed him in public. The scribe, listening to his story, was furious. He commented:

Let them do it themselves then, let us see how that goes. What they want is to kill people. It may be the law, yes, but we have to work within the framework of traditional norms. If you go and allocate the house to one party only, you think that the other will not retaliate? You think that? Here in the North, we have a tradition. The other party will have them killed. That was what happened in *Unidade 15* (Unit 15, a section of Bairro Acordado). The local authorities did exactly what this association wants: they gave the house to the mother because of the child. One week later, it was not even a week, the child was dead! This association is killing people! Since 1997, we have been working here, and that never happened with us!

By “tradition” and by killing, the scribe meant that the other party would resort to sorcery to restore the balance: once the child was dead, there would be nothing to stop the marital home from being sold and divided equally. I asked the scribe whether the AMMCJ had the authority to intervene in this matter. He shrugged his shoulders and said that he had no idea. This was what the judge president later told Salimo as well, when the AMMCJ representative had visited the house and Salimo came to ask advice. The judge president said that, in his opinion, the AMMCJ was overstepping its boundaries, but there was little that he could do about it: he had given his verdict, it was out of his hands. Salimo was a party in the dispute. If he felt wronged by the AMMCJ, he should file an appeal at the City Court. When I followed up on this case six months later, Belinda and the child were still living at the house, and it appeared that Salimo had not filed an appeal.

This case demonstrates several things. Firstly, Salimo’s concern about the prospect of another man moving into his marital home shows that, while the house no longer functions to represent people’s position in networks of kin exchange in Bairro Acordado, it continues to carry associations with marriage and matrimonial fidelity. I found that this was a common pattern in divorce cases at the neighbourhood’s community court. Men



worried, when it came to the division of the marital home, that if they left the house to their ex-wives, other men would move in once they remarried and dilute the sanctity of the original marriage. For example, in one case I observed, a man pressed charges against his ex-wife several years after their divorce. He had signed a document at the time, saying that the house would be hers. But when another man came to live there with her, the plaintiff had second thoughts, saying that he did not want to support this other man. The community court sided with him and ordered the ex-wife and her new partner to leave. Meanwhile, Belinda's emphasis on freedom and not wanting to move back in with her mother attests to the impact of FRELIMO's efforts at promoting the nuclear family model. Other women voiced similar concerns at the community court: they argued that leaving the marital home would restrict their freedom as they would have nowhere to go without a house, and did not want to become exclusively dependent on their families.<sup>13</sup>

Secondly, the case illustrates how these sensibilities become invested with new meanings in the context of decentralisation. Male concerns about the destiny of the marital home are validated by community court judges and reinterpreted, following the court's mandate, in terms of 'traditional' norms of fairness, retribution and sorcery. Women, on the other hand, in their quest for freedom for themselves and their children, receive support from legal associations, whereby the latter cite the state's duty to protect the interest of children.

When I discussed this with the AMMCJ representative from Belinda's case and with people working at other legal institutions, they confirmed that the emphasis on the best interest of the child partly serves to protect women's freedom. Like Belinda, many of their female clients have neither a stable source of income, nor the means to purchase their own home, meaning that moving in with family is their only option. This is considered detrimental, for the women as well as for children: such dependence means insecurity, and this would leave them open to exploitation or abuse – much as was evident in the case of Maura. Another factor cited by the representatives I spoke with is that men often renege

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<sup>13</sup> See James (2015: 183-193) for an account of similarly complex interweavings of marital disputes and property in South Africa. In the context she studied, these do not only intersect with changing marriage patterns and gender roles, but also with questions of indebtedness, inheritance and aspiration.

on their legal duty to pay child support. Especially if they work in the informal sector and their income is undocumented, this obligation is difficult to enforce. By awarding the marital home to women, the women will at least have one expense less to cover. The representatives were thereby not impervious to the anxieties of ex-husbands. They told me that they instruct women to find another place if they remarry. Even then, however, the marital home should not be sold. Rather, it should be rented out, so that the money can be used to contribute towards child support.

As the case of Salimo and Belinda shows, these reinterpretations have concrete implications for social organisation in Bairro Acordado. In the divorce cases adjudicated by the community court, the focus on the plight of men and on 'tradition' has the effect of severing ties between biological fathers and their children, and consequently, of undermining the model of nuclear families promoted by the state. Women and their children are directed by the court towards maternal kin for support, which facilitates the reproduction of matrilocality and other patterns of matrilineal kinship. This situation is not black-and-white: as mentioned in the description of Salimo and Belinda's case, the court also requires parties in divorces case to register their children with the state, so as to formalise their parenthood. The work of legal associations such as the AMMCJ, in contrast, reinforces the nuclear family. Their emphasis on the duty of fathers to provide sustenance for their children beyond marriage, both in terms of food and housing, stands in opposition to the historical patterns of Makhuwa kinship presented in the first section of this chapter. While, following these patterns, a significant amount of effort was dedicated towards making contributions of fathers towards their offspring's upbringing invisible by redistributing food via the granary of the mother-in-law, legal associations seek to highlight the involvement of fathers and make the marital home its material embodiment.

Yet the main effect of these novel meanings is less tangible. As discussed in Chapter 1, there is a debate in the anthropology of Mozambique concerning the consequences of state policies of decentralisation. While some researchers (Alexander 1997; Baker 2003; Buur and Kyed 2006; Kyed 2007; Orre 2007) claim that decentralisation reinforces state power and strengthens discourses of citizenship, others (Bertelsen 2003, 2009; Florêncio 2008;

Obarrio 2007; Virtanen 2005; West 2009) argue that the reforms result in the proliferation of struggles over power and meaning, thus creating ambiguity. The case of Salimo and Belinda supports the latter analysis. With different fora for dispute management advocating different models for social organisation in Bairro Acordado, disputing parties are left to figure out for themselves which model applies to their situation. In pursuing their individual interests, and to enforce their personal preferences for one particular model, they may maximise the differences between the fora through strategies of forum ‘shopping’ (cf. K. von Benda-Beckman 1981). As Salimo found out, it is thereby unclear whose authority prevails, and the result is increased ambiguity – and potential contestation.

### **3.5 “If they do not know what is right, how are we supposed to know?”**

There is one element I glossed over in the above discussion of Salimo and Belinda’s case: the fact that Salimo had consulted friends from his reformist mosque about divorcing Belinda. This points to the increasing manifestation of Salafi-inspired Islamic reformism in neighbourhoods of Nampula City. As discussed in the previous chapter, this brand of reformism has been expanding rapidly in peri-urban northern Mozambique over the past decade, both in terms of the number of reformist mosques, as well as in terms of the number of Muslims identifying themselves as reformists. In this section, I will discuss the implications of its manifestation for social organisation in Bairro Acordado.

Reformist mosques, I found, intervened in the social domain of Bairro Acordado in various ways. Salimo’s initiative to ask his friends for advice, or peer counselling in general, was one example. Others illustrate the point yet further. I often observed young men tease each other about their unmarried status after *madrassa* (Islamic school) classes, or, in a more serious manner, say that they had seen one of their peers alone in the company of women, and agree to approach the student in question in order to impress upon him the sinfulness of this type of behaviour. Other interventions included sermons and *madrassa* lectures, in which *xehes* (Islamic leaders) instructed their followers on how they should organise their lives after the example of Prophet Muhammad. Some of these

sermons were recorded and circulated in the neighbourhood on DVDs. People also approached reformist *xehes* individually for advice. One *xeh* I knew, for instance, would receive text messages on his phone, asking for his counsel. Topics varied from how to dress in Islamic fashion, to what do when a friend has stopped attending prayers. Finally, interventions took the form of dispute resolution: disputing parties asked *xehes* to settle their disagreements. This happened in cases of conflicts over debts between mosque members or when one member felt slighted by another. It was, however, most common in marital disputes.

From my conversations with reformist *xehes*, three aims emerged as guiding these interventions. First, *xehes* sought to encourage their followers to abide by Islamic norms. They endeavoured to increase people's knowledge of Islam, and, by speaking of the punishment awaiting sinners and the rewards for doing as God commanded, urged them to use Islamic norms as guidelines for every aspect of life. Secondly, with regard to family matters, their objective was to promote marriage. Marriage was seen as the solution to many of the ills affecting modern Mozambican society, including, according to the *xehes* I spoke with, adultery, single parenthood, prostitution and children born out-of-wedlock. Therefore, when people requested mediation in marital disputes, the primary goal of the *xehes* was to reconcile disputing parties. Finally, several of the *xehes* mentioned that they sought to foster the acceptance and understanding of Islamic family models. By this, they were specifically referring to polygamy. Although the state no longer actively opposes it, polygamous unions continue to lack legal recognition in Mozambique, and the *xehes* felt that many misconceptions persisted. It was not their intention, they indicated, to encourage people to engage in polygamy, which is relatively rare in Bairro Acordado. But, they noted, there was a growing interest from their followers in polygamous unions and they wanted to make sure that people made an informed decision when they did. Among other things, this meant instructing men that they should only contemplate polygamy if they had sufficient financial means to sustain more than one family.

However, while the *xehes* I interviewed in Bairro Acordado agreed about these aims in general terms, they differed as to how they should be realised. Some *xehes* felt that, in

light of the pluralist environment of the neighbourhood and the challenges reformist Muslims faced as a result, their role was to assist people in finding ways to negotiate their religious engagements with other commitments. For instance, when I discussed the above case of Salimo and Belinda with the *imam* from the Anwar mosque where I conducted part of my fieldwork (see Chapter 2), he said that this was not the first time he had heard of a case like theirs. He explained that according to Islamic law, when a man wanted to divorce his wife, he should pronounce the *talaq* (Arabic for “I divorce you”) three times in the presence of witnesses and return his wife to her relatives. Each partner would be entitled only to their individually acquired property. In other words, if a husband like Salimo was the sole breadwinner and had built or bought the house where the couple lived, it would remain his property. But in practice, the *imam* continued, few women were willing to accept this, and even if they did, their relatives might not. Insisting otherwise would merely lead them to seek recourse elsewhere, at state institutions where Islamic law was not recognised, and drive them away from Islam, thus fomenting division. In divorce cases, he therefore advocated compromise. Not every *xeh* I spoke with was as inclined, however, to take the context of Bairro Acordado into account. Defining their role as *xehes* more narrowly, they saw it as their task to disseminate what Islam stipulated, and left it to people’s individual judgement whether to act on this or not.

These issues also surfaced in the conversations and interactions I had with mosque members about their involvement with Islamic reformism. Research participants told me that they wanted to follow Islamic law, but that this was not always possible. Among other difficulties, exigencies of everyday life were cited, as well as social pressure or a lack of cooperation from kin, spouses and neighbours of different religious beliefs. Furthermore, people indicated, the advice reformist leaders gave was sometimes inconsistent. An illustration of this came from a conversation I had with Alima, a reformist Muslim woman in her early twenties. She was a friend of one of the students at the Anwar *madrasa*, and when I talked with her about the challenges of being a reformist Muslim in Nampula City, she recounted the following episode of a marriage proposal made to her the year before by her partner Abdul.

Alima had met Abdul in another neighbourhood of Nampula City. She had grown up in Bairro Acordado, but had been living in this other neighbourhood with her mother since her parents' divorce. Abdul was married and had children when they met, but the two started seeing each other, and before long she became pregnant with his child. When she told Abdul of her pregnancy, he proposed to marry her as his second wife. She had accepted his proposal. Being a second wife was not what she had imagined for herself, but it seemed an appropriate way of involving Abdul in the child's upbringing. Her mother agreed. However, when Abdul visited Alima's father in Bairro Acordado to ask for his blessing, the father had responded that he needed to consult the *xehé* from his reformist mosque first.

At the mosque, Alima's father had been informed that Abdul taking Alima as his second wife was, in itself, not a problem. Abdul made a living selling suitcases, and he earned enough money to support a second family. But, the *xehé* recommended, the marriage should be postponed until a later date: because the child had been conceived illegitimately, Alima and Abdul had to wait until 40 days after the delivery before marrying, otherwise the marriage would be considered *haram* (illicit). According to the *xehé*, such was written in the Qur'an. Alima became angry when she heard this. She felt unfairly judged. She knew that she and Abdul had sinned by having relations while they were not married, but she did not want her child to grow up fatherless and was trying to work out a solution. When she consulted a different reformist *xehé*, in charge of a mosque near her mother's house, he told her that the advice given by the *xehé* from her father's mosque was based on an incorrect interpretation of the Qur'an. Alima and Abdul had indeed conceived their child in a state of sin, but marriage was the opposite of sin, and by marrying Alima and Abdul would demonstrate their intent to repent and return to the divine path.

Bringing this news back to her father, he was uncertain about what to do. But after giving the matter further thought, he decided to withhold his blessing regardless. He did not want to be involved in sinful behaviour, he said, and while he left it up to Alima to make the final decision, he would not consider her his daughter if she went ahead with the marriage. Following these words, father and daughter had an argument. Alima ended up postponing

the marriage, but she and her father remained at loggerheads for months. Only after the baby was born did she reconcile herself with him, recognising that her father had wanted what was best for her. She was no longer sure herself by then of whether marrying Abdul was a good idea. Being a second wife did not appeal to her, after all, and she wondered if she should wait and see if she would meet another man. For the time being, when we talked, she lived with the child at her mother's and Abdul regularly came by to visit, bringing groceries when he did.

Alima's case demonstrates how Islamic reformism offers novel and conflicting frames of reference to Muslims in Nampula City for organising their lives. Whereas other residents rely on combinations of matrilineal family arrangements and the model of the nuclear family in coping with the everyday challenge of survival and raising children under conditions of poverty and unemployment, Muslims are presented with the polygamous family unit as a viable alternative. These novel frames, as the argument between Alima and her father shows, carry the potential of superseding people's existing commitments. You will not be my daughter if you do not follow Islamic norms, the father told Alima. Perhaps he did indeed privilege his religious sense of belonging over his family relations. Perhaps he was angry with his daughter because of the situation she found herself in. Or perhaps, as Alima later realised, he wanted to protect her from making a rash decision.

Nevertheless, as the case also shows, it is not always clear what these Islamic norms are. One *xehé* told the father that the Qur'an demanded that the marriage were postponed, another *xehé* gave Alima his contradictory opinion. This is a common complaint among the reformist Muslims participating in my research. "If they do not know what is right, how are we supposed to know?," was the way one woman expressed her frustration with the incongruous interpretations given by *xehes* to the same Islamic scriptures. Alima's hesitations about polygamy were thereby also shared by other reformist Muslim women I spoke with. Although, in the abstract, they accepted that Islam allows polygamy, and they saw it as a solution to situations of single motherhood, it was not something they aspired to themselves, saying that they preferred not to share a husband with other wives. They did not want to compete for the same resources. Furthermore, polygamy felt wrong. These

explanations suggests that, alongside Islamic reformism, their lives are oriented by the ideal of the nuclear family and – as Alima’s reliance on her mother demonstrates – matrilineal patterns of kinship.

The impact, then, of Islamic reformism on existing patterns of social organisation in peri-urban northern Mozambique appears to be similar to that of decentralisation policies of the Mozambican government. Reformism offers new models and aspirations and it questions existing forms of social organisation, but in the pluralist context of Bairro Acordado, it also creates ambiguity and uncertainty.

### **3.6 Conclusion**

I have analysed in this chapter how, in the peri-urban context of Bairro Acordado, the historical centrality of matrilineal kinship to Makhuwa patterns of social organisation is reconfigured under the influence of colonial and postcolonial legacies, decentralisation policies and religious transformation. In analysing the changing significance of marital property in cases of separation and divorce, I have shown that notions of citizenship and state-sponsored preferences for nuclear family arrangements have become increasingly important in orienting the lives and aspirations of neighbourhood residents. Meanwhile, more recently, these have been complemented, and to a degree unsettled, by Islamic norms and family models promoted by reformist mosques. Yet, despite these changes, matrilineal understandings of kinship continue to carry relevance and structure the social organisation of the neighbourhood.

As I have argued above, these findings have several implications for the anthropological literature. With regard to matriliney, I have demonstrated that although both Douglas’ analysis that matriliney is undermined by economic scarcity, and the claims by Kottak and Arnfred about the impact of state policies are applicable in the context of Bairro Acordado, there is a question about the inevitability of these effects. Matriliney, I suggested, can also be adaptive, and a way to survive in a harsh economic environment. Furthermore, in relation to the research literature on the effects of decentralisation policies



in Mozambique, the material presented in this chapter supports claims that these policies result in increased ambiguity, as contestations over power and meaning proliferate. Such ambiguity is reinforced in peri-urban Nampula City, I showed, by the manifestation of Islamic reformism.

In the next chapter, I will continue to explore how matrilineal patterns of kinship intersect with Islamic reformism, but with a focus on sorcery beliefs and urban migration.

## CHAPTER 4. SORCERY AND ISLAMIC REFORM

### 4.1 Introduction

As anthropologists of Africa (Beidelman 1963; Geschiere 1997) have noted, witchcraft and sorcery can be considered the flip-side or ‘dark side’ of kinship; accusations typically involve intimate social relationships, and whereas notions of kinship represent ideals of society and moral personhood, beliefs of witchcraft and sorcery constitute their counter image by taking the normal and desirable and rendering it perverse and morally repugnant. For this reason, following Sanders (2008: 182), sorcery beliefs provide privileged insights into local understandings of personhood, kinship and community. In this chapter, I continue to explore the nexus between patterns of Makhuwa kinship and Islamic reformism begun in Chapter 3, but with a focus on transformation and change, and the question of how sorcery beliefs are reworked and adapted in the process of urban migration.

The anthropological literature offers different interpretations in this regard. Several anthropologists propose that urban migration leads to a reduction in fears of sorcery and witchcraft. For example, Mitchell (1965) postulates on the basis of fieldwork in what is now Zimbabwe that urban life was witnessing a decline in explanations of misfortune in terms of witchcraft. The reason for the decline was that, unlike their rural counterparts, urbanites live among strangers on whom they do not depend for future cooperation. This makes it easier to express frustrations openly and break off social ties; there is no need to couch hostility in supernatural terms. Ferguson (1999: 117) similarly argues that Zambians see the city as refuge from the bewitching practices of their kin living in the countryside.

These readings are, however, contested. A number of anthropologists point out that urban areas are connected to rural ones in multiple ways, and that perceptions of vulnerability to sorcery attacks by kin do not vanish when people move to the city. Geschiere and Nyamnjoh (1998) found in Cameroon, for instance, that relations between urban migrants and their rural kin became a hotbed for sorcery rumours in the wake of the country’s

democratisation. This was due to the combination of intimacy and socio-economic inequality that marks these relations, to people's frequent dislocations between city and countryside, and to the increased importance of rural ties as political capital. Andersson (2002), meanwhile, notes that in Zimbabwe sorcery is conceptualised in translocal terms, and that physical absence from the countryside does not guard urban migrants against sorcery.

Furthermore, living among strangers does not necessarily reduce perceptions of sorcery. Writing about the forced relocation of the rural population of northern Mozambique to communal villages in the 1980s, West (2005: 178) notes that the grouping together of different matrilineages in these villages and the abolition of pre-Independence authority structures by FRELIMO resulted in heightened sorcery fears; no one was seen as capable of controlling invisible forces, leaving residents to look after their own interests, which was traditionally considered selfish and associated with sorcery. Kottak (2002: 195-196) found the same pattern in a former communal village in Nampula province. He observes that, while physical proximity and the increased opportunities this offers for the monitoring of neighbours assuage fears to an extent, proximity also makes socio-economic inequality manifest, giving new impetus to perceptions of sorcery. Indeed, it is a common finding of anthropologists that witchcraft and sorcery beliefs thrive in settings of inequality, change, social disintegration and structural tension (Comaroff and Comaroff 1993; Douglas 1970; Evans-Pritchard 1937; Geschiere 1997; Niehaus 1993). In the peri-urban context of Nampula City, where non-kin of varying socio-economic status live side-by-side, such inequalities are evident.

These challenges to the conventional wisdom on witchcraft offer more dynamic models of the relation between sorcery fears and migration. In the first three sections of this chapter, I take up these suggestions to explore a number of points. I shall describe how, at the general level, urban migrants in Bairro Acordado perceive themselves to be living in an environment where they are particularly vulnerable to sorcery attacks. This perception, I argue, is structured by Makhuwa notions of relatedness and personhood, according to which both rural kin and neighbours pose specific threats. However, at the individual

level, it depends on people's personal circumstances which of these two threats feature more prominently in articulations of sorcery. These points are clarified by an analysis of the life histories of two second-generation migrant women. Both women were my neighbours while I lived in Bairro Acordado, and whereas one neighbour emphasised her fear of neighbours in her accounts of sorcery, the other neighbour focused on rural kin. As I will demonstrate, the difference between their respective anxieties is structured by several factors. These include patterns of migration and socio-economic mobility, differential integration into social networks and religious affiliation.

Against the backdrop of these observations, I will turn to a related question in the final section of the chapter: the interrelation between sorcery beliefs and religious change. Various recent studies have documented how the expansion of Pentecostalism and other forms of charismatic Christianity coincides across Africa with growing anxieties about witchcraft and sorcery resulting from the malcontents of modernity, global capitalism and neo-liberalism. These studies (Freeman 2012; Laurent 2001; Marshall-Fratani 1998; Maxwell 2005; Meyer 1999) claim that Pentecostal churches derive their popularity in part from their perceived effectiveness in combatting witchcraft, either by encouraging church members to repudiate kinship ties and the social channels through which sorcery travels, or by harnessing the power of the divine as a source of healing and protection from sorcery attacks. Pfeiffer and colleagues (2007) demonstrate the applicability of this argument to the growth of Pentecostalism in a setting of urban migration to the city of Chimoio in central Mozambique. They show that an influx of internally displaced refugees to Chimoio during Mozambique's civil war, combined with deepening household inequality as a result of post-civil war structural adjustment economic reforms, have exacerbated fears of crime and witchcraft in Chimoio's peri-urban neighbourhoods. In coping with these fears, an increasing number of people turn to Pentecostal churches for spiritual help.

While these arguments centre on Christianity, they may be relevant for understanding the appeal of Islamic reformism in Nampula City as well. As Larkin and Meyer (2006) have noted, evangelical Pentecostalism and reformist Islam share a great deal of common

ground in contemporary Africa, and their respective growth can be understood through the same theoretical framework (see also Dilger and Schulz 2013; Drønen 2013). In analysing the relation between sorcery and the manifestation of Islamic reformism in Bairro Acordado, I claim that by offering individualised notions of personhood, reformist mosques do attract urban migrants on account of their fears of sorcery. However, as I will show, participation in the neighbourhood's Islamic reform movement simultaneously heightens these fears.

#### 4.2 Sorcery in the urban periphery

Stories abound in Bairro Acordado of the exploits of witches, sorcerers and other agents of darkness. It was said that local businessmen, for example, flew on sieves to Maputo each day to purchase trade goods cheaply and sell them back in Nampula City for marked up prices. Or that another type of sorcerer called *mwawelo* dances naked outside people's houses at night, stealing their money. Victims wake up the next morning and find the money where they left it but they spend it rashly – the *mwawelo* has stolen the value of the money, but not its material form. People warned each other of sorcerers collecting nail clippings, hair or footprints to inflict curses on their targets. These sorcerers are also reputed to use the cover of the crowd at markets and initiation rites to throw harmful charms at the bodies of their targets. Different rumours have it that wealthy couples in the neighbourhood engage *majini* (genies), or giant snakes (*víboras*) to go out and steal for them. In return for their services, the couples let the creatures sleep with the wife and feed off her blood. The darkest, most evil type of sorcerer is called *mukhwiri*. *Mukhwiri* kill their own relatives bit by bit, often unconsciously, by turning them into zombies to make them work at night for their personal enrichment.<sup>14</sup> The relatives feel worn out, but they will not know what is happening. Eventually, they die from exhaustion. In other versions of this story, *mukhwiri* kill out of spite, or because they have signed blood pacts. They enter into such pacts involuntarily; other *mukhwiri* appear in their dreams disguised as family or friends, offering them a plate of what looks like goat meat and they eat it, only

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<sup>14</sup> See Niehaus (2005) for a more general discussion of discourses of witches and zombies in sub-Saharan Africa.

to discover afterwards that it was human flesh. You just ate one of our relatives, they are told, now you have to repay us by bringing us one of yours; if you do not, we will eat you (cf. Bowen 2002).

These stories give an impression of the various types of sorcery said to exist in Bairro Acordado.<sup>15</sup> While neighbourhood residents perceive other invisible forces such as *minepa*, (ancestral spirits) and *majini* as capable of affecting their everyday lives in a variety of ways, I found sorcery to be the dominant framework in people's interpretations of fluctuations in their wellbeing. Not only do sorcery rumours provide common points of intrigue and conversation, and do neighbourhood residents readily attribute their own experiences of misfortune or the fortunes of others to sorcery, there is also a sense that living in the city makes residents particularly vulnerable to sorcery attacks. This has to do with two factors, both mentioned in the introduction: the perceived affluence of city life compared to the living conditions of relatives in the countryside, and the proximity of strangers in the city. Let me illustrate this with two very short examples, which I will then use as a lens through which to view, more broadly, how substance and personhood are conceived of.

The first example relates the death of the eldest sister of my research assistant Gabriela, a second-generation urban migrant, born in Bairro Acordado. Gabriela's parents moved to the neighbourhood from the province of Zambézia in the 1960s when her father took up a job with the railways company. Gabriela's eldest sister grew up there as well, but had since moved to Maputo to work for the Ministry of Defence. When I saw Gabriela the week after the funeral, she sounded calm when she said that she already knew the cause of death. Divination by a *curandeiro* (healer) had revealed that her sister had died from a sorcery attack by their rural kin. The sequence of events was as follows. One month

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<sup>15</sup> Following Evans-Pritchard (1937), the different types of sorcery mentioned could be classified into witchcraft, involving unconscious and inborn psychic powers, and sorcery which consists of the conscious use of tools. While, as I will describe in this section, Makuwa do distinguish between the two different mechanisms underlying this classification, they use the same word in relation to them, *enretthe* in eMakuwa, which I translate, in line with Kottak (2002: 137-144), as sorcery.

earlier, the eldest sister had visited the family in Zambézia to attend a funeral. It was the first time in many years that she had visited, and she brought food with her for the ceremony: canned fish, crackers, and so on. When the relatives saw the food, her clothes and her mobile phone, they thought she must be very rich and they became envious and angry. Gabriela's father had never told them about his wealthy daughter, nor had he shared her riches with them. They concluded that he had "eaten everything alone". If they could not share in their urban kin's good fortune, the relatives reasoned, neither should their urban kin. In their malice, they decided to kill the eldest daughter, so that, in Gabriela's words, "no one would eat". This had happened after the sister's return to Maputo – so the distance had not diminished the effectiveness of the sorcery attack. At first glance, it can be seen that this example shows the relevance of the pattern Geschiere and Nyamnjoh describe for Cameroon: the fact that urban migrants live far away from their rural relatives does not reduce their fears of sorcery attacks. Striking in this regard is that, similar to what Andersson found in Zimbabwe, considerations of space and time do not mitigate anxieties. From the perspective of urban migrants, rural kin feel entitled to their share of wealth, and their wrath is capable of reaching their kin in the city regardless of the physical distance.

The second example involves a woman called Sara I knew from my visits to one of the neighbourhood's Catholic prayer groups. Sara was a first-generation migrant from the province of Cabo Delgado and had come with her husband to Nampula City a decade earlier for reasons of work; he worked for the provincial government at the time, a job he had since lost. One day, Sara told me about an argument she had been having with her neighbour. The neighbour had hit Sara's seven-year-old daughter because of a fight between the girl and the neighbour's six-year-old son. When Sara found out about it, she went to confront the neighbour and hit the neighbour's son in return, after which an argument ensued, which ended with Sara walking away and the neighbour filing a complaint with the police. Sara was summoned and she explained her side of the story, upon which the police referred the case to the neighbourhood authorities, as this was a matter of "between neighbours", and it should be resolved there. That same night, Sara found an insect behaving 'strangely' in her house. She killed it, but her hand kept hurting

for several days afterwards. This was how she knew the neighbour had concocted the insect in an attempt to curse her. It was not the first time someone had tried to attack her. Another time, she found a snake in her house and when she killed it, it turned into a folded leaf of the Qur'an. It had been produced by a *curandeiro* at the request of someone seeking to harm her.<sup>16</sup> On a different occasion, she had dreamt of a potion placed inside the house. Sure enough, when she woke up and went to look for it, she found the potion. She told me that she was not sure who was behind these attacks, but blamed them on envious neighbours. Some of them were single mothers, who must have been jealous of her married state and must have sought to kill her in order to marry the husband themselves. "This place is very dangerous," she warned me about Bairro Acordado. "No one cares about their neighbours. All people want is to see others suffer."

Again, what this example demonstrates at first glance is that Mitchell's predictions about living among strangers and reduced sorcery fears do not apply in Bairro Acordado. Even though hostility can be expressed openly, and people readily do so, they are afraid that their adversaries resort to sorcery to cause harm. Indeed, as Sara's warning about neighbourhood suggests, it is precisely the precariousness of social relationships in the city that contributes to fears of sorcery. People do not care. This is what makes them dangerous.

Perceptions among Bairro Acordado's urban migrants of heightened vulnerability to sorcery attacks are structured, then, by what could be described as a dual sensation of remaining connected to those left behind in the countryside, while having no connection to the people with whom one lives side-by-side. But what accounts such as those by Mitchell, Geschiere and Nyamnjoh and others do not reveal is that people's notions of relatedness and personhood are the key to this sensation (cf. Englund 1996, 1999, 2002b). As noted by Ciscato (2012: 29-30), a Catholic missionary from Italy with over 30 years of experience of living among the Makhuwa of Zambézia province, Makhuwa do not conceive of themselves as individuals, but in terms of interdependence. This sense of

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<sup>16</sup> A number of *curandeiros* in Bairro Acordado have Muslim backgrounds and they use their Islamic knowledge in the services they offer (see Chapter 6).



togetherness is captured by the eMakhuwa term *okhalano*. From the root verb *okhala*, to be or to exist, *okhalano* conceptualises the human condition as ‘being with’. According to Ciscato (2012: 31), it is a feeling of “being member rather than partner”: “...not isolated, but in intimate association and communion with something that is larger.” In similar vein, neighbourhood residents in Bairro Acordado habitually affirmed “*estamos juntos*” (we are together) in their conversations, and it was frequently suggested to me that personal wellbeing is mediated by a person’s relationships with others. The accounts of sorcery exemplify this, but people also talked in this regard of their fear of being socially isolated, as this might produce a condition of ‘thinking too much’: worrying or letting negative feelings into one’s heart, losing the will to live or care about others.<sup>17</sup>

Specifically, I propose, the aforementioned anxieties of connectedness follow from the workings of *eruku*: according to some accounts, a term meaning shadow or spirit. As one of three elements of *mutthu*, the eMakhuwa term for person, other researchers define this term by noting the contrast to the second element of personhood: *erruthu* (the body) (cf. Martinez 1987). Mbwiliza (1991: 70), for instance, translates *eruku* as the shadow of the body or the reflection one sees of oneself in the water. He compares it to the soul or spirit:

The Makua believe that all objects of nature have a dual existence: they exist in a visible form – *errutho*, and in an invisible or intangible form as *erruko* (shadows). The transition from *errutho* to *erruko* takes place at death, and as such death is not an end to life but rather marks a beginning to a new existence. This duality of life forms permeates Makua beliefs and conditions of initiation and burial rites which are seen as the necessary preparations for that transformation.

Based on descriptions from research participants in Bairro Acordado of their fundamental sense of interrelatedness, however, *eruku* is better conceptualised in relation to the third element of the person, namely *murima*, the heart. While the heart is the site of health, luck

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<sup>17</sup> MacGregor (2006) encountered a similar notion in Cape Town, South Africa, where disability grantees spoke of ‘nerves’ when they described how being alone led them to focus on their own hardship, feel jealous of people in their surroundings and develop bodily responses accordingly. According to MacGregor, such feelings were aggravated by perceptions of poverty, inequality and the disruption of kinship ties (see also Mann 2013; Scheper-Hughes 1992).

and the seat of moral character, where desires dwell and decisions and plans are made, *eruku* can be defined as the vital substance nurturing the heart. With an adequate supply of *eruku*, the heart is good (*murima orera*): the person is healthy, generous, compassionate and eager to contribute to society and its reproduction. But once the stock of *eruku* is depleted, the heart becomes sickly and filled with individualistic desires such as envy, ambition and greed. The fulfilment of these is thought to cause social disorder, upset and, possibly, death – the heart turns bad (*murima onanara*).

*Eruku* has, in my interpretation, several characteristics. Firstly, springing from the *erukulu*, an eMakhuwa term which refers to both the womb and the uterine group, it is not of a universal nature, drawn from a shared cosmic pool, but it is unique to each family as it nurtures its members across space and time, both during their worldly existence and beyond, when they live on as ancestral spirits called *minepa*. Among members of the same *nloko* (lineage) and *nihimo* (clan) there appears to be some notion of shared *eruku* as well, but I found that in practice, the circulation of wellbeing is conceptualised in relation to the *erukulu*. Secondly, *eruku* is shared and it connects close kin, automatically transmitting states of wellbeing from one relative to the next, with the *erukulu* functioning as a circuit. It can be material and embodied as well as immaterial, with *eruku* flowing through the veins of the members of the *erukulu* and materialising in their possessions, food, money and other instantiations of wellbeing. Finally, it is limited in supply, meaning that its distribution, as Kottak (2002: 206) describes for Makhuwa perceptions of fortune in general, is a zero-sum game. Participants in my research suggested in this respect that one only gets ahead in life at the expense of others, and that the accumulation of wealth by one member of the kin group automatically means that others have less of it; it is a form of debt to be repaid.

Together, these characteristics of *eruku* and its effect on the heart explain why people in Bairro Acordado fear sorcery attacks from their rural kin. On the one hand, they regard their own wealth with a sense of alienation and usurpation, as it does not belong to them but to the kin group. On the other hand, they are aware of the destructive consequences that usurpation has for their less fortunate relatives. Because their hearts are related, these

ultimately revert back to themselves. One research participant explained the dynamics to me as follows. If someone runs a successful business at the expense of his or her relatives, or while neglecting them, and they take their feelings of envy to heart, or “tie a knot in their heart”, as people in Bairro Acordado say, the owner of the business will be cut off from the kin group. He or she “won’t be well”, feeling weak and apathetic, and the business will collapse. To resolve the situation, the family should sit down, discuss how relations can be restored and seek to remove any ill-feeling from the heart, if necessary with the help of a *curandeiro*. If not, they risk inviting ever greater cycles of mutual harm and destruction, until one of the parties turns into a *mukhwiri*, the ultimate example of a person with a bad heart, resulting in the sort of sorcery attack that killed Gabriela’s sister.

The properties of *eruku* also account for people’s fears of their neighbours. Of relevance here is the understanding that although *eruku* is not shared between members of different *erukulu* and questions of its distribution are therefore less of a concern, the conversion of *eruku* into bodily fluids such as blood, semen and sweat, or into food or objects means that it can be transmitted between *amalapo*, literally meaning strangers or enemies, as non-kin are called in eMakhuwa. This potentiality generates anxieties about the effects of transmission on people’s own *eruku*. Such anxieties are expressed in a number of taboos. For example, mothers are warned not to have sex while their sons undergo initiation rites, because the exchange of blood involved will disrupt the healing process of the sons’ circumcision wounds. For similar reasons, a mother should not have sex as long as she is breastfeeding, because, transmitted via breast milk, the blood of her sexual partner will put too much pressure on the infant’s vulnerable heart.

More important in relation to sorcery, however, are fears about the possibility of appropriation implied in the transferable nature of *eruku*; people are afraid that non-kin will destroy them by expropriating their wellbeing without reciprocation. These feelings are reinforced by the notion that there is no in-built cap on selfishness in interactions between non-kin. Seeing that their hearts are not interconnected, recovery of *eruku* is more complicated than it is in the event of usurpation by kin. Neighbours are thereby particularly suspect, because their closeness means materialisations of *eruku* are within

their reach, and they may try and take advantage of the opportunity to try and seize these. A Makhuwa proverb collected by Matos (1982: 168) on the subject of neighbours warns in this regard: *Wàttamannaweno t'oniwiva* (your neighbour is the one who can kill you). Expressions of this fear can also be found in rural areas of Nampula province, where *irukulu* reside in homesteads situated relatively far apart from one another, with fields and bush in-between, and interaction between non-kin is strictly regulated and ritualised (cf. Arnfred 2011; Ciscato 1997, 2012; Geffray 1990; Kottak 2002; Martinez 2008). For instance, the exchange of labour between neighbours during the harvest season is organised through an institution called *olimiha*, with labourers formally given thanks at the end of each work day and presented with food and *otheka* (a type of millet beer) prepared especially for the occasion (cf. Arnfred 2011: 244-245). Meanwhile, for situations of structural interaction a relation of mutual reciprocity exists to regulate the tensions surrounding the exchange of *eruku* between *irukulu* – the partners in this alliance are called *anavili*. *Anavili* manage the exchange of blood for procreation through symmetric exchange of wives in the form of patrilateral cross-cousin marriage. In times of distress, they also support each other, by cooking and cleaning at each other's funerals for example, when their partners are at their most vulnerable and exposed to the malice of ill-wishers. They enjoy extensive liberty in claiming each other's possessions and maintain a joking relationship, as a reminder or perhaps a training mechanism to learn to take grievances not to heart.

Having outlined people's general fears of sorcery and their rootedness in Makhuwa notions of relatedness and personhood, I will now analyse how their articulation is structured in Bairro Acordado by individual experiences of urban migration. In the next two sections, I will discuss and compare the different life histories and fears of sorcery of two neighbours.

### **4.3 Dangerous neighbours**

The first case is that of Roxana, the neighbour living opposite my house in Zona Melhorada (see Chapter 2). She was a second-generation migrant in her mid-thirties. From

what she told me, her life had involved an endless series of setbacks. She was born in relative affluence. Her father, originally from Nampula province, worked for the national railway company. He had settled in Bairro Acordado in the 1970s, built a house and married Roxana's mother after the death of his first wife, and he was an active member of the Baptist church in the neighbourhood. The first setback came in the early 1990s, when the railways company laid off many of its workers and he was faced with early retirement. The downsizing of the work force was mandated by the government as part of its economic reforms (see Chapter 2). It was around this time that Roxana gave birth to her first child, a daughter. She dropped out of school and married the child's father. Together they set off for Niassa, the province west of Nampula, to cultivate tobacco. The objective was to earn enough money to buy their own house in Bairro Acordado. This, they did, and they moved into the house with their three children, but a couple of years later, her husband surreptitiously sold the house and disappeared with the money to marry another woman in Niassa. Roxana moved back in with her parents, to help her mother take care of her ailing father. She started seeing other men, and had three more children, one of whom was living with an aunt in Nampula province during my time in the field. Without a job, Roxana relied on financial contributions from the fathers of the children and from suitors, as well as on occasional odd-jobs to make ends meet, and she barely scraped by. Roxana was not her "official" name, "name of the document" or "name of the school", as she variously put it to me. Rather, it was the name she inherited from her mother after her father had died and her mother left the neighbourhood to go and live with a sister elsewhere in Nampula City.<sup>18</sup>

The house where Roxana lived reflected the family history of downward mobility. Decades ago, when it was built, it had represented a promise of a brighter future, with its concrete walls, the fibro-cement roof and its connections to city's water and electricity network. This was at a time when Zona Melhorada was an upcoming neighbourhood for the emergent middle class (see Chapter 2). Only those with formal employment were

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<sup>18</sup> Name inheritance is not uncommon in Bairro Acordado. Traditionally, Makuwa acquire different names as they progress through the stages of life. In the case of Roxana, it signaled that she was now considered the head of the household.

allowed to construct their house there. Plots were parceled, the roads were wide, there were street lights, and basic utilities. Upon my arrival in the field, however, there were few signs left of this former prosperity. The roof and walls of the house were crumbling. It was dark and hot inside, with no electricity or running water, and the house mainly served as shelter at night and as storage room for Roxana's few possessions: a table, chair, mattress, cooking utensils and clothes. To an extent, the life story of Roxana and the state of her house reflected those of other households in the area, and of Zona Melhorada as a whole. As civil war took its toll in the 1980s, living conditions deteriorated, while the population of civil servants and employees of state companies was also hard struck by the structural adjustment policies and wave of privatisations of the late 1980s and 1990s. But there were examples of families better able to weather these socio-economic and political changes, including amongst Roxana's neighbours. Recently, new families had begun to arrive in the area, renting refurbished houses in her vicinity. They preferred the low rents and spaciousness of the neighbourhood to the expense and the cramped conditions of the apartments in the city centre. Roxana's household, although not the poorest, ranked among the poorer households of the area while I was in the field.

Roxana proved an eager conversationalist. I would often find her sitting on her chair in the yard, in the shadow of the mango tree in front. Located next to one of the neighbourhood's main arteries, it stretched between her neighbour's yard at the back and the collapsed walls of the adjoining house, and it was separated from the street with only a few markers. Hardly a thing went by in the neighbourhood without her knowing. Many people stopped by for a chat, and a varying group of women congregated in her yard every now and so often to exchange the latest novelties. "Gossip station," people called it. Some were afraid of her sharp tongue. With her large physique, loud voice and booming laugh, she struck an imposing figure, and as one of the local representatives of *Organização da Mulher Moçambicana* (OMM) (Organisation of the Mozambican Woman), FRELIMO's women's association, she was involved in the neighbourhood's affairs. She was also a member of the Baptist church like her father had been, but she did not participate actively in the church community.

Sorcery was a prominent theme in Roxana's comments and stories. Several mentioned her relatives, some of whom lived in the countryside. During one of our conversations, for example, she told me about the time she was attacked by her cousin living outside the city. This happened six years earlier, when Roxana was pregnant with her second youngest son. She had been experiencing severe aches in her womb during the fifth month of pregnancy, and when an analysis at the hospital yielded no results, an aunt took her to a *curandeiro*. He informed them that the cousin, herself pregnant at the time, was jealous of Roxana. She wanted to eat the baby, Roxana explained to me, meaning that it would be stillborn. To this effect, the cousin would have uttered the following curse: "That belly of yours, it is a grave, your baby will come out death... Stop showing off, you already have many children." Roxana thought that the cousin was envious because of her own difficulties in conceiving. She asked the *curandeiro* for a solution, and he presented her with a doll wrapped in white and black cloth. They went to the graveyard together at night to bathe it in a potion and bury it. According to Roxana, her body became "strong" as a result of the treatment, and her cousin's attack bounced back, killing the cousin's unborn child in place of hers. The treatment consisted, in other words, of savaging the relations with her cousin further, so that her feelings of envy would not touch Roxana.

Mostly, however, her talk of sorcery was focused on her neighbours. This could mean neighbours in general. She would warn me, for example, about the importance of not being seen to cause upset to others. "You have to be very careful," she said. "There are many sorcerers in this area, and they take advantage of that kind of situation. They throw a curse and if the upset person dies, the blame will fall on you." In other cases, relative newcomers and outsiders to the neighbourhood were the culprits. They were, in her eyes, the general cause of the decline of the area, crime rates and other social ills. For instance, she complained about refugees who had arrived in Bairro Acordado during the country's civil war in the 1980s and ended up staying rather than returning to their places of origin, or she told me about businessmen from the city centre renting houses in the neighbourhood, to bring in thieves; after the thieves had stolen as much as they could, they would hand over part of the proceeds to their sponsor and move on to the next neighbourhood. Her direct accusations were, however, reserved for her immediate

neighbours. On one occasion, she said about the woman living across the street from her that she was a witch flying out at night to steal from other people. The living conditions of the two women were similar, and Roxana said that her neighbour was “thin” because of her occult activities. About another neighbour, an entrepreneur running a successful carpentry workshop in the neighbourhood, she indicated to me that he owed his wealth to a pact he had made with a *majini*. The *majini* would have promised to make him rich, but in return, the man needed to sacrifice one of his relatives each year. The deaths in his family were her evidence for this claim.

To a degree, these articulations can be taken as expressions of the fears of living amongst strangers analysed in the previous section. More specifically, in light of Roxana’s life story, they convey a sense of loss and discontent produced by manifestations of socio-economic inequality. Roxana interpreted both the accumulation of wealth in the hands of others and the competition posed by newcomers through the framework of sorcery.

There is, however, another factor involved: the reduced ability of Roxana to participate in neighbourly exchange networks. Engaging immediate neighbours in networks of material exchange and mutual assistance is one of the strategies people in Bairro Acordado have developed in dealing with the proximity of strangers. From dusk to dawn, there is a constant stream of people, goods and favours circulating between different families and houses in the neighbourhood. People request salt at the neighbours’. A child is sent across the street to ask for a piece of burning charcoal. Neighbours go to the market together, borrow a knife or some groceries. They keep an eye on each other’s children, watch TV together, and use the fridge next door to keep drinking water cold. They also visit each other when they are sick, and collect donations when someone in the vicinity mourns a death in the family. The proactive and spontaneous nature of these exchanges stands in marked contrast with the controlled and ritualised nature of interactions among non-kin in the countryside, mentioned in the previous section. Indeed, if neighbourly exchange in Bairro Acordado resembles any aspect of rural non-kin sociality, it is their treatment of guests. Here, rural Makhuwa go out of their way to accommodate strangers, offering them their best food, a chair to sit on if they have one, their mattress while they sleep on mats



outside, and in the past, also their wife for the night (Kottak 2002: 187-188). In line with the anthropological literature on hospitality (Candea and Col 2012; Pitt-Rivers 1968), such gestures of goodwill can be interpreted to function as protection against the dangers of exposure to the unknown. By sharing their *eruku*, hosts demonstrate their good hearts and contribute to their guests' wellbeing, and in the process they trust, even implicitly, that their guests will be prevented from acting selfishly. Mutual assistance in Bairro Acordado can be similarly argued to constitute a deliberate means of creating connectedness and interdependence where there is none, giving residents a measure of control over their social surroundings.

In the case of Roxana, her experience of downward mobility had compromised her ability to participate in these networks of exchange on equal terms. She tried to take part, just as she had been used to do while growing up, but every time her life hit a bump, her relations with her neighbours threatened to shift. What had been mutual interdependence looked set to become dependence by her on them; and her references to sorcery articulated this tension. These dynamics were illustrated by what happened when Roxana's mother suffered a stroke. The mother had been living with her sister, Roxana's aunt, on the other side of Nampula City. She survived, but could not speak or move until a *curandeiro* treated her and she regained some of her abilities. A family meeting was held, and it was decided that the care for the mother was too much of a burden for Roxana's aunt, herself elderly. The mother, it was decided, was to move back to her late husband's house where Roxana would look after her. Roxana accepted the decision, but she was worried. Not only did having her mother back at the house mean extra expenses. The *curandeiro* treating the mother had also warned her that she must not have sex while her mother was recovering. Because the two were bonded by blood, the pressure generated by her sexual activity would transmit to the mother's heart and result in another stroke. This presented Roxana with a problem, because the gifts and money from her suitors had constituted one of the ways in which she had been able to get by.

Roxana relied on the aid of her neighbours in coping with her family situation. Every morning, she would go on a hike through the area, fetching water from the well at the

house of one neighbour, gathering plants at someone else's, asking for a bit of salt here and some charcoal and flour there. Whereas before she had been able to offer small tokens of appreciation in return, the exchanges became more unidirectional, and she interspersed her requests for assistance with complaints about her relatives, and how they reneged on their promises to help her out financially with the care of her mother. Her neighbours did not mind, or at least not at first. They understood, and many knew Roxana's mother from the time she had lived at the house. Some had gone to visit her at Roxana's aunt's place when they received news of her stroke. But as time went by, behind her back, people began to express their disapproval of what they saw as her incessant pleas and selfish behaviour. They did not go as far as suggesting that she was a sorcerer, but it did make them suspicious and contribute to Roxana's social isolation. One neighbour accused Roxana of wanting to seduce and marry her husband. The neighbour living next to Roxana – she was renting the house and had moved in six months earlier – said that Roxana had stolen plates and toys from her when she came to ask for fire. She constructed a bamboo fence between their yards. Roxana, for her part, resented her situation, and disparaged some of her neighbours for avoiding her. As fewer people came and sat down with her for a chat, she told me that they thought they were better than her and that they were selfish and had bad hearts.

It was not the first time Roxana and those living in her vicinity had gone through this routine, and when her situation improved and she began to participate in networks of mutual exchange again, her relations with her neighbours improved as well.

#### **4.4 Being held back**

Rajah, a Muslim woman and the stepmother of Ali (see Chapter 1), whom I lived next to during my stay in Zona Melhorada articulated very different perceptions of sorcery. She was also a second-generation migrant, but where Roxana's perceptions of sorcery centred on her neighbours, Rajah spoke mainly of her rural kin in this regard. Rajah's life, just like Roxana's, had been marked by significant difficulties. She was born and raised under similar circumstances. In her mid-thirties, she was of the same age as Roxana, and her

father had similarly worked for the railways company when she was born in the central part of Bairro Acordado. Her mother came from one of the small islands off the coast of Nampula province where her grandfather had settled upon migrating from Madagascar. Civil war brought misfortune upon the family. First, her mother was almost deported by the police while the father was travelling, because, being alone, they suspected her of prostitution. Not long afterwards, in about 1986, Rajah's parents got divorced and her mother took her and her sister to the town of Monapo in Nampula province where she married another railroad worker. Rajah was eight years old. Her mother was abducted by RENAMO a few years later, together with relatives. The relatives escaped, but when her mother tried to flee as well, she was killed. A childless aunt living on Mozambique Island took Rajah and her sister in, and raised the two children. Rajah stayed in touch with her father, who, along with other colleagues was forced to retire in the 1990s. But she rarely saw him, and he died a couple of years after his retirement.

It was at Mozambique Island that Rajah met Jafar. Jafar was married with three children at the time, but he left his wife to marry Rajah. The couple got off to a good start. Jafar worked as a mechanic and driver for a wealthy businessman on the island. During the country's civil war, Jafar's travels across northern Mozambique had provided him with lucrative opportunities to trade and earn an extra income on the side, and this continued to be the case in the years following the 1992 General Peace Agreements. Rajah remembered how he came home the day after they had first slept together, and told her that their relationship was blessed; he had made a lot of money that day. Their fortunes later, however, went into reverse. Jafar's employer wanted to open a new business in Nampula City. He put Jafar in charge, and the couple moved to a company house in Bairro Acordado. When the business failed, Jafar lost his job. They bought their current house as Jafar found another job with a Portuguese businessman, but he quit again a couple of years later when his employer implicated him in a customs scam and he spent a month in jail. Meanwhile, the couple had difficulties getting pregnant. Rajah suffered a number of miscarriages and their first child died when it was eighteen months old. After giving birth to their son, she became ill, and another baby was stillborn a couple of years later. Recently, however, the couple's financial prospects were looking up again. Jafar had

found a job as a truck driver, transporting tree logs for a private business. One of the major clients was, ironically, the railways company. The company had profited from a recent boom of foreign investment in Mozambique to attract funds for the upgrading of its railroad network, and much of the construction work was outsourced to contractors such as Jafar's employer.

Although the two lived only a stone's throw away from each other, Rajah differed from Roxana in a number of ways. She was not timid, but could be cautious in her interactions with others. She was unforthcoming with information about herself, and it was difficult to gauge what she was thinking. She preferred to sit in her doorway or inside rather than in the yard, watching TV as she prepared food. She was better-off than Roxana, in that she and Jafar owned the house they lived in, and his salary provided her with a measure of security. If it was insufficient, she relied on her home business of selling pastries and *maheyo* (a non-alcoholic drink produced from maize flour and germinated malt). The couple's house was small and made of concrete, built with its back against the neighbour's. The yard was in front, bordered by two narrow alleyways. The roof of the house was sagging. Now that his work was providing him with a source of income, Jafar was planning to refurbish it. While he awaited the construction permit, the bricks lined up at the edges of the yard for construction served as a clothes drying rack. There was a water well finished off with a rim made from an old car tire, and in the corner of the yard stood an outdoor toilet cubicle. Rajah cooked on the porch. She and Jafar shared the house with four others: their only son Rashid, eight years old, Rajah's stepson Ali, a young niece from the province and Rajah's youngest brother from her father's side of nineteen years old. Jafar was seldom home, as he spent most of his time on the road.

Rajah's relations with her neighbours were not as tense as Roxana's. While she was no active participant in the social life of the area, she was on good terms with a number of neighbours and partook in their networks of assistance and exchange. They fetched water from her well, bought her food products and she was a member of an informal savings group organised by neighbours. Rajah ignored the neighbours she did not get along with. For instance, beyond the formalities of greeting, she and Roxana paid each other little

attention. This social awkwardness was the result of one of Roxana's previous cycles of approximation and distancing, when Roxana's son used to come over to eat at Rajah's place, which Roxana first encouraged but then prohibited, saying that the children at Rajah's bullied her son. Her relatively harmonious relations with her neighbours were reflected in her stories of sorcery – or rather, in the lack of them. There was only one time I heard Rajah mention sorcery in relation to a neighbour. The son of this neighbour had asked Jafar if he could borrow a number of bricks. He would return them later. Jafar had consented, because the father frequented the same mosque as Jafar did and he was a business man of considerable wealth. However, as time passed and the son did not return the loan, Jafar grew frustrated, especially with the father, whom he had expected to take responsibility for his son's behaviour. It was during a conversation with me about this matter that Rajah suggested that the neighbour owed his wealth to sorcery.

Rajah's sorcery narratives focused, instead, on her rural kin. For example, she attributed both the failure of the business when she and Jafar moved to Bairro Acordado and the time Jafar was jailed for his alleged involvement in the customs scam on a spell his aunt had put on him. The aunt lived near the coast and, herself poor, she would begrudge Jafar his luck. Her spell also caused him to throw away his earnings on drinking and women rather than spend money on a future for himself and his family. About her miscarriages and the death of their first child, Rajah said that these had resulted from sorcery attacks by her own aunt, the one who had raised her and her sister on Mozambique Island. She must have cursed Rajah by saying that, since she had not had any children herself, Rajah was to remain childless either. Every time Rajah became pregnant, the aunt would invade her body in her sleep, disguised as Jafar, and have sex with her to upset her womb and provoke an abortion. Two elements stand out in these accounts, first, that the sorcery attacks started after Jafar and Rajah moved to the city, and second, that the rural relatives envied the couple's luck. It conveys a sense of being held back, in contrast to the experience of loss apparent in Roxana's articulations of sorcery. This suggests that Rajah's pattern of remigration and the time she spent with her rural kin, as well as her trajectory of upward social mobility are all factors in her anxieties regarding rural kin.

A further aspect of the contrast concerns the mobility of the families of Rajah and Jafar, and the continued integration into rural kin networks this implies. Rajah's aunt was involved in trade and she would sometimes stop over on her travels at the house of Rajah and Jafar in Bairro Acordado. Tensions between Rajah and her aunt flared up during these sporadic visits. Once, Rajah recalled, her aunt spent a couple of days at their house on her way back from Cuamba, a city on the western borders of northern Mozambique, near Malawi, where she had travelled to buy trade goods. About a month after the aunt had left, Rajah began to lose weight and she became ill. She felt exhausted and was unable to breastfeed her son Rashid, born not long before. The doctors could not find the cause, and when neighbours began to enquire whether Jafar was mistreating her, Rajah remembered an argument she had had with her aunt during the visit. "You will see," the aunt had said with a threatening voice. Rajah convinced Jafar to give her money, so that she could travel to the coast to meet her aunt. There, the aunt confirmed that the reason for Rajah's illness was her own bitterness which had resulted from the argument. Rajah asked her for forgiveness and soon recovered.

Finally, a more recent factor in Rajah's fears of sorcery by kin has been her membership of one of the reformist mosques in the neighbourhood. Paradoxically, sorcery was also her main reason for joining. She had just suffered the last miscarriage when Ali, Rajah's stepson, convinced her and Jafar to become a member. Although she was raised as Sufi Muslim and had been a regular participant in *dikhr* (ecstatic prayer) sessions at a local Sufi mosque in Bairro Acordado, Rajah liked what she saw. As she explained to me, reformist teachings helped her accept that hardship is ultimately part of the plan God has for her, and that if she falls victim to a sorcery attack, this is a trial from God for her to show her faith. She also appreciated that it made Jafar focus on his family and stop drinking. These dynamics of incorporation were manifest during my time in the field as well, when one of Jafar's co-workers fell off the back of his truck and died. The family of the co-worker blamed him for the accident and he spent a week in jail, before his employer offered an advance on his salary to pay off the police officials to drop the case. The couple sensed that the accident had resulted from a further sorcery attack by Jafar's aunt. "We need to demonstrate patience," Rajah said, and she and her husband looked for

comfort in their religion. While Jafar started attending prayers and Sunday classes at their reformist mosque more regularly, Rajah signed up for *madrassa* (Islamic school) classes, something she told me she had been wanting to do, but had previously not found the time for.

However, while Rajah drew strength from Islamic reformism, it also left her puzzled. Her *malimos* (*madrassa* teachers) warned their students, in the same breath with which they acknowledged the existence of sorcery, not to go to *curandeiros*, because, they taught, divination and amulets are *haram* (illicit). Rajah believed them, but she felt that people should do as much as they can to protect themselves, and the warning made her feel vulnerable. She was used to wearing *xris* (amulets) on her body for protection, and taking these off would expose her to the ill-wishes of her kin. In general, she told me that she found it difficult to negotiate the rules reformist preachers recommended Muslims follow, such as that women should stay at home rather than engaging in small trade, in order to avoid being brought into contact with men they are not related to. Rajah was, as mentioned, used to supplementing the family income by selling food products, and she did not want to give this up. She ended up following some of the guidelines *malimos* gave her, while ignoring others.

#### **4.5 Salvationist Islam**

The discussion of Rajah's life history brings me to the question raised in the introduction, of whether sorcery fears, similar to what has been found elsewhere in Africa in cases where Pentecostal Christianity is expanding, contribute to the growth of Islamic reformism in Bairro Acordado.

Rajah's story suggests that there is indeed a correlation, and I gained similar impressions from other Muslim reformists participating in my research. Like Rajah and Jafar, a number of them had arrived in the city relatively recently, and left Sufi mosques to join the neighbourhood's Islamic reform movement after experiencing a degree of upward social mobility (see Chapter 2). Their upward mobility coincided with the recent spurt of

economic growth in Mozambique. As mentioned in Chapter 1, this spurt is largely driven by foreign investment, and while it creates few jobs, there is more money available in the local economy, providing new opportunities for entrepreneurs, which Muslims, due to their historical involvement in trade and the informal economy, are well-positioned to take.

From what research participants told me, their experiences of migration and mobility generated various motivations for switching from Sufism to Islamic reformism. For some, it was the modern outlook of reformism and the feeling of being part of a transnational community rather than following in the footsteps of their ancestors. Others felt attracted by the aspirational message of Islamic reformism, and its insistence that all Muslims are equal in the eyes of God. There were also the opportunities reformist mosques offered for social networking, for example when it came to finding jobs or clients for their businesses. Several youth appeared to get involved for reasons of respectability; reformism represents an alternative means to social status for those who have finished secondary school but do not have the financial means to continue their education and step on the career ladder. Finally, anxieties about sorcery were cited, and there was a pattern for Muslims to either join reformist mosques or become more active after they had gone through life crises or other unfortunate events, in some of which sorcery was deemed to have played a role.

The reason why Islamic reformism is attractive in the latter regard is because, compared to Sufi Islam, it offers a radical break from the Makhuwa notions of relatedness and interdependence analysed above. As Rajah indicated, reformism privileges people's relationships with God, and it thereby takes its followers' minds off concerns about the effects of social relations on their personal wellbeing, including by means of sorcery. This break is achieved through two conceptual innovations.

Firstly, reformist Muslims believe that every person has a unique soul. This can be glimpsed from the terminology they use in relation to personhood. Whereas the Makhuwa model distinguishes, as mentioned, between *murima* (the heart), *eruku* (shared vitality) and *erruthu* (the body), reformists participating in my research preferred to describe the



heart with the eMakhuwa term *eroho*. They told me that it derives from the Arabic word *ruh* (spirit or soul), which is breathed into the person by God prior to birth, and without which the person dies. They were not alone in their use of this term. Sufi Muslims and Makhuwa from the coast where Islam is historically prevalent mentioned it to me as well. However, where Sufi Muslims in northern Mozambique define the person and wellbeing in relational terms not dissimilar to how these are conceptualised by other Makhuwa (see Chapter 6), reformist Muslims derive a highly individualised understanding of the self from the existence of the soul, according to which each person has a primary responsibility to God for how they conduct themselves, not to others in their social surroundings. The health of the heart is, in this understanding, not a reflection of how well a person is integrated into networks of family or neighbours – people’s hearts are not connected. Instead, it indicates the state of a person’s relationship with God, determined by individually held beliefs, by personal choices and by individual deeds.

Secondly, as Rajah mentioned, there is the belief in predestination. Reformist mosques in Bairro Acordado teach that prior to birth, before the soul is breathed into the person, people sign individual contracts with God, stipulating what kind of life they will have and promising to worship God in return. The contract covers the amount of *rizq* (sustenance, or everything a person makes use of such food, house, clothes, money and so on) people will receive during their lifetime. It also specifies everything that will happen to them while they are on earth. Consequently, rather than worrying about their material wellbeing or what the future holds, Muslims should focus, preachers at the reformist mosques in the neighbourhood assert, on keeping their end of the contract; their promise of worship. They should try and be grateful for what they have, trust that God will provide for them, and persevere when God does not, for hardship is a trial. Those who keep faith and follow the guidelines for worship revealed in the Qur’an and through the example of Prophet Mohamed will be rewarded come Judgement Day. Whereas they will gain access to Paradise, sinners shall be sent to Hell for punishment.

The appeal of those two beliefs is that they make reformist Muslims feel less vulnerable to sorcery attacks. In my conversations with reformist research participants on this topic,

they indicated that they took comfort in knowing that what came their way was planned, and that attacks would only succeed if God allowed it. They claimed to thank God when they suffered affliction, grateful for the chance God had awarded them to show their faith, and I met a few reformists who believed that the conditions in which they lived and the challenges they encountered resulted from their own choice, for they believed, they told me, that they had been given the option by God to pick the sort of life they wanted when they signed their contracts. Both misfortune and fortune were, following these assertions, their lot. Luck is not, as others in the neighbourhood claim, taken away from kin or neighbours.

Islamic reformism mirrors in this respect the pattern identified by Weber for salvationist religion in general. As Weber (1958: 329-330) claims, salvationism derives its attraction from its justifications of worldly success in terms of destiny and individual achievement, rather than in 'magical' terms, which explains why upwardly mobile Muslims prefer Islamic reformism. Meanwhile, the notion that obligations to God trump other types of obligation provides urban migrants with a certain liberation from social pressures. Relevant here is the individualised understanding of hearts as unconnected. This frees reformists from bodily instantiations of these pressures, including from those coming from disgruntled rural kin. The feelings of envy of their kin are no longer capable of affecting reformists, at least not directly. Islamic reformism is similar to Pentecostalism in this regard, which, as described in the introduction, is seen by its adherents as successful in combatting sorcery because it renounces the social ties involved.

However, there is an important difference with Pentecostal Christianity, or at least with some versions of it. Whereas a number of Pentecostal churches give their members access to the power of the divine in exchange for their repudiation of social relations, a power vastly more effective than sorcery, Islamic reformism offers little beyond the comfort of knowing that sorcery is part of destiny. This is what Rajah referred to when she registered her disagreement with reformist teachings about the sinful nature of the work of *curandeiros* and the warning of her *malimos* that Muslims should not consult healers; reformism leaves people defenceless against sorcery.

A further complication here is the rallying of reformist leaders against those practices associated with Makhuwa kinship which normally have the effect of alleviating social tensions and fears of sorcery. For example, Makhuwa funerals, including among Catholics and Sufi Muslims, are normally highly social affairs, counting on the participation of kin and neighbours, stretching over several days and involving the conspicuous consumption of food. The purpose of these ceremonies is to guarantee the safe passage of the dead to the spiritual world of ancestors, while they also offer time and space for the readjustment of the social fabric. Reformist Muslims refuse to participate, however, and they do not want to contribute financially either, because they see such funerals as illicit deviations from the example of Prophet Muhammad and as expensive burdens on the shoulders of the families of the deceased.<sup>19</sup> Similarly, in relation to neighbours, there is a tendency among reformist Muslims to retreat from social life as they become more active in the neighbourhood's reform movement, and to restrict their social interactions to the social networks of their mosques. They no longer sit with their non-reformist neighbours, saying that they want to avoid becoming involved in gossip. They do not participate as actively in networks of material exchange, citing Islamic restrictions on non-public interaction between men and women; and they refuse to participate in funerals of their neighbours if they are of a different religion. In result, reformists come to be seen by their non-reformist kin and neighbours as stingy and selfish, and the frictions this creates singles them out as targets for sorcery attacks, instead of reducing their fears.

Many reformist Muslims in Bairro Acordado deal with these dilemmas in the same way that Rajah did, by balancing their engagement with Islamic reformism against other considerations. To give another example of such balancing, there was the case of Mariamu, a reformist Muslim woman in her early twenties, living in with her mother, a Sufi Muslim. I had come to know her as an active participant at the weekly *madrasa* classes of one of the reformist mosques in the neighbourhood. Towards the end of my fieldwork, her mother became critically ill. When talking to me about this, Mariamu revealed that relatives had come to her house for a collective offering of flour to the

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<sup>19</sup> See Becker (2013) and Bowen (1984) for similar debates in Tanzania and Indonesia.

ancestors, requesting their support for the mother's recovery. Mariamu had refused to participate, explaining to me that she "did not believe in these things." Later, she had thrown away the flour used for the offering, so that her reformist friends would not see it in case they came to visit.

When I saw her again a couple of weeks later, she sounded less certain. Her mother had recovered, but it had been a frightening experience; she had nearly died. After the recovery, the mother had gone to see a *curandeiro* who had informed her that one of her sisters, Mariamu's aunt, was plotting to kill her. The sister would be part of a ring of sorcerers, sacrificing the blood of their relatives. The *curandeiro* had given the mother a potion for a protective bath, and told her to make sure her children took it as well, for their own protection. Again, Mariamu said, she had initially refused to, but this time, after pleas from her family, she had relented, even though she considered taking the bath sinful. It was a favour to her mother, she said, adding that there was always a bit of doubt in her heart about sorcery. This example illustrates that the interrelation between Islamic reformism and perceptions of sorcery is no straightforward matter. To an extent, participation in reformism can be argued to reduce sorcery fears, but at the same time, it can also make people feel more vulnerable.

#### **4.6 Conclusion**

Urban migration, Makhuwa kinship and Islamic reformism are closely linked, as shown here through the lens of sorcery fears. Against theories of sorcery highlighting either the relations of urban migrants with their rural kin or their interactions with urban neighbours, I have demonstrated that, due to Makhuwa notions of relatedness and interdependence, both of these types of relations matter in understanding sorcery fears in the peri-urban context of Bairro Acordado. More specifically, I have shown that the reconfiguration and adaptation of people's social relations in the process of migration influences how they perceive sorcery.

Affiliation to Islamic reformism plays an important role for some residents. It offers a break from Makhuwa understandings of the self as interdependent with others by introducing an individualised understanding of the self which is focused on God. This break makes reformist mosques particularly attractive to urban migrants whose experience of migration and social mobility has led them to fear sorcery attacks by their rural kin. At the same time, once people become more actively involved in reformism, it may also increase their fears of sorcery.

In the next chapter, I will explore how the adoption of reformist self-understandings affects people's normative commitments.

## CHAPTER 5. ETHICS AND MORALITY

### 5.1 Introduction

The previous chapters revealed that Islamic reformists can be distinguished from others in Bairro Acordado by their attempts to define themselves in relation to God, rather than in interdependence with others or as independent state citizens. In this chapter, I will explore the normative ramifications of this shift in self-understanding. This exploration is guided by two objectives. First, I seek to analyse whether people's involvement with Islamic reformism comes with distinct ethical preferences. The second objective is of a methodological nature. It concerns the question of whether people's explicitly stated ethical preferences can be taken as reliable indicators of their implicit normative commitments.

The incentive for the first objective comes from research by Shweder and colleagues (1997) in Orissa, India, where they identified self-understandings similar to the ones I found in Bairro Acordado. They discovered, upon asking research participants to comment on a standardised list of brief descriptions of behavioural events, each representing a moral violation relevant to the field site, that these self-understandings were correlated with three specific sets of ethical commitments. Research participants who conceptualised the self in interdependent terms relied in their judgements on what Shweder and colleagues call community ethics. It involves regulative concepts such as duty and hierarchy, the aim of which is "to protect the moral integrity of the various stations or roles that constitute a 'society' or 'community'" (1997: 138). Participants with a notion of the self as independent, in contrast, invoked autonomy ethics, consisting of harm, rights, justice and other concepts seeking to "promote the exercise of individual will in the pursuit of personal preferences" (ibid.). Finally, definitions of the self as a spiritual entity and bearer of a legacy that is elevated and divine were associated with preferences for concepts of a sacred order, tradition, sin and pollution. According to Shweder and colleagues, divinity ethics "aims to protect the soul, the spirit, the spiritual aspects of the human agent and 'nature' from degradation" (ibid.). These correlations, together labelled

as the CAD-model, have since been shown to apply to a variety of other settings, including Western countries (cf. Haidt and Hersch 2001; Graham et al. 2009; Preston and Ritter 2012). I aim to investigate in this chapter whether they are also applicable to the context of Bairro Acordado, and how far Islamic reformists adopt divinity ethics as they become involved in the neighbourhood's reform movement.

The second objective is related to recent directions in the anthropology of morality and ethics. There have been a number of proposals lately for anthropologists to study ethics, defined by Zigon (2010: 8) as "conscious and intentional work that cultivates the non-consciously enacted moral habitus." The idea, against Durkheimian identifications of morality with the social (cf. Laidlaw 2002), is that foregrounding ethics allows researchers to understand people's own role and agency in shaping morality, the latter of which is conceptualised by Zigon (2008: 17) as bodily dispositions: morality "does not consist of principles and rules, but instead is a bodily way of being in the world that is continually shaped and reshaped as one assumes a new and different life, that is, social experiences."

Thus, Zigon (2008) proposes to examine the dialectal production of morality through what he calls "moral breakdown": ethical moments, precipitated by the intrusion of events into people's everyday lives causing them to consciously reflect on their morals and formulate appropriate ethical responses as they seek to return to prior levels of existential comfort and embodied morality. Meanwhile, Laidlaw (2002) has a different proposal: he encourages anthropologists to study people's normative commitments and moral sensibilities through the lens of the technologies they self-consciously employ in their efforts to become moral persons. Mahmood (2005) makes a similar proposition for the anthropology of Islam. She argues that practices of ethical self-fashioning constitute privileged sites for the analysis of Muslims' moral engagements with the world. In a recent application of this argument to the case of the so-called cartoon riots, the wave of protests that gripped countries across the world after the publication by a Danish newspaper of cartoons depicting the Prophet Muhammad, she claims that these riots need to be interpreted against the attempts of Muslims to emulate the persona and habits of Prophet Muhammad (Mahmood 2009). Such attempts, she maintains, facilitate the

inculcation of distinct structures of norms and affect, leading Muslims to feel personally violated by the publication – hence, their anger.<sup>20</sup>

These proposals have generated considerable theoretical debate in anthropology. On the one hand, Robbins (2007) and Yan (2011) have criticised proponents of the ethical turn for moving too far from Durkheim and for neglecting social influences on morality. On the other hand, Laidlaw (2014), in his recent review of the state of the art in the anthropology of morality and ethics, shows himself critical of the tendency in the work of Mahmood, Zigon and others to define the ethical commitments of their research participants in opposition to ‘Western liberal’ thought which they associate with autonomy. Not only does their work ignore, as Laidlaw points out, the diversity of positions in Western liberal philosophy with regard to notions of autonomy, which range from ‘negative’ appraisals of the absence of domination and constraints, to ‘positive’ conceptions defined as the freedom to act according to one’s true self. It also over-emphasises the coherence and singularity of alternative commitments, at the expense of ambivalence, struggle and pluralism. Laidlaw references in this regard the writings of Marsden (2009) and Schielke (2009), in which they, as discussed in introduction of this thesis, criticise Mahmood and other researchers of ethical self-fashioning in Islam for neglecting value pluralism, inconsistency and the lived experiences of Muslims. This analysis has led Laidlaw to revise his earlier proposal (2002) about studying ethics through the lens of technologies of the self. He maintains that it is important to analyse the values people seek to cultivate by engaging in projects of self-formation, but only in so far as this takes into account their capacity for inhabiting multiple moral registers, as well as the implementation of ethical commitments in practice.

In the discussion of Maura’s case in Chapter 3, I have already observed that commitments in Bairro Acordado to notions of interdependence associated with kinship ideologies, and liberal understandings of rights and independence, are not as incompatible or mutually exclusive as they may appear. Following Englund’s study of the appropriation of notions

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<sup>20</sup> See Howell (1997), Lambek (2010) and Robbins (2004) for other recent work in the anthropology of morality and ethics.



of freedom in Malawi, I suggested that residents of the neighbourhood may hold both sets of values, and that they, at times, translate and interpret state-sponsored discourses of civil liberties in ways that reinforce kinship patterns.

Here, I want to raise a different question, which is what, if anything, people's ethics reveal about their morality. From a methodological point of view, the answer to this question is not as straightforward as the aforementioned proposals would suggest. Researchers working in other fields have shown that there is no necessary relation between explicit and implicit domains of human action. Studying general patterns of reasoning, for example, the psychologists Nisbett and Wilson (1977) demonstrate that people's explicit judgements and justifications often do not match the underlying dispositions. This may be due to social desirability bias or to information not being stored inside the brain in logical-sentential formats, making implicit theoretical assumptions inaccessible or subject to distortion when translated into explicit formats (cf. Bloch 1998). Another illustration comes from Astuti's (2001) fieldwork among the Vezo of Madagascar. She describes how she found that while Vezo consistently produce statements that could be interpreted as showing that they do not distinguish biological birth from social nurture, her research participants did differentiate between the two when she targeted their inferential reasoning processes with experimental procedures from developmental psychology. This finding leads her to conclude that anthropologists should be careful when it comes to making claims about the implicit reasoning processes based on people's articulations and on behavioural observations. Shore (1996: 305-306) makes a similar point for the study of ethics and morality:

...we must never mistake the public expression of ethical discourse with the private and subjective experience of a morally problematic situation. While the private experience is apt to be experienced as ambivalent and ambiguous, the public representation is more likely to be framed as categorical and absolute. To confound these two perspectives mistakes what is only a partial fit between cultural knowledge and personal experience.

In the following pages, I shall follow up Zigon's proposal to focus on moments of moral breakdown and describe several cases of a type of dispute called moral offence in Bairro

Acordado. In analysing these cases, I demonstrate that the emergence Islamic reformism has resulted in the destabilisation of what counts as offensive in the neighbourhood. Whereas the reactions of the majority of residents are structured by tensions between interpersonal norms such as respect and compassion on the one hand and considerations of independence and equality on the other, reformists stand out by registering their upset in relation to a class of offences their non-reformist neighbours show no reactions to: violations of sin and public decency. These findings suggest, following the CAD-model, that reformists place more emphasis than others in Bairro Acordado on the ethics of divinity, and that their efforts to model themselves after the example of Prophet Muhammad have resulted in distinctive normative commitments. This impression is further reinforced by an analysis of changing attitudes toward one of the technologies people in Bairro Acordado use to fashion the self: initiation rites. In the final section, however, I will present the results from a pilot survey designed to test whether variations in ethics are mirrored by similar patterns at the implicit level of normative commitments. While the survey results are too ambiguous to reach any firm conclusions, they show a disparity between ethical preferences and implicit norms, leading me to wonder whether people's ethical behaviour is structured by factors other than morality.

## 5.2 Moral offence

The first time that I heard the term moral offence was relatively early in my fieldwork. Two neighbours, an older woman and young man from another family, had been having words on the street near my house. When I later asked others about it, they blamed the man. Regardless of whether he had been right or wrong, people said, for him to shout at an older person in the way that he had done was disrespectful. It was a moral offence (*ofensa moral*).

The term came up more frequently after this. It turned out to refer to transgressive behaviour, or the violation of embodied norms, standards or principles. This violation has upsetting effects, causing people to feel angry and indignant. A judge of the community court of Bairro Acordado described moral offence to me as follows: "It is when your spirit

feels disoriented (*confuso*)... Your heart is not calm, you transform. You do not feel well inside your body.” He went on to state that moral offence is “a shock to who you are, to your morals”. The moral impact would cause people to pause, reconsider and, possibly, act to re-establish order. As such, moral offence is a prime example of what Zigon defines as moral breakdown: it constitutes a moment in which people become aware of the moral habitus they embody, compelling them to reflect on their norms, formulate ethical responses and endeavour to restore their sense of ‘calm’.

Moral offence was one of the most common sources of disputes in Bairro Acordado. While it might be part of other types of disputes, with arguments starting as moral offences but evolving into other types such as physical aggression or divorce, it constituted a socially recognised type of dispute in itself as well. At Bairro Acordado’s community court, for example, a significant proportion of the case load was classified as moral offence. In fact, as Figure 6 shows, moral offence was the largest category of disputes received by seven of Nampula City’s 10 community courts between December 2011 and February 2012. The graph presents the results from a survey I conducted in collaboration with the Directorate of Registries, Notaries and Religious Affairs of Nampula Province (see Chapter 2). It gives an impression of the high incidence of moral offences in the peri-urban periphery of Nampula City. The judge president of one of the courts participating in the survey corroborated this when he ventured during an interview that moral offence is “the number one cause” of disputes in Nampula City. According to him, the amount of moral offence cases community courts receive represent only the tip of the iceberg. “People do not respond, they just stay quiet, they do not know that we deal with these cases as well. Others do, they take their cases here.”

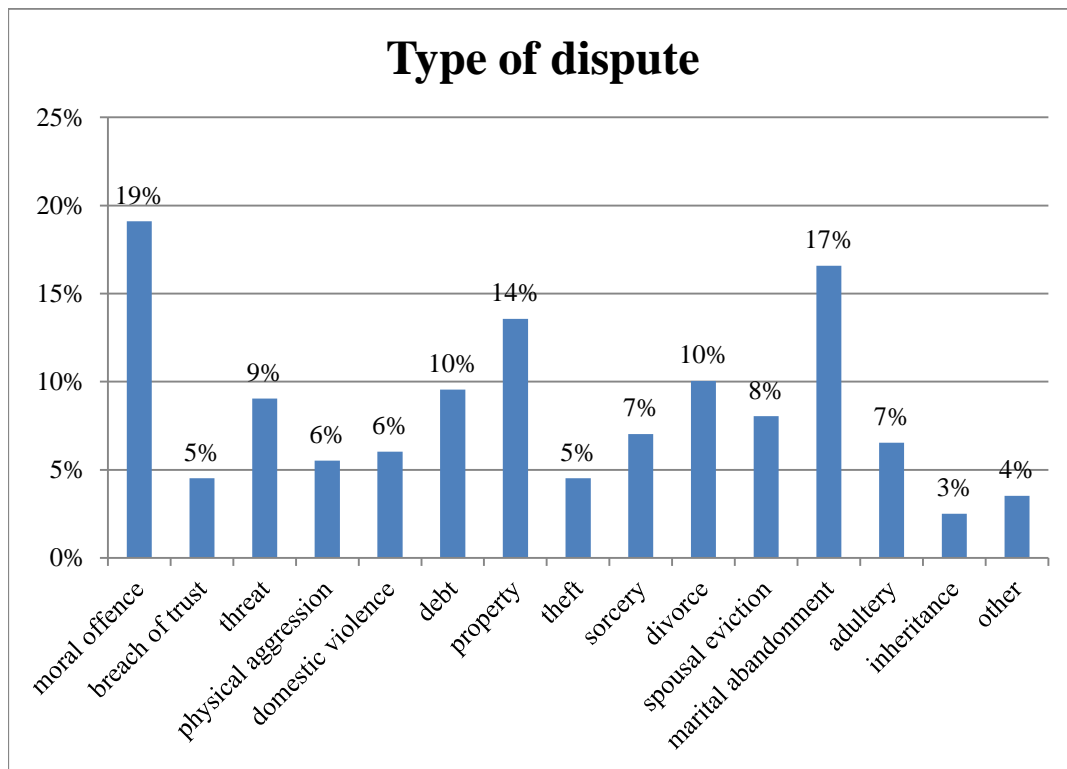


Figure 6. Frequency of types of disputes in Nampula City.

The moral offence cases I encountered at community courts and during fieldwork in Bairro Acordado revealed the co-existence of two competing sets of ethical commitments, one concerned with duty and hierarchy, the other with independence and equality. To illustrate this, one case involved a marital dispute between the daughter of *senhor* Biko – he was a former secretary of Bairro Acordado and a longstanding member of FRELIMO – and her husband, a clerk at the city court. As the couple explained to the judges when their case reached the neighbourhood’s community court, the two had met when she was still living with her parents. He had built a house and after the couple got married, they had moved in together. Sometime later, she became pregnant. This, according to the husband, was when her behaviour began to change. Their male *empregado* (domestic help), lived in with the couple and the daughter of *senhor* Biko started inviting him to come and sit at the table to eat with them, and wash his hands with the same water he gave her husband for washing his hands – at some point, she also presented the *empregado* with gifts. Her husband thought of this as strange and felt offended. He considered it disrespectful of his

wife to treat the *empregado* in the same way she treated him. Many neighbours agreed. There were rumours that the child *senhor* Biko's daughter was pregnant with was not the husband's but the *empregado*'s, and that the daughter and the *empregado* had conspired to drive the husband away so that they could have the house for themselves. *Senhor* Biko's daughter was aware of these rumours and that her husband was upset, but she thought that there was nothing wrong with treating the *empregado* as she did. As her parents had taught her, he was a human being like everyone else. The couple got into a series of arguments, and the husband threatened to fire the *empregado*. The wife felt that this was out of line and responded that she would rather divorce him than see the man fired. Things did not improve when their families got involved. *Senhor* Biko's family sided with the wife, and eventually, divorce seemed inevitable. This was when they turned to the community court. The judges heard both sides, with the husband alleging that his wife had committed adultery, while the wife denied these accusations. The judges concluded that there was no trust between the spouses and granted their divorce request.

What this case demonstrates is the husband's concern with principles of respect and with hierarchy. He interpreted his wife's attitudes toward their *empregado* as putting him and the man on the same footing, and saw this as evidence for adultery and for the *empregado* attempting to take his place. The wife, however, did not agree with her husband's insistence on difference. She seemed committed to notions of equality and fairness. When the confrontation of their commitments forced the spouses to reflect on their own norms, it did not lead to integration or compromise. Rather, they grew apart, until there was no mutual trust left and they separated, with both partners persevering in their own commitments.

A second moral offence case provided an example of how people in Bairro Acordado do make compromises between the two sets of ethics. It concerned a police officer living in the neighbourhood, who was part of a group of friends I sometimes spent time with. He had been saving up money to buy a stereo, and when he finally managed to do so, he proudly used it to play music at loud volume, late into the night. His neighbours were not happy with this development, complaining to each other about their lack of sleep, but in a

pattern I have observed more often in Bairro Acordado, they felt it would be inappropriate to confront him. One of his neighbours explained to me that it was his house, and that he was therefore free to do as he pleased. All she could hope for was that the situation would improve once the novelty of the stereo had worn off. Several weeks passed and the nightly music sessions continued. Finally, a committee of two elderly male neighbours was dispatched to relay the noise complaints. The owner of the stereo said he understood – openly refusing them would have been disrespectful – and promised to turn the volume down, but within a few nights, it was back up at its previous levels. It was only a while later that one of the friends told me the officer had finally given in and stopped playing music at night altogether. A female neighbour had approached him to tell him of her sick mother and how the sound disturbed her in her sleep. Her appeal had swayed him. As the friend explained it, he let his compassion prevail over his sense of entitlement.

A third moral offence case related a more open-ended encounter, as it involved neither compromise, nor a return to the unconscious norms embodied before the incident. It took place on the rural outskirts of Bairro Acordado, and I heard about it via hearings at the Bairro Acordado's community court in which I participated. The case centred on a property dispute between two neighbours, an elderly lady and a young man living with his wife next door. The yards of the neighbours were separated by a patch of bushes, and much to the man's chagrin, the lady used the patch for burying her garbage. He thought of the patch as his and one day, after having warned her several times, he got angry when he found another bag of garbage, ready to be buried. He threw it into her yard and later that night went to find her inside her house and physically assaulted her. She pressed charges at the court. What had hurt her the most, she told the judges, was that the man had shown no compassion to her following the assault. He had refused to give her money to go to the hospital for a medical check-up and to buy medication.

The judges sided with her, but citing the law, they turned the offence into a violation of principles of privacy and harm, rather than of respect and compassion. In his verdict, the judge president decreed that the man had committed a moral offence by awarding himself the right to use violence. The man had made three mistakes, said the judge president. First,

he had violated his neighbour's private space by entering her house and beating her there. Secondly, he had assaulted her when she was sick. Thirdly, he used violence, whereas he should have gone to local authorities and asked them to intervene. The judge president ordered the man to pay moral damages to the sum of 1,450 Mozambican meticaís, the equivalent of approximately 30 British pounds, or half a month's worth of minimum wages in Mozambique.

Now it was the man's turn to appeal for compassion. He accepted blame, he said, but the damages were too high. He barely made enough for his wife and him to survive on, and he asked for the amount to be lowered. Neither the lady nor the judges obliged, with the judges referring again to the law by saying that the law can hurt, but that the man would be grateful for this in the future as there might come a time when he needed it for his own defence. The man was given three weeks to come up with the money. This was where the case was left open-ended. The man did not pay the damages, and when the secretary of the section where he lived delivered a summons to him at the request of the community court, the man said that his family came from a region in Nampula province infamous for its powerful sorcerers. He threatened to curse the secretary, the judges and the lady. The judges were angry at his threat and contemplated forwarding the case to the City Court, but they eventually dropped the matter, as did the lady. They did not want to antagonise the man.

The third case is interesting for the judges' reference to the law in redefining the man's transgression, coupled with the man's recourse to invisible forces to challenge this conceptualisation. It suggests that the two sets of ethical commitments manifest in the three cases are rooted in different discourses, namely that of Makhuwa sociality and of citizenship. This is indeed how many people in Bairro Acordado see it. Respect, compassion and also shame are commonly associated with Makhuwa kinship. They are seen as the basic qualities of what constitutes a good heart, and the manifestation of these qualities in people's behaviour evinces their moral personhood. Equality, fairness and privacy, on the other hand, are considered the province of state law. Research participants relate these notions to what they denote as "democracy". For instance, when people are

not treated with the compassion they feel they deserve, they complain about people thinking that everyone is equal “now that we have democracy”. Alternatively, in seeking to guard themselves against redistributive demands from others in their surroundings, they are grateful for the freedom “democracy” provides.

There is the suggestion that as people are more exposed to state-sponsored discourses of citizenship, via their family in the case of *senhor* Biko’s daughter or through their work in the cases of the police officer and the community court judges, they become more committed to the norms involved in these discourses while defining themselves and others in comparatively autonomous terms. In this, a sort of self-reinforcing effect can be noted: as people emphasise their independence and their commitment to notions such as privacy, others respond through their framework of Makhuwa sociality by socially isolating them, which strengthens their independence in real terms. However, as the last two cases show, the result is often that people abandon their commitment to individual rights and privacy. This is partly because of social pressure, but also because interdependent notions of the self continue to hold relevance in the city, as the previous chapter also demonstrated.

In sum, the analysis of moral offence cases in this section confirms the pattern found in Chapter 3, namely that notions of citizenship contribute to the emergence of new forms of sociality and individuality in Bairro Acordado, but that these operate alongside Makhuwa narratives of kinship. Nevertheless, there appears to be some validation for the applicability of the CAD-model to the context of Bairro Acordado, as Makhuwa self-understandings of interdependence come with preferences for the ethics of community, while the independent self-understandings promoted by the Mozambican state translate in commitments to equality, fairness and privacy.

### **5.3 Islamising the neighbourhood**

Islamic reformists in Bairro Acordado had somewhat different ideas about moral offence. While they might or might not feel offended in relation to the cases cited above, the emergence of Islamic reformism appeared to have resulted in the introduction of novel



understandings of what counts as offensive, which did not meet criteria of community nor of autonomy ethics, but instead focused on sin, decency and modesty in public interaction.

This was illustrated during my visit to one of the reformist mosques in the neighbourhood. After showing me around, the mosque's preacher and I were standing outside and he told me of the mosque's history. It had been a small Sufi mosque until several years earlier. When the owner passed away, his family had intended to sell it, and as the Catholic Church was about to buy it to turn it into a church, a group of concerned Muslims contacted a reformist organisation in the city centre to ask for help. The organisation agreed to find a donor from the Middle East. With his financial support, the mosque had been refurbished and it was now four times its previous size, painted and with a galvanised roof. It operated daily *madrassa* (Islamic school) classes and featured a sound system for broadcasting prayer calls. There were plans to build a minaret as well. I asked the preacher whether he thought the mosque had an impact on social life in the neighbourhood. "Very much so," he stated proudly, pointing to a small shop opposite the street. "You see that?" he asked. "It used to be a bar where people drank alcohol and gambled. Can you imagine, right in front of the mosque!" The preacher considered it very offensive, and he went on to explain that the owner of the bar was a Muslim. He had been a member of the Sufi mosque before the reformist organisation bought it, and would close his bar during prayer times to cross the street and join the congregation for prayers. Sometime after the sale, the preacher had approached the owner of the bar, together with other mosque members. Over the course of several meetings, they had managed to convince him that God does not approve of selling alcohol or gambling; that these are very sinful activities. The owner ended up closing the bar to turn it into a shop, and joined the reformist mosque. "Some of the men who used to gamble there now study at our *madrassa*," said the preacher with satisfaction. "We opened their minds. Bit by bit, we are Islamising the neighbourhood."

As the reference to sin shows, the preacher defined the bar owner's offence by his violation of Islamic rules of conduct. That he was a Muslim and operated a bar in front of a mosque were exacerbating factors. It made the offence worse, because he should have

known better. This applies to a second case as well, which was also set at a bar, but centred on norms of purity as well as sin. The place was known for renting out rooms by the hour to men bringing along girlfriends or prostitutes, and the case involved a client visiting the bar after Friday prayers, dressed in a *djellaba* (tunic worn by Muslim men). When people saw him and rumours spread about the event, it caused consternation among the neighbourhood's Islamic reformist community. A number of reformists, including a *xehe* living in the vicinity of the bar, went to the bar owner to find out what the purpose of the man's visit had been. As a reformist friend explained to me, they considered the man's behaviour offensive. Even if he had just gone in to buy a soft drink because he was thirsty, an act not sinful in itself, my friend explained, he should have thought better, so as to avoid giving evil impressions to others. What is more, the man had smeared the *djellaba*. "To enter a bar dressed like that, it is a big offence. That place is filthy."

A third case was about violations of standards of purity and public decency more generally: people littering the streets or relieving themselves in public. Both are common sights in Nampula City, especially in the city centre where people find that they have no alternative. Several Islamic reformists told me that this was a major source of irritation for them and that they saw it as a prototypical case of moral offence. They had made a habit out of approaching people when they saw this happening, to tell them that what they were doing is wrong. "You are dirtying the streets and spreading disease," were the words used by one reformist to confront a man when he encountered him urinating on the sidewalk. The man had responded angrily, asking whether it was any of his business, and the reformist had thought it wise to not pursue the matter further. A reformist woman described a similar incident to me. In her case as well, she conceptualised public urination in terms of dirt, disease and purity, but she added nudity as a factor, which she considered shameful.

I found the articulation of these concerns relatively unique for the context of Bairro Acordado. Other research participants indicated that they either did not care, or they conceptualised the same issues in different terms. When I asked people for their opinions on public urination, for example, some said it bothered them, but not as much as to speak

their mind about it. Others simply shrugged their shoulders and responded that one has to go somewhere. It would be a different matter if they saw a person doing it in front of their own house, they suggested. Then, it would constitute a violation of norms of respect or of privacy, and they would confront the person in question.

It had not escaped people's attention that reformists did care, and this bemused them. For instance, the story of the preacher and his peers persuading the owner of the bar in front of their mosque to turn his joint into a shop was well-known in the neighbourhood. As one Catholic man recounted the story to me, he said he was convinced that the bar would still be open had it been the Catholic Church that bought the mosque. "The owner would have been rich by now," he joked, suggesting that church members would be at the bar drinking beer before the end of Mass. Research participants saw the difference between themselves and Islamic reformists as one of norms and discipline. They consider reformist Islam a "very complicated" religion, "full of rules" and commend reformists for their capacity to observe these – "reformists are extremely *cansados* (serious or strict)," research participants would tell me.

Reformists felt vindicated by such observations. When I mentioned to them that their ethical standards appeared to differ from the ones of those around them, they responded with approval and a certain pride. Many see the pluralist social environment of Bairro Acordado as characterised by immorality, and to have an outsider like myself suggest that they stood out was taken by reformists as affirmation and a sign of success – their efforts to extract themselves from their surroundings and remodel their normative commitments after the example of Prophet Muhammad were paying off. Specifically, they attributed their understandings of moral offence to their sense of *taqwa*, which can be translated as fear or piety. It is the third level of spiritual attainment in Islam, which comes after the levels of being Muslim and having *iman*, meaning faith. It thereby refers to fear of God in everything one does. To have *taqwa*, an *imam* of a reformist mosque in Bairro Acordado explained to me, is to have "deep inside you, this moral feeling", and "to put a barrier between yourself and evil, to avoid committing sins by always thinking of God." And: "This fear manifests itself in good deeds, you want to please God." To him, *taqwa* is the

product of internalised Islamic norms: a sense of right and wrong, guiding Muslims along the path to God.

There are several techniques of the self that are employed by reformists in the neighbourhood to develop *taqwa* and become *muttaqeen*, as people possessing *taqwa* are called. Foremost among these are Islamic studies at home or at the *madrasa*, as it is through the Qur'an and Islamic scriptures describing the life of Prophet Muhammad that God's commands can be learned. Watching DVD sermons and listening to broadcasts of Radio Haq, Nampula City's Islamic radio station, constitute other means of increasing one's moral knowledge. Meanwhile, bodily postures of submission during prayer, Islamic dress codes – *djellabas* or knee pants for men, *hijabs* (veils) covering the shoulders and arms, and socks covering the feet and ankles for women – as well as the maintenance of standards of personal hygiene, the commitment of which is expressed through a nail clipper on one's key chain, further the cultivation of *taqwa* in more embodied ways. When Sufi Muslims, themselves wearing shorter headscarves, for instance tease Islamic reformist women about their *hijabs*, saying that it must be hot to wear those, the latter respond with a jibe about the fires of Hell awaiting those who do not follow God's orders: "You think this is hot? Wait until Judgement Day, and then you will know what hot means." In other words, from the perspective of reformists the *hijab*'s discomforts make their fear of God tangible.

The idea is that, with the aid of these techniques, reformist Muslims fashion their tastes and desires in accordance with what God ordered, so that the discernment of sinful or desirable actions becomes automated. Telling me about the process of moral transformation he experienced when he became involved in the city's Islamic reform movement, one reformist man described it to me as overcoming an addiction. Before, whenever he would see girls in short dresses, their hair and faces made up, he felt compelled to approach them – he could not help himself. He was good-looking and claimed to have enjoyed considerable success with women. Through his studies at the *madrasa*, he gradually came to understand the wrongness of his ways. He began to feel God's presence in his life and gained control over his desires by reminding himself of the

divine punishment awaiting those who sin. Now, the sight of a girl in a short dress no longer affected him. If anything, it repulsed him. He tried to stay away from people whose behaviour shows them to be far removed from God, and shielded himself from their influence. He saw the cultivation of *taqwa* as a continuous struggle, saying that it is difficult to attain and that those who have it can never be sure and need to work hard to retain it.

The owner of the aforementioned bar gave me a similar account when I interviewed him about his reasons for closing it. He said that until the group of reformists bought the mosque and approached him, he saw nothing wrong with selling alcohol. He did not drink himself and what others do is their business. The reformists convinced him otherwise by showing him Qur'anic verses suggesting that selling alcohol is forbidden, as it has immoral effects on others and on society. It did not take long for him to come around. Subsequently, he had a falling out with the mosque leadership. The shop went bankrupt because of a lack of clientele and he blamed the leaders for not doing more to support him. When he complained to them about his difficulties, they showed no compassion, he told me. But he did not regret his decision, despite pleas from his former clients to reopen the bar. "The bar, that is something of the past, I know better now," he said. He felt that exposure to Islamic reformism had changed him, leading him to adopt a new code of conduct and novel understandings of what is acceptable and what is not. Notions of sin and moral corruption feature prominently in these understandings.

The difference in interpretations of moral offence and the statements about *taqwa* provide additional support for the relevance of the CAD-model to the analysis of Islamic reformism in Bairro Acordado. The material suggests that as reformists come to define themselves more directly in relation to God and strive to make God's presence felt in themselves and in their lives, they develop ethical commitments distinct from those of their non-reformist neighbours, which mirror the ethics of divinity. Before I will explore whether these ethical commitments reflects differences in morality, let me first provide a further piece of evidence in the next section: changing attitudes towards initiation rites.

## 5.4 Initiation rites

The divergence in ethical commitments observed above in relation to moral offence can also be noted in people's attitudes with regard to initiation rites (*wineliswa*). Whereas reformist Muslims condemn these rites as sinful, the vast majority of residents of Bairro Acordado consider participation in initiation rites a fundamental part of socialisation and essential to the constitution of moral personhood. Importantly, the socialising effects do not only apply to the initiates themselves, but also to their participating relatives and neighbours, with people taking part in initiation rites on a regular basis throughout their adult lives.

Male initiation rites, called *ekoma* or *masoma* in eMakhuwa, are organised once a year during school holidays in the month of December as their initiation lasts longer; about a month, which is the time it takes for the initiates' circumcision wounds to heal. They typically take place in bush camps on the rural edges of the neighbourhood, while some families prefer to send their sons to the ancestral places of origin of their maternal kin; due to the higher concentration of *minepa* (ancestral spirits) there, they are thought to be better protected and it eases their recuperation. In the camps, the initiates share a large tent together with their *padrinhos* (godfather or sponsor), which in this case refers to male relatives picked by their families to look after the initiates for the duration of the rite. The *padrinhos* are generally older nephews, and one of their tasks is to go to the houses of the initiates each day to fetch food. The master of ceremony is also present, acting in consultation with the *régulo*, the chief of the area, as he supervises the recovery of the initiates and the daily organisation of the camp. The age and group size of the initiates in the camps varies. In the three rites I attended, there were boys as young as seven and as old as 17 years old, and while two rites brought together around 50 initiates each, the other counted on 10 participants. During the first two weeks of the rites, the initiates spend much of their time in bed to ease the healing process. Later, they engage in games and are taught a number of dances and songs. The master of ceremony and the *padrinhos* may offer the initiates a few words of informal advice at this point. Formal instruction is,

however, given by counsellors during the final weekend of the rite, when the initiates' families join in.

As for female initiation rites (*emwali*), these are organised throughout the year, often individually or for a small group of two or three girls from the same family. Female rites normally take place at home. The counsellors arrive after male family members have left and female relatives and neighbours have come to the house to join the festivities. For each initiate, one of the relatives is appointed *madrinha* (godmother). Girls receive their initiation after their first menstruation. The time between the first menstruation and the rite depends on the financial means of their families. Because of the small size, there are less opportunities for cost-splitting, meaning that the organisation of the rites can be quite expensive. The female initiate rites I attended parts of lasted three days, as did the rite attended in its entirety by my wife on my behalf, but there are also two day-rites. These are more common among Muslim women from the coast, as they reserve the final part of the rite, during which girls receive sex education and are instructed about how to be a good wife, for marriage celebrations.

Several techniques are used in both male and female rites to cultivate moral personhood. These have been reported in other African contexts as well (La Fontaine 1986; McNeill 2011; Richards 1956; Turner 1967), but they are specifically tailored to the inculcation of Makhuwa notions of interdependence and the associated ethical capacities.<sup>21</sup>

Firstly, initiates receive no explicit instructions during the rite. Rather, counsel (*ikano*) is given in the form of songs. These songs generally consist of a single line, followed by a chorus. Initiates are seated in a circle with their relatives and the others in attendance standing behind them. The counsellors sit in the middle, singing and drumming. As one of the counsellors gets up to sing the verse to each initiate individually, the rest joins in for

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<sup>21</sup> There are significant differences between male and female initiation in terms of the knowledge transmitted and the technologies used, but I focus here on what they have in common. For detailed descriptions of Makhuwa male initiation rites, see Medeiros (1995), for an analysis of Makhuwa female initiation rites, see Arnfred (2011).

the chorus. Every time a song is finished, the drummers take over and the relatives make their way to the middle of the circle to start dancing and award the counsellors for their efforts with coins and sweets. The topics of the songs vary. Some offer behavioural advice, telling initiates to honour their mothers, or that now that they are grown-ups, they should no longer enter their parents' bedroom without knocking. Other songs teach initiates the real names of things, distinct from their everyday ones, and about *minepa*. The latter songs, one could argue, contribute toward an understanding that there is a secret world out there, imperceptible to the senses. The initiates may have noticed earlier that their mothers leave the dinner plates outside at night, unwashed, with a bit of food on them to attract spirits for good luck, or overheard older siblings talk about sorcery. When they were about to enter the rite, they also participated in a family offering of flour to *minepa*, and they were sprinkled with some of the flour for protection. While they will be included in such conversations and practices from the moment of their initiation on, giving them a sense of the invisible forces manifested in their surroundings, this will only be gradual and partial, and they are left with a degree of epistemic vigilance toward the claims of themselves and others concerning reality.

Secondly, initiates are given a number of practical tasks to complete. These are performed first by the counsellors, generally in the form of dance, and the initiates then have to repeat the dance, aided by their sponsors, before the others join as well. The purpose of these tasks is to endow initiates with the gendered skills and knowledge necessary to participate in society as responsible adults. Boys are for example shown how to hunt and how to bury human remains – up until their initiation, they are not allowed to participate in funerals. Girls are taught about edible roots, and they receive demonstrations on how to sexually seduce their husbands. During several dances, they mimic sexual positions and learn how to clean their husband's body with a towel after sex. Both sexes are instructed about menstruation. The counsellor will show them a plate with five flour balls, ranging in colours from brown to red to white. The colours represent the stages of menstruation, and initiates are told to count the balls. As several counsellors told me, the task is designed to teach initiates when to abstain from sex and when it can be initiated again. Again, no explanations are given about the tasks. Some sponsors provide these individually, but



mostly, the capacities transmitted are of a bodily nature. Initiates are warned, however, not to share what they have seen with anyone else, as this knowledge is considered secret and dangerous. It is harmful to the uninitiated.

Thirdly, initiates are submitted to a series of tests. It is in these tests that the inculcation of the commitment to norms of Makhuwa sociality, described in the first section, can be observed. To show their respect, initiates have to maintain submissive postures throughout the rite. For example, they are told to keep their eyes lowered, and while sitting they need to keep their legs stretched in front of them, showing the soles of their feet. The failure to assume and maintain these postures results in punishment, in the form of verbal and sometimes physical chastening. There are constant threats of greater punishment and at some point during the rite, the counsellors ask those present to list the times each initiate refused to help out in the household, or otherwise disobeyed elders. Initiates are disciplined accordingly, so that they next time, they will be afraid. Compassion is instilled via a different test. During female initiation rites, for instance, a mother or aunt will fake her own death. If the initiate cries, this is taken as a sign that she is compassionate and people feel assured that she will take care of her mother when she is old. The initiates' sense of shame, finally, is activated by obliging initiates to perform a moral transgression in front of the others. For example, they have to tell the counsellors the eMakhuwa terms for genitals, or sing songs containing strong language; they are also told to strip down at various moments during the rite. Many initiates find this extremely embarrassing, and it often takes persuasion and further threats of punishment to make them comply.

At the end of male rites, initiates are given a potion to ingest. In two of the rites I observed, animal meat was used, boiled with protective roots. In the other rite, the master of ceremony gave the initiates water to drink, in which Qur'anic verses had been dissolved. The potions were prepared by *curandeiros* (healers), and devised to stimulate the reproductive potential of the initiates. Adult men observing the proceedings were eager to partake as well. With the distribution of the potion, the rite is complete. Initiates and participants have been integrated into society, their awareness of the invisible forces determining their integration has been raised, they have acquired some of the knowledge,

skills and sensibilities required to negotiate their integration, and their sense of their dependence on others in this regard has been cultivated.

To an extent, it can be considered remarkable that people in Bairro Acordado consider initiation rites as important as they do. As analysed by Medeiros (1995) and Arnfred (2011), there have been several attempts in the past to undermine them. First, during colonial times, in a pattern found across Africa and elsewhere, Christian missionaries rallied against the rites, because they considered them uncivilised. After Independence, FRELIMO's women's movement argued for their abolition on the grounds of their perceived oppressive and humiliating character. Mirroring current commitment to notions of equality and independence in people's understandings of moral offence, the movement wrote in a 1977 policy brief on female initiation rites that the rites "implant in the woman submission and total dependency of the man" and that "the woman is conditioned to submit herself and gradually to assume self-inferiority" (quoted in Arnfred 2011: 12-13).

From what research participants told me, people responded to these campaigns by temporarily suspending the organisation of rites, by shortening their duration – in the past, they lasted as long as a year – and by hiding them from public view.<sup>22</sup> The preference for female initiation rites to be held at home appears to have been a result of this, and there are families who opt to rent a house for male initiation rites as well, rather than send their sons to bush camps. In another demonstration of the strength of commitments to Makhuwa forms of sociality, however, the Catholic Church and FRELIMO have since changed their positions. The Catholic Church now organises initiation rites itself on church property, adapting some elements, but otherwise maintaining the format described above. The changes are that there is no nudity and strong language involved, and

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<sup>22</sup> The shortening of initiation rites has been observed in other contexts (Richards 1956: 55; Comaroff 1985; La Fontaine 1986; Turner 1967) where it is mostly attributed to the time constraints of modern life. Time constraints were cited in Bairro Acordado as well, but campaigns against the rites by the Catholic Church and by FRELIMO appeared to have been additional factors.

catechism classes have been added to the repertoire.<sup>23</sup> FRELIMO, meanwhile, has substituted opposition for mechanisms of control. Rite organisers are required to request authorisation, and parents pay a fee per initiate, to the neighbourhood administration in the case of male initiation rites, and to local chapters of FRELIMO's women's organisation for female initiations.

The latest challenge to initiation rites comes, as mentioned above, from Islamic reformists. Although many of the reformists I spent time with in Bairro Acordado had been initiated themselves, they insisted that they would not send their own children for initiation, and neither did they participate in rites organised by others in their vicinity. To an extent, their condemnations of initiation rites expressed the same sentiments as the ones voiced by the Catholic Church and FRELIMO in the aforementioned campaigns, namely that the rites were backwards and humiliating. However, they added a novel element which reflects their commitment to divinity ethics: the perceived sinfulness of the rites. There were several aspects to this perception. Some rejected the rites altogether. They argued that there is no basis for them in Islamic scriptures, and that Prophet Muhammad's children were not initiated, therefore they should not initiate theirs either. Others objected to the methods used in rites and the nudity and strong language involved. They were concerned that this leads to moral corruption, as participants come to consider it normal and imitate it outside the context of the rites. Similar to moral offence, the rites were considered to spread impurity.

I heard of a few cases where this became an issue. In one case, the reformist parents did not want their son to be initiated other than for him to be circumcised. Their relatives insisted, however, that initiation was necessary. A compromise was reached. The boy would spend two weeks in a secluded room at home following his circumcision, and a *xelhe* (Islamic leader) would come to visit a couple of times for them to recite the Qur'an together and cultivate his sense of piety by giving behavioural advice. In a different example, another reformist man in Bairro Acordado arranged for his son to be circumcised

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<sup>23</sup> McNeill (2011) reports the incorporation and similar adaptations of Venda female initiation rites by Zionist churches in South Africa.

immediately after his birth. One couple sent their son to the hospital for circumcision, and only informed their relatives afterwards.

## 5.5 Pilot survey

Having established that different notions of the self are associated in Bairro Acordado with specific ethical preferences, in this section I will analyse whether observed variations in ethics are grounded in differences in embodied morality. As discussed in the introduction, this relation cannot be presumed; the study of ethics focuses on people's deliberate interventions, their articulated concerns and explicit justifications, and the data this produces gives no necessary clues to the underlying implicit thought processes. This applies to the material presented thus far as well. In an attempt to address this concern, I piloted a survey towards the end of fieldwork in Bairro Acordado to systematically test people's implicit judgements of moral wrongness.

The survey was similar in design to the one used by Shweder and his colleagues in India for the development of the CAD-model. It consisted of a total of 24 short descriptions of violations of either community, autonomy or divinity ethics, eight for each type. However, whereas Shweder et al. (1997) asked respondents to state whether they thought the behaviour designated in the descriptions was wrong and, if so, to explain their reasons in qualitative terms, I asked people instead to indicate on a nine-point Likert scale how wrong they thought it was. Following Graham et al. (2011) and Guerra and Giner-Sorolla (2010), such a quantitative approach is better suited than qualitative methods for the analysis of implicit reasoning patterns. While posterior quantification of the explicit explanations people give for their judgements essentially measures on which moral theories they rely in their justifications, numerical indicators of wrongness allow researchers to infer and compare the relative weight respondents implicitly attribute to different normative domains. For the selection of violations, I adapted descriptions from a study of the CAD-model by Haidt et al. (1999), matching these with moral offences research participants had reported to me over the course of fieldwork in Nampula City. For instance, where Haidt et al. (*ibid.*: 578) included a description of someone burning the

American flag as a violation of community ethics, I used a report of someone refusing to stop for the daily flag ceremony at Nampula City's Military Academy, an act several research participants independently described to me as disrespectful. See Table 7 below for an overview of the descriptions.

The survey was conducted as part of the household survey discussed in Chapter 2. A more detailed description of the implementation of the survey is included there, but to recapitulate, four local interviewers visited a total of 336 households. 97 of the respondents identified themselves as Catholic, 116 as pertaining to Sufi Brotherhoods and 82 as reformist Muslims – the number of participating Protestants and respondents declaring that they had either a different or no religion was too small to be included in the results. The three groups were not entirely comparable in terms of composition. Men were with 52 percent somewhat overrepresented among reformist Muslims, while women were with 54 percent overrepresented among Catholics. The age distribution was largely similar, but Catholics were with a rate of 72 percent secondary schooling better educated than the other two groups, especially than participating Sufi Muslims, of whom 14 percent had received no state education at all. In terms of housing conditions and household assets, reformist Muslims were wealthier than the other two groups, Sufi Muslims in particular.

Table 7 lists the various violations and the average levels of wrongness attributed to the violations by members of the different religious groups. In Table 8, the survey results are grouped together according to the three types of ethics identified by Shweder and colleagues. T-tests reveal that the differences between the overall means listed in Table 8 for violations of community ethics and divinity ethics are not statistically significant. Neither are those between the means for violations of community and divinity ethics in the case of Catholics, and autonomy and divinity ethics in the case of reformist Muslims. They could, in other words, be coincidental rather than reflect genuine divergences in normative commitments. The differences between the other means are statistically significant:  $p < 0.1$ .

Table 7. Results of neighbourhood survey, by religious group

	<b>Total</b>	<b>Catholic</b>	<b>Sufi</b>	<b>Reformist</b>
Number of respondents	336	97	117	82
<b>Violations of community ethics</b>	<b>0 = not wrong at all, 8 = very wrong</b>			
1. A wife refuses to wash the clothes of her husband. When he returns from work and finds her at home, she says that he has to wash them himself, because she wants to relax.	4.58	4.83	4.90	3.86
2. A student shouts at his teacher as he would to a friend of his.	5.07	5.26	5.00	4.80
3. A newlywed man has arguments with his wife. His mother-in-law tries to counsel him, but he tells her that she cannot intrude into his affairs.	3.67	3.67	4.19	3.19
4. A guard customarily sleeps at work when he thinks that no one sees him.	4.27	3.60	5.09	4.05
5. Someone passes the Military Academy when the flag is being raised. He sees other people halt, but does not stop himself. When someone asks him to stop as well, he replies that he does not want to and continues on his way.	5.39	5.94	5.46	4.59
6. A mother asks her daughter to go to the market. The daughter does not want to and asks why the mother does not go herself.	4.89	4.69	4.60	5.63
7. An elderly man enters the bus to Ilha. He is the last to enter and there is no space left to sit. As he has difficulty standing, he asks a 16-year old boy for his seat, but the boy refuses.	4.21	3.83	4.53	4.42
8. A worker likes to go and sit on the chair of his boss for lunch when his boss is not there.	5.17	5.31	5.56	4.74
<b>Violations of autonomy ethics</b>				
9. A shop owner prohibits a client from entering, because the client is poor.	5.98	5.84	6.22	5.85
10. A woman is carrying a bucket of water on her head. When she crosses someone she does not like, she spills the water on this person.	5.35	5.49	5.41	4.92
11. Someone is playing loud music at home. His neighbours ask him to reduce the volume, but he refuses.	3.18	2.61	3.69	3.20
12. Someone arrives at the bank. There is a long line, but he immediately proceeds to the front of the queue. When others bring it to his attention that there is a queue, he does not respond and stays where he is.	4.83	5.29	4.80	4.58
13. A woman needs a machete and goes to the house of a random neighbour. The owner is not home, but she takes the machete without asking. She returns it later, again without a word.	5.03	4.93	5.30	4.78
14. A man comes home drunk and beats his wife.	5.71	6.00	5.86	5.10
15. A woman tells a secret of hers to a friend. She asks the friend to tell it to no one, but the friend spreads the secret around the neighbourhood.	5.25	5.11	5.64	4.99
16. A person discards garbage in the yard of a neighbour.	5.83	6.20	5.93	5.35

Table 7. Continued

	<b>Total</b>	<b>Catholic</b>	<b>Sufi</b>	<b>Reformist</b>
Number of respondents	336	97	117	82
<b><i>Violations of divinity ethics</i></b>				
17. A man kisses another man on the mouth to make love.	4.14	3.30	3.63	5.81
18. A brother and his sister have sex, because they like each other. To prevent her from getting pregnant, they use a condom.	6.88	6.89	6.39	7.49
19. Someone goes to the cemetery for a funeral. After returning from the cemetery, he starts to eat without washing his hands first.	4.28	4.87	4.14	3.66
20. Someone eats rotten meat, because he likes it.	3.32	2.82	3.35	3.89
21. A husband and his wife have sex when she is menstruating.	6.39	6.41	6.59	6.48
22. A man is in the city centre and relieves himself in public.	4.81	5.18	4.56	4.53
23. Someone vomits in the bathroom and does not clean it up afterwards.	4.66	4.86	4.78	4.42
24. A man of 20 years old has sex with a woman of 70 years old. The two say that they are in love.	3.58	3.53	3.83	3.65

Table 8. Results of neighbourhood survey, by religious group with grouped type of ethics violations

	<b>Overall</b>	<b>Catholic</b>	<b>Sufi</b>	<b>Reformist</b>
Violations of community ethics	4.65	4.63	4.91	4.41
Violations of autonomy ethics	5.15	5.18	5.37	4.85
Violations of divinity ethics	4.76	4.73	4.67	4.99

In terms of findings, these seem, at first glance, to confirm that Islamic reformists attribute comparatively more weight to violations of norms of purity and sin in their implicit judgements of moral wrongness. They differ in this from members of other religious groups – both Catholics and Sufi Muslims judge violations of autonomy ethics more severely, while also showing greater concern for community ethics. Importantly, religious affiliation is the main factor driving these variations; they are not the result of other determinants such as sex, age, education or wealth. However, upon closer inspection of Table 7, the relatively high average score of judgements of violations of divinity ethics among reformist Muslims are largely determined by two items, the one describing incest and the one suggesting homosexuality. Once the results for those two items are removed from the analysis, the average reformist score of the wrongness of violations of divinity ethics drops to 4.44 (versus 4.61 for Catholics, and 4.54 for Sufi Muslims). This is significantly lower than the score for autonomy ethics and it would result in a distribution of average means that is largely similar to those of Catholics and Sufi Muslims. In general, the results show that differences in implicit assessments of wrongness operate within a much smaller range than the qualitative findings reported in the previous sections suggest.

As stated, the survey was a pilot. The instrument would need to be further developed before any firm conclusions can be reached about whether or not Islamic reformists share the same moral habitus as others in Bairro Acordado, despite their different ethical preferences; at the moment, there are too many ambiguities. In survey interviews, I observed for instance how most respondents explained their judgements of the description of parental disobedience as a violation of norms of respect, but a few reformist respondents described it as sinful, referring to Islamic stipulations that children have to obey and honour their parents. Results, by implication, cannot be taken as reliable evidence for commitments to either of the ethical domains to which they were assigned. There is also the question of how to interpret references to sorcery. For example, in response to the description of a neighbour borrowing and returning a machete without asking permission, some people said that the latter was wrong, because it could create suspicions of sorcery. While one could argue that sorcery constitutes a violation of norms



of purity as it involves degrading behaviour, it can also be seen as harmful and therefore a violation of the ethics of autonomy. Alternatively, people might judge sorcery less severely, because moral considerations are less applicable to the evaluation of people operating outside the human domain. This brings me to a further ambiguity I noticed during interviews. Violations mostly appeared to be judged in absolute terms, but people sometimes referred to consequences. About the man jumping the queue at the bank, for example, they said that it was wrong, because it could lead to fights. It is unclear how classifications of offences in terms of either absolute norms or consequences affected the results.

Notwithstanding these reservations, it is evident from the results of the survey that at a basic level, there is a certain disparity between the ethical commitments analysed in the previous sections and people's moral judgements presented here. Whereas the analysis of moral offences and attitudes to initiation rites showed Islamic reformists to be relatively unique in their concern with violations of divinity ethics, the survey results show that others in Bairro Acordado register such violations as well and condemn them in roughly equal amounts. Especially illustrative in this regard are people's judgements of public urination: although the observations and conversational data suggested that only reformists care about this issue, the survey results indicate otherwise – Catholics and Sufi Muslims judge it more severely than reformists do.

This can mean two things, both of which bear on current formulations of the anthropology of morality and ethics. Firstly, I may have been too focused during fieldwork on the most salient of cases, leading me to perceive ethical differences where there were none. Without meaning to downplay any shortcomings of my own research, there is the question whether this is stimulated by the emphasis in the study of ethics on agency and deliberate action, leading researchers to treat non-action as inconsequential. Yan (2011) makes a somewhat similar observation when he criticises anthropologists of morality and ethics for overstating the effects of ethical work on the self; he calls on researchers to study immorality.

The second possibility is that the observed variations in ethics are real, but that they are not structured by differences in embodied morality, or at least not exclusively. People in Bairro Acordado, to put this differently, care about more or less the same moral issues, but whether they do so explicitly depends on other factors. I think there are some grounds for the latter possibility. In the next chapters, I will discuss how Islamic reformists' understandings of truth lead them to adopt novel perceptions of accountability and modalities of public engagement: whereas others in Bairro Acordado, as part of conceptions of reality as structured by invisible forces, are hesitant about making truth claims, reformists insist that the truth about other people's behaviour can be known and that it needs to be spoken. Consequently, reformists are more likely to articulate their feelings of upset when confronted with offensive behaviour, which is especially noticeable in the case of violations of divinity ethics. Because the latter are of an impersonal nature and do not affect potentially offended parties directly, these are easier to ignore for non-reformists. Again, this has implications for the anthropology of morality and ethics: researchers of ethics should be aware that the articulation of ethical concerns may reflect other concerns than the moral issues they touch upon.

## **5.6 Conclusion**

In this chapter, I have explored whether the different notions of the self analysed in the previous chapter translate into distinct ethical and moral preferences. The incentive for this investigation came from work by Shweder and others, which suggests that as people define themselves less in terms of their interdependence with others and more as spiritual entities connected to a sacred order, they become more concerned with avoiding sin and maintaining purity, rather than with notions of duty and hierarchy. More generally, the chapter sought to follow up on recent proposals by Zigon, Laidlaw and Mahmood to study morality through the lens of ethics, or specifically, as Zigon proposes, through its opposite, moral breakdown.

In analysing cases of moral breakdown called moral offence, as well as changing attitudes to the cultivation of the self in initiation rites in Bairro Acordado, it was found that

Islamic reformists distinguished themselves from others in the neighbourhood by their commitments to what Shweder and colleagues refer to as divinity ethics. However, in people's responses to a pilot survey designed to test for similar commitments at the implicit level of embodied morality, these differences largely disappeared. This disparity has implications, I argued, for the anthropology of morality and ethics. When studying ethics, anthropologists should take inaction into account, and be aware that individuals deliberate actions and their reflections on morality do not necessarily represent moral commitments. These may be structured by other factors. In the next chapter, I will analyse one such factor: people's understandings of truth.

## CHAPTER 6. REGIMES OF TRUTH

### 6.1 Introduction

When asked for their recollections of the Sufi *xehes* (Islamic leaders) of old, participants in my research agreed on two things. First, that the Sufi *xehes* were “very powerful”. Some recounted stories of *xehes* curing the ill, others of miracles and the sudden changes of fortune in the lives of *xehes*’ clients. Many implied that the *xehes* were, in fact, sorcerers. Secondly, participants agreed that there has been a break in the transmission of this type of authority. “The *xehes* we have today,” people said, “refuse to do or are no longer capable of these things.”

By “the *xehes* we have today”, participants were referring to young reformist *xehes*, some educated in Islamic universities abroad, who were currently taking over from the older generation of *xehes* associated with Shadhiliyya and Qadiriyya Sufi Orders (cf. Bonate 2006, 2007; Morier-Genoud 2007). Calling themselves *Ahl As-Sunna*, followers of the way of life of Prophet Muhammad, reformist *xehes* criticise Sufi *xehes* for what they perceive as religious innovation (*bid’ah*), and for capitalising on the ‘ignorance’ of their followers. We have to go back to Islam as exemplified by the Prophet, they say, our duty as leaders is not to perform miracles, but to teach people about Islam and instruct them on how to lead their lives in accordance with Islam. Their growing number of followers in Nampula City attests to the popularity of their message.

One domain where the reconfiguration of Islamic authority is playing out in Nampula City is dispute management. This is an arena in which the practice of oath-taking was formerly held to predominate. Historically, local Sufi *xehes* have been renowned for their oath-taking skills. Family elders, chiefs (*mwene*) and others resolving disputes would contract them to oversee the taking of oaths on the Qur’an by disputing parties, in order to guarantee the veracity of statements, or the binding nature of vows. Reformists see this as *bid’ah* and as an example of Sufi *xehes* perverting Islam for their own benefit. Taking oaths on the Qur’an is sinful or unlawful (*haram*), they argue, for oath-taking constitutes

an expression of reverence for the object of the oath, and to revere anything other than God is to commit idolatry (*shirk*). If one wants to take oaths, one should do so by invoking the name of God, and no *xehes* is needed for that. Oaths taken individually are just as valid as the ones taken in the presence of *xehes*. Reformists appear to have been successful in their critique. It is hard to find a Sufi leader in Bairro Acordado today willing to take oaths, and there is little demand for the service. One leader told me: “No one wants to take oaths anymore.”

In this chapter, I shall further explore the shift in notions of personhood outlined in the previous chapter. However, rather than focus on the moral implications of this shift, I will analyse its epistemological dimensions. Using the apparent demise of oath-taking as an analytical lens, I will argue that Sufi Islam has historically been understood in northern Mozambique in relation to Makhuwa notions of interdependence and connectedness. In this context, Sufi leaders derive their power from the perception that their Islamic knowledge gives them insight into the workings of the invisible forces structuring relations of interdependence. As I will demonstrate, this perception has been gradually undermined by novel truth regimes introduced by the postcolonial socialist state and reformist Islam. This leads me to conclude that in order to understand current transformations in Islam in northern Mozambique, earlier campaigns by the socialist postcolonial state against ‘tradition’ should be taken into account.

## 6.2 “Just go to any of the old mosques”

Oath-taking, or *olapha* as it is called in eMakhuwa, which also means to correct, pervades the language and imagery of everyday life in Bairro Acordado. *Wallahi* (by God, I swear to God), Muslims exclaim in their conversations with others to signal their sincerity and seriousness, or simply to emphasise a point or express their surprise. *Atata va* (I swear on my uncle), their Christian neighbours respond. Children, indicating to others that they are not lying, mimic gestures from oath-taking ceremonies, moving their right hand from left to right under their chin before slapping it down on what would be the Qur’an. *Wallahi*, I did not steal that banana. Sometimes, on my journeys through Bairro Acordado, I would

stumble across a group of children gathered outside the entrance of someone's yard, carrying large plates of rice, eating in quiet satisfaction. "What is happening?," I asked. "The person living there has cooked rice," people explained. "She has made a vow and is now fulfilling it by giving food away." The vow, or promissory oath, could concern anything: getting better when ill, becoming pregnant, doing well in exams, being offered a job, acquiring a car. Those who do not 'cook rice', to thank God or ancestral spirits (*minepa*) for their favour, throw coins in the air for others to pick up, clean the graves of deceased kin, make ancestral offerings or travel to sites known to host particularly powerful *minepa*.

In the domain of dispute management oaths serve to elicit true statements from the parties involved with regard to something they did or did not do or experience in the past. Although it is not as common anymore as it used to be, family elders, neighbourhood secretaries and others working outside the formal channels of dispute resolution resort to it as one technique among several for determining culpability and proportioning blame, reserved for when disputing parties deny charges or offer conflicting accounts about the basic facts of a case, and when there are no reliable witnesses available and a compromise cannot be reached otherwise. Parties are asked to place their hands on the Qur'an, reiterate their testimonies, and state the divine sanctions they are willing to suffer for not speaking the truth.<sup>24</sup> There are other techniques that can also be used for truth finding: the ordeal, involving a needle the accused has to pluck from boiling water, the ingestion of flour balls (*mukatthe*), either dipped in poison distilled from the bark of the *erythrophleum guineense* tree (*mwavi*), or in water in which Qur'anic verses have been dissolved, and divination (cf. Bonate 2007).

Taking oaths on the Qur'an is referred to in Portuguese as '*bater o Alcorão*'. Literally meaning 'to beat the Qur'an', the expression captures the forcefulness of the act, with some participants clapping the Qur'an between their hands before they grip it tightly, or moving their hand under their chin as if slicing their own throat, to emphasise the solemnity of their words. In line with Clanchy's (1979: 232-233) observations on oath-

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<sup>24</sup> See Lambek (1993: 122-123) for a description of oath taking on the Qur'an in Mayotte.

taking in Medieval England, the salience of the performance can be interpreted as reinforcing oaths' function as mnemonic device, marking the words spoken to be easily remembered later.

Oath-taking on the Qur'an can be done individually, but the consensus among participants in my research is that it is more effective when a religious leader is in charge of the event. The first time I heard of *xehes* being contracted to oversee oath-taking was at the neighbourhood's community court. A woman came in to press charges against her son-in-law for indecency. He had walked in on her while she was using the bathroom. The man claimed he did not know the bathroom was occupied. It had been an accident, and anyway, he was drunk at the time, he did not know what he was doing – he apologised. Ignoring appeals from her relatives and the community court judges, the woman refused to accept his apologies. Twice, she had warned him as he was coming in, she said, and he did not immediately leave when he saw her. He must have done it on purpose, to offend her. Less so today, but in the past, in line with the matrilineal kinship system prevalent in northern Mozambique, interactions between a man and his mother-in-law were strictly regulated by avoidance taboos (cf. Gough and Schneider 1961). When the two crossed each other on the street, he was expected to step aside and turn his back until she had passed, and around the house, at least until his wife had given birth to their first child, he kneeled in her presence (cf. Macaire 1996: 214). Kottak (2002: 238-239) describes that the most shameful event his research participants in Nampula province could imagine was a man seeing his mother-in-law naked.

The woman's refusal left the judge president exasperated. He sighed:

If you do not want to accept his apologies, there is nothing we can do. We have reached the limits of our competence. As you know, for cases such as these, we have a tradition here in the North. We have *xehes*, you can take oaths on the Qur'an. Go there and let him (the son-in-law) take an oath about what he did. But remember that we have nothing to do with it (oath-taking).

It proved challenging to find out more about *xehes*' involvement in oath-taking. When I followed up on cases in which parties had mutually agreed to resolve their dispute by

taking oaths, I was invariably informed, over the course of repeated enquiries, that it had yet to take place. They were still looking for a *xehé*, the other party had failed to come up with the money needed, or people were waiting for relatives from elsewhere to come and attend. Alternatively, parties told me, oaths were “no longer needed.” The woman pressing charges against her son-in-law eventually bowed to the pressure from her family and the judges. She had wanted her son-in-law to swear an oath, she explained, but forgave him “out of pity.” As he had said, he was drunk at the time. What if he had entered the bathroom on purpose, but swore an oath to the contrary because he did not remember this? He might die. The judges thanked her for her understanding. They ordered the son-in-law to pay her financial compensation for his offence, so that he would remember not to repeat it in the future.

“Just go to any of the old mosques,” research participants assured me. ‘Old mosques’, in their words, are mosques associated with Sufi Orders. The *xehes* there would be experts in oath-taking, as they are believed to be in other applications of Islamic knowledge such as in the domains of healing and divination. But at Sufi mosques I was told that oath-taking is no longer practiced. Sufi *xehes* said that where their predecessors had known how to take oaths, they did not do so, they were ‘simple’ *xehes*. “Such practices are of the past,” *xehé* Yasin from the Shadhiliyya mosque where I spent part of my fieldwork (see Chapter 2) said, perhaps I could try in Nampula province “where they still do those things.” The last Sufi leader in Bairro Acordado said to have taken oaths died shortly after I arrived in the field. He was the owner of the oldest mosque in the neighbourhood. It is rumoured that he died of the consequences of breaking an oath himself, an oath of allegiance to RENAMO, sworn on the Qur’an in the wake of the 1992 General Peace Agreements. He would have broken it in the run-up to the 2003 municipal elections, switching sides to FRELIMO in favour of his nephew, the Mayor of Nampula City at the time of fieldwork.

I was advised to try traditional healers (*curandeiros*) instead. As I will discuss below, due to state intervention and to the rise of Islamic reformism, many of the practices for which Sufi *xehes* in northern Mozambique have historically been renowned are no longer part of



their repertoire. Themselves focusing on worship, lifecycle rituals and Islamic education, these *xehes* have left to *curandeiros* the more exotic art of healing, the production of charms and amulets, and divination. Within the field of *curandeiros*, distinctions have emerged between those working with roots and herbal potions; with spirits, either *minepa* or genies (*majinne*); and with books and ‘knowledge’ – the latter call themselves *alimo*, from *‘ilm*, knowledge in Arabic.

In the end, I found three *alimos* who specialised in oath-taking, men in their late fifties, working from their respective homes as healers. Each arrived in Bairro Acordado about ten years ago, having been born and raised on the coast of Nampula province, and two lived on the rural margins of the neighbourhood, making them relative outsiders to community life. They learned their trade from established Sufi *xehes*, one of whom resided in Tanzania. Interviewing them individually, when I told them how hard it had been to find *xehes* and *alimos* taking oaths, they said that ‘nowadays’ there is very little demand for the service – in the past, there would have been more. At their peak, cases usually involved accusations of witchcraft, adultery, theft, or moral offences of the type the mother-in-law had reported to the community court. Clients came from all walks of life, wealthy and poor, and were of various religious affiliations, including Catholic and Protestant. But the last time they had held oath-taking ceremonies was more than a year ago, and the ones before that two or three years earlier. “No one wants to take oaths anymore,” one of the *alimos* commented to explain the lack of clientele.

### 6.3 Beating the Qur’an

The *alimos* I interviewed attributed the perceived demise of oath-taking partly to the Mozambican postcolonial state, and partly to growing Islamic reformism in northern Mozambique. The state’s claim after 1975 Independence that God does not exist, and its railing against ‘tradition’, would have undermined oath-taking. Reformist Muslim leaders, for their part, equated oath-taking with idolatry, and condemned the work of *curandeiros* as *shirk*. “How can it be *shirk* if we are using the word of God?,” the *alimos* countered, “God gave us the Qur’an for a reason, to help people.” They saw state and

reformist opposition to oath-taking as an illustration of what was wrong with the current generation of leaders in Mozambique. “They do not care about people’s wellbeing,” the *alimos* suggested, “they want people to come to them exclusively and return, so they can get rich. They are greedy.”

The *alimos* contrasted the lack of concern for others which they attribute to state officials and Islamic reformists with their own more socially responsible attitudes to oath-taking. When disputing parties approached them, they did not offer their services lightly, despite the opportunity to earn money. They told me that there is no set fee, the *alimos* would perform oath-taking as a service to God and left it up to oath-takers to ‘show their gratitude’ as they saw fit. Before agreeing, the *alimos* warned disputing parties of the risks involved, describing in detail what happens to those who give false oaths, and sent them home to think it over. By then, the parties’ resolve had been tested several times. In any case, they rarely approached *alimos* directly, exhausting other avenues of dispute resolution first: mediation by family elders, by neighbourhood secretaries, the community court and by the *régulo* and his subordinates. The *alimos* claimed that they preferred to broker a compromise than to take oaths. Special attention was given to the accused. The oath of the accused should be an act of free will, it would not work if he or she feels obliged to do it. More often than not, as I found out when following up on cases, the result was that parties gave up, or informed the *alimo* that his services are no longer required as they had come to an agreement.

This pattern of filing charges only to desist or retract them later in favour of reconciliation is a general feature of people’s engagement with the justice system in Nampula City, which can also be observed at community courts. But I think there are several aspects intrinsic to oath-taking that facilitate it in particular.

First, there is the reciprocal framing of oath-taking, as *alimos*, according to what they explained me, tend to demand that both parties in a dispute take oaths. The accuser goes first, stating the charges and swearing that he or she knows them to be true. The accused follows, denying any knowledge of the matter in dispute and stipulating the divine

punishment for lying – the same punishment will apply to either side. Many accusers, mindful of the consequences of false accusations, and given that positive claims are harder to substantiate than denials, think twice before they press ahead with oath-taking. Reciprocity of risk also makes for a degree of shared responsibility and compassion, in that disputing parties are reminded of the bonds between them: each is made to feel that if any harm befalls the other he or she has a role in this.

Second, as indicated by the explanation the woman gave for accepting the apologies of her son-in-law, the question of whether people's testimonies are true or false, and whether they will subsequently be punished, depends on the facts of the case, not on their recollection or awareness of these facts. One may have been drunk and not remember committing an offence, but to deny the offence counts as lying regardless. Oath-taking, by defining perjury in this way, destabilises any firmness of conviction which previous attempts to resolve the dispute, where claims had to be stated and restated repeatedly, may have given disputing parties. Especially in the case of witchcraft accusations which provoke a great deal of uncertainty and self-doubt, people may prefer to desist or opt for compromise rather than oath-taking.

Third, the punitive nature of oaths, in combination with their reciprocal framing and the uncertainty they generate, provides parties with an excuse for settling disputes that is not seen as an implicit admission of wrongdoing. The accuser may, like the mother-in-law, have decided to withdraw charges, not because they were false, but on account of being concerned for the wellbeing of the other. Or the accused may find that, after all, his or her fear of punishment is greater than the certainty of innocence, and agree to a financial settlement.

Fourth, oath-taking establishes parity between disputing parties, by requiring that oaths are acts of free will, and by asserting that all are equal in the eyes of God, regardless of their social status. The truth value of their words depends on conformity of fact, not on social considerations. Those who perceive themselves to be of higher status than their opponents may wish to avoid this, even when they know they are right, and prefer to

settle ‘out of pity’, as the bond of debt this creates restores their superior position. Similarly, following Herzfeld’s (1990) observations on oath-taking among shepherds in Crete, people at the bottom of the social ladder may favour compromise and admission regardless of whether accusations are true, because it creates an opportunity for making powerful allies, or at least keeps them from becoming enemies.

If the attempt to persuade disputing parties to compromise fails, preparations ensue for the oath-taking ceremony. Based on what the *alimos* told and showed me, the parties are asked to accompany the *alimo* to a mat spread out on the ground. Sometimes, relatives are allowed to witness the event, but generally only one elder from each side is permitted, or no one at all. Under social pressure, oath swearers would be less inclined to admit to any wrongdoing, afraid of later retaliation. One of the *alimos* explained: “We want it (the dispute) to end here.”

The accuser and accused take a bath with water provided by the *alimo*. Ritually washing the entire body, they follow Islamic *ghusl* procedures for ablution, mandatory after sexual intercourse among other things, rather than performing *wudu* or partial ablution as Muslims do in preparation for formal prayers or handling the Qur’an. The water has been ‘treated’: the *alimo* has dissolved small pieces of paper in it on which Qur’anic verses were written. This adds to the purifying effect of the bath and decreases the risk of foul play by one of the oath swearers in which they may try to use sorcery to pervert the ceremony. The *alimo* takes his own bath to protect himself against sorcery.

The two parties are given white robes to wear. Normally reserved for healing ceremonies, dressing in white is associated with purity in Makhwa cosmology, and carries connotations of rebirth – the dead are wrapped in white cloth, as are boys and girls returning from initiation rites. The oath swearers sit down on their knees on the mat the *alimo* had spread out, facing each other, the Qur’an placed between them. They are reminded to close their eyes when they take their oaths. One of the *alimos* told me he uses red cloth to blindfold the oath-takers, red signaling blood and danger (cf. Ciscato 1987:

76). According to him, participants die if they see what happens, such is the power involved.

A prayer is recited, *Al-Fatiha*, the first chapter (*sura*) of the Qur'an, followed by several supplications (*du'a*) asking God for His blessings and for the ceremony to go well. The *alimo* opens the Qur'an on a specific *surah* and verse (*aya*). Various *ayas* serve. The *alimos* I interviewed told me they prefer *ayas* that mention the word truth and invoke divine punishment for lying. As the accuser is about to state the charges, his or her hands are placed on the open pages. Touching the Qur'an has the effect, the *alimos* claim, of making oath-takers feel the power of God contained in Qur'anic verses release into their body, inspiring them to do what is right and to be truthful. The power is called *baraka*, the flow of blessings and grace that flows from God into creation, bringing prosperity and wellbeing. Sufi Muslims in Bairro Acordado can be seen to solicit it after prayers, their open hands held upwards and raised in front of them while reciting *du'a*, wiping the hands over their face afterwards to spread the *baraka* they received onto their body.

This effect of touching the Qur'an, combined with the resemblance between oath-taking and healing ceremonies, is interesting. It shows that oath-taking is about more than the invocation of the divine as witness and guarantor of one's words. In the way the *alimos* tell it, oath-taking has a sort of purging effect. Lying is seen as a symptom of being isolated from God, and possibly of suffering from a greater affliction associated with spirit possession and sorcery that makes a person want to commit immoral behaviour in general, including the offence the person was accused of in the first place and is thought to be lying about. One of the *alimos* said: "It (the affliction) obliges you to keep lying." Through *baraka*, oath-takers are integrated into the divine, removing obstacles that keep them from being moral. The connotation between *olapha*, oath-taking, and correcting conveys this. *Olaphulela*, an eMakhuwa term closely related to *olapha*, means oath-taking, purifying and exorcising evil spirits. The *alimos* claim it is this effect that gives power to the oath-taking ceremonies they organise; they know how to channel *baraka*. There was also the suggestion that the copies of the Qur'an they use contain more *baraka*

than the copies of others do – some *xehes* and *alimos* were said to own particularly powerful Qur’ans.

Returning to the oath-taking ceremony, if at this point the accuser retracts the charges, or the accused confesses, the ceremony is over. There may be further negotiations about financial compensation for the accuser, but often the confession itself is deemed sufficient, as this is taken as proof of successful divine integration, reducing the chance of recidivism. Pleading guilty to witchcraft charges, for example, is usually followed by apologies and promises not to use witchcraft again, and no further action is taken.

With no retractions or admissions, both parties take their oaths. The accuser states: “I swear that the accused did this and this.” Now it is the accused’s turn to place his or her hands on the Qur’an. “I swear that I know nothing of what the accuser said. If I do, may God kill me.” Or: “If I do, may God make me blind.” Sometimes, the accused adds for good measure that the accuser is to receive the same punishment for perjury. With this, the ceremony is finished. The disputing parties go home, in the knowledge that one of them will be punished for lying, but that it is unpredictable when this will happen and that it could take years.

According to the *alimos* I interviewed, the parties are now expected to interact with one another as they did before their dispute – they are to show each other goodwill, and not carry any grudges. As the *alimo* said about the oath-taking ceremony: “We want it (the dispute) to end here.” Again, note how oath-taking is as much about creating a setting where people can speak the truth, as it is about reconciliation, correcting and integration so that people can get on with their lives. In part, the purging effect of touching the Qur’an applies here as well, as it is supposed to diminish the ill feelings that oath-takers harbour against each other. Further encouraging them to reconcile is that their conflicting testimonies have been depersonalised and redirected. Being right or wrong is no longer a matter dividing them, but between each of them individually and God. As Herzfeld (1990) notes in his work on oath-taking in Crete, the effect of transposing disputes onto the cosmological plane is that it introduces a measure of finality to disputes. It is no

longer acceptable for disputing parties to reiterate their accusations after they have taken oaths, for to do so would amount to putting oneself in the place of God and to doubting the cosmos.

#### 6.4 Sufi authority

The question is: Why, in earlier times, would disputing parties have turned to *xehes* and *alimos* for oath-taking, rather than organise the ceremony themselves?

The above analysis of the information provided by the *alimos* suggests that there are two answers to this question. First, the involvement of religious authorities as arbitrators reduces mutual suspicion among disputing parties. People are afraid that oath-takers will try and use potions prepared by *curandeiros* or some other form of trickery to invalidate oaths and get away with lying. The ‘treated’ water that *alimos* provide for bathing before the ceremony is prepared in order to counter this threat. The Qur’anic verses dissolved into the water would rinse off and undo any potions or spells oath-takers may have previously applied. Second, there is the effect of *baraka*. *Xehes* and *alimos* would know better than lay people how to recruit and direct it. In other words, people prefer oath-taking ceremonies organised by *xehes* and *alimos*, because they are deemed to be more effective in generating confessions, fostering integration and eliminating resentment, thus increasing the odds of successfully restoring relationships. There is also the acknowledged roles of Sufi leaders in a world religion with high levels of institutionalisation.

Such an explanation fits with what others (Crapanzano 1973; Eickelman 1976; Geertz 1968; Gellner 1969; Westermarck 1926) have written about the authority of Sufi leaders as structured by *baraka*. *Baraka*, as mentioned, refers to the stream of blessings flowing outward from God into creation. It is efficacious, in that it brings prosperity, happiness, health and wellbeing, and as such is much sought after. Key to obtaining *baraka* is moving closer to its source through the cultivation of a personal relationship with God. There are several ways of doing this, including the performance of good deeds expressing one’s devotion, ecstatic prayer (*dhikr*) and rote memorisation of the Qur’an that fills one’s

heart with God's speech and suppresses base desires and reprehensible character traits. By moving near to or touching people and objects closer to God than oneself, one can also seek proximity (*tawassul*) via intermediaries in a more physical sense. Tying Qur'anic verses as amulets to one's body is an example, as are studying under the guidance of advanced scholars and visiting sacred sites. Sufi Orders facilitate *tawassul*. They grant Sufi leaders a certificate (*ijaza*) upon completion of their studies, attesting to their place in a chain of successors (*silsila*) leading up from their teachers to Prophet Muhammad. The idea is that, through their studies and their position in a spiritual lineage, they have come to embody *baraka* and convert it from temporary grace into more permanent substance. Transformed from seekers into agents, they themselves transmit *baraka* and manipulate it for the performance of miracles, for healing and, in this case, for oath-taking.

Eickelman (1992), in his influential interpretation of Islamic reformism in the Middle East, argues that changes in knowledge formation have undermined the embodied, personalised and socially transmitted model of authority represented by Sufism, which would explain the relative growth of reformism over the past decades. Contrasting the past emphasis in *madrasas* (Islamic schools) on rote memorisation with the focus on literacy and analysis in modern mass education, Eickelman claims that as more Muslims attend state schools, they start reading the Qur'an for themselves and are confronted with fellow Muslims whose religious practices diverge from their own, leading to the objectification of religious knowledge. As they question and debate the correct interpretation of Islamic scriptures, a concern previously restricted to Islamic leaders, popular attitudes to knowledge shift away from the efficacy of religious teachings to their meaning. Reformist leaders would cater to this demand. Generally young and educated in state schools, their appeal derives not from their embodiment of *baraka* or from their *silsila* credentials, but from their capacity for rational interpretation and for reasoning (see also Kane 2003).

I will come back to reconfigurations of authority and the growth of Islamic reformism later, but let me point out here that the reasons people give when asked why they rely on *xehes* and *alimos* are not necessarily the same as the ones mentioned here. There are two



essential differences, both of which relate to the Makhuwa model of personhood of interdependence (see Chapter 4).

First, in my conversations with research participants about oath-taking, they did not appear to conceptualise lying in terms of isolation from the divine, but as isolation from the social. Key is that people, in accusing others of lying – *mentir* in Portuguese, in eMakhuwa *wottha* – are not accusing them of deception, or of stating something with the intent to bring about in the audience beliefs which the speaker regards as false (cf. Frankfurt 1988: 121). Instead, lying is associated with hiding. To be truthful is to ‘say it as it is’, or to show the true state or nature of things, while to lie means to conceal or withhold information from others, regardless of whether one does this on purpose or because one holds erroneous beliefs. This links with the observation in the previous section that in oath-taking ceremonies perjury is not defined by the oath-takers’ mental states at the time of the ceremony, but by conformity of fact. Withholding or not sharing is viewed negatively in Bairro Acordado (see Chapter 4). It is seen as an indication of greed and ambition, and, following perceptions of fortune as distributed according to a zero-sum game, of seeking individual advancement at the expense of others, which places lying in the same category as sorcery. The *alimos*, in their critique of the current generation of authorities, appealed to such sentiments.

The problem is that people feel ill-equipped to tell whether information is being revealed or concealed. During fieldwork, I was surprised by how often I heard people accuse others of lying, almost habitually it seemed. You should know that he was lying, someone would comment the moment a person I was talking to had turned his back, only for me to be told by the next person that the critical commentator had been lying as well. Sometimes, allegations were part of the banter, joking and mockery that characterises exchanges between friends and equals in Bairro Acordado, and would be made directly. In hierarchical relationships, such banter is considered inappropriate and the tendency is for the lower-ranking party to accept as true what the other says, especially when accompanied by emotive cues giving words a sense of purpose (cf. Barley 1984; Toren

2005). Other times, accusations seemed part of what struck me as a generalised discourse of reciprocal distrust.

Structuring this, I think, is the Makhuwa dualist world view described in Chapter 4, according to which events in the visible world are structured by invisible forces. This brings me to the second difference. West (2005), in his work on governance in Cabo Delgado, the Mozambican province north of Nampula, has studied the implications of a similarly dualist world view among the Makonde for their notions of authority. The Makonde, he shows, also distinguish between the visible and the invisible realm. They conceptualise what happens in the visible realm as determined by an invisible force called *uwavi*, morally neutral as it can both be recruited for socially constructive purposes, healing and rain making for example, and for destructive sorcery such as theft and causing illness. Power is associated with seeing. Insight into the invisible realm allows for the manipulation of *uwavi*, as well as for holding others in one's gaze, revealing and undoing their efforts at manipulation. As a result, authority figures are approached with a certain ambivalence: their power is taken to be both the result and proof of their better vision, and just as they may use it for constructive ends, they can destroy people and seek individual gain through destructive sorcery. Importantly, West argues that the Makonde have interpreted Catholicism and socialism, introduced by outsiders in Cabo Delgado as alternative world views, through the lens of *uwavi*: these alternatives are thought to offer those well-versed in them superior insight into the invisible realm.

As I will argue in the next section, it seems to me that Makhuwa cosmology is not as encompassing as West suggests for the Makonde. But other than that, I feel his findings apply to the context of Sufi leadership and oath-taking in Bairro Acordado. When I asked people why they would go to *xehes* and *alimos* for oath-taking, their responses indicated that it had something to do with an imputed ability to see what remains invisible for others. *Alimos* are skilled at "seeing secrets", I was told, and one woman explained: "If you hide something, that book of theirs (the Qur'an) seizes you immediately." Research participants also describe the work of Sufi leaders with the ambivalence mentioned by West. *Xehes* of the past are remembered as powerful sorcerers, and the woman who

talked about the Qur'an seizing oath-takers said that she considered the Qur'an a "very dangerous book." I think the warning of the *alimo* that oath-takers may die if they do not cover their eyes needs to be understood against the backdrop these associations between knowledge, power, seeing, invisibility and danger.

In summary, what these differences mean for popular attitudes to oath-taking is that it needs to be understood in relation to Makhwa notions of relatedness and personhood. In accordance with this model, oath-taking is seen in relation to perceptions of selfishness. It involves the forceful extraction of knowledge to make individually held information shared, rather than, as the Sufi model suggests, a process of extending the divine and inserting it into oath-takers. From the perspective of my research participants, to illustrate this, the reason why no further action is taken in the case of sorcery confessions is not because confessions evince successful divine integration. Instead, confessions constitute the means to social integration. By revealing individual secrets and making them social, they become powerless. As for Sufi leadership, participants place relatively little emphasis on the role of Sufi *xehes* and *alimos* as transmitters or vehicles of *baraka*, and more on what their perceived closeness to God and position of authority allow them to see – their authority is not seen as embodied and personalised, but in terms of their position. Following Weber's (1963) classification of authority, one could argue that, while elements of charismatic and traditional authority are present in either, the Sufi model accentuates charisma, but its interpretation by research participants highlights traditional aspects.

### **6.5 "We have secretaries and courts now"**

It is hard to verify whether there has been an actual demise in oath-taking, as the *alimos* indicate. Other research participants suggested that such a decline had occurred, telling me about oath-taking ceremonies they had attended when they were younger, and how they had not heard of recent ceremonies, but it is circumstantial evidence, and my own difficulties in finding out more about the practice could be due to my status as relative outsider. What can be substantiated is the claim of the *alimos* that state officials and

Islamic reformists oppose their oath-taking ceremonies, along with other practices associated with Sufism. It appears that such opposition has resulted, to a degree, in the marginalisation of these practices. In this section, I will focus on the state.

State opposition to oath-taking has its roots in the post-1975 Independence era. After FRELIMO took over from the Portuguese, it sought to distinguish itself and legitimise its own authority through the launching of a comprehensive modernisation agenda for Mozambique (see Chapter 1). Society was to be organised according to the principles of ‘scientific socialism’, central to which were rational planning, industrialisation, modern education and science. Healing, divination, ancestor worship, initiation rites and institutionalised religion were glossed as ‘tradition’, ‘superstition’ and ‘obscurantism’, and, as such, banned, along with the office of chief (*régulo*). ‘Tradition’ would have facilitated colonialist-style indirect rule and held back national development by providing Mozambicans with occult explanations for their misfortunes that prevented them from recognising the root cause of their condition: capitalist-imperialist exploitation (West 2005: 152-153).

Research participants recalled how they were first introduced to FRELIMO’s take on ‘tradition’ when Samora Machel visited Nampula City and addressed a crowd in one of the city’s football stadia. “Close your eyes,” he told his audience, “and hold your hands out in front of you.” He waited until people did what he requested. “Now ask God to give you bread.” “God give us bread,” people said. “Again!” “Again!” “Open your eyes.” “Did God give you bread?” “No,” people replied. Machel made them close their eyes again. “Now ask the government for bread.” “Papa Machel, please give us bread,” they went, as Machel’s aides went around to put pieces of bread in everyone’s hands. Although some interpret this as meaning that Machel was merely calling upon people to take control of their own lives rather than relying on external help, many took the gesture to mean, instead, that FRELIMO was claiming the non-existence of God, or that the state was seeking to put itself in God’s place. Another illustration of this comes from applications for FRELIMO youth leadership courses organised in Nampula City in the 1980s. One of the questions on the application form asked applicants for their religious affiliation.

Without exception, applicants wrote “no religion” or “I was baptised as Catholic, but the priests forced me to, I have no religion.”

Initially, local-level state officials and FRELIMO operatives in Bairro Acordado appear to have followed the party’s repudiation of ‘traditions’ of all kinds. The Catholic parish church in the neighbourhood was closed for a while, to be turned into a discotheque. There were also stories of how the first neighbourhood secretary, coming home to find his own mother treated by a *curandeiro*, emptied a pot of boiling water over the man – the incident led some residents to move to a part of the neighbourhood where secretaries favoured less confrontational strategies. Later, as elsewhere in Mozambique, when officials and activists realised that there was little popular support for state campaigns against ‘tradition’, and that the opposition RENAMO was profiting from this by posing itself as ‘protector of tradition’, they began turning a blind eye to ‘traditional’ practices and beliefs, as long as these remained hidden from public view. The current approach is geared towards control and cooption. Traditional authorities are being formally ‘recognised’ by the state (see Chapter 1).

Sufi mosques in Bairro Acordado were not as directly affected. Unlike the Catholic Church, Sufi leaders had not manifestly been implicated in the colonial regime, and there is some evidence to suggest that they supported FRELIMO’s early battles against the Portuguese in the 1960s, despite Portuguese attempts to recruit them to their cause (Bonate 2008). Sufi *xehes* I interviewed in Bairro Acordado recalled how FRELIMO cadres came to inspect their mosques shortly after Independence in 1975 and announced that they would nationalise the buildings and turn them into schools, but they never returned and the plan was not implemented. State officials, however, remained suspicious of what ‘tradition’ might imply politically. They feared that Sufi *xehes* supported RENAMO and that mosque grounds were being used to recruit RENAMO followers. *Xehes* denied this in conversations with me, saying that their mosques served as places of worship only, but some of the state officials I spoke to eagerly pointed out that Sufi mosques in Bairro Acordado were located in parts of the neighbourhood where RENAMO was said to have more support, and that one of the Sufi *xehes* in the

neighbourhood went on to become a member of parliament for RENAMO after the 1992 General Peace Agreements. Either way, the effect FRELIMO opposition to ‘tradition’ appears to have had is that aspects of Sufism that did not meet a strict definition of ‘worship’ became increasingly marginal. Whereas the Sufi leaders who founded the first mosques in Bairro Acordado in the 1950s and 1960s combined their role of leading in prayer and ritual with that of healing, divination and oath-taking, the current generation tended to describe itself as ‘simple’ *xehes*, while ‘traditional’ services were performed by *alimos*, away from the mosques.

But oath-taking has been undermined by more than just a generalised stance of FRELIMO against ‘tradition’. There has also been the introduction and spread of alternative methods for truth finding, most notably police investigation, the use of written testimonies, cross-examination of witnesses by judges, and law-backed sanctions for perjury. Whereas the Portuguese had reserved such methods for the most serious cases, leaving the policing of *indígenas* to *régulos*, FRELIMO extended their use to the population at large. Several grassroots institutions were created to aid the judiciary and police in facilitating this (see Chapter 1). These included: neighbourhood secretaries, popular courts and the popular police (now called community courts and the community police). The novel institutions were charged with the objective, rational and proportionate upholding and application of legal and social norms, or with what FRELIMO referred to as ‘popular justice’. They had a range of measures at their disposal to enforce compliance: compromise, apologies, financial compensation, fines, expulsion, public critique and public flogging, the latter of which was formally legalised in 1983 and revoked later.

Much can be said about the implementation of state methods of truth finding in practice, and whether this meets the professed criteria of objectivity, rationality and proportionality. What I will observe here, however, is that, following Asad (1993), the regime of truth they represent diverges considerably from that represented by oath-taking. Whereas in oath-taking ceremonies truth is conceptualised as embodied and social in nature, in state procedures truth is objectified, abstracted from social relationships and external to the individual. The notion of truth is understood as something a person

deliberately chooses, refuses or can be made to commit to. This objectification of truth parallels the effects of Islamic reformism I will discuss in the next section, and it is achieved by means of several techniques.

First, in adopting a positive or mechanistic world view, procedures used by the police and the judiciary highlight proximate causes and visible connections between events. For example, someone's death after ingesting a toxic substance during a truth telling ordeal may ultimately be the result of lying or trying to withhold information from others, but state functionaries ignore such invisible links, and trace death to its immediate cause, poison, incriminating the person who applied it.

Second, legal procedures not only focus on objective facts, they also produce them, making truth less social, and literally more object-like. When someone files charges against another person at the police or the community court, the first thing officers or scribes do is solidify verbal testimonies in written form, which parties are asked to commit to by signing them. Witness statements are also written down and signed, and as parties progress through the legal system from filing charges to court hearings, they are asked to restate their testimonies a number of times, comment on any inconsistencies, and sign these as well. The written statements allow for state officials to make character assumptions and infer from these whether a person is likely to be lying or not. In oath-taking, by comparison, people refrain from making assumptions about personal character, partly because of the understanding that lying can be the result of spirit possession, and partly because of interdependent notions of personhood. Thus, today's conclusion that a person lied to me does not necessarily offer clues as to whether the same person will lie again to me tomorrow.

Third, truth is objectified through the adversarial procedures state officials employ in dispute management. In my earlier analysis of oath-taking on the Qur'an it is striking how ambiguous, relative and temporal truth claims remain. People come out of oath-taking ceremonies convinced that they have spoken the truth, only to become ill later and attribute this to unwittingly swearing a false oath. They may admit to offences they did

not actually commit for the sake of reconciliation, or privately doubt whether the ceremony was effective given that the other party may have subverted it. Or, alternatively, they maintain their conflicting accounts and agree to a settlement, each party holding on to their own truths. State procedures, in contrast, work against ambiguity. Claims of only one party are granted truth status, or only one “*ganha razão*” (wins right) as people in Bairro Acordado put it. If the losing party does not agree, she can appeal the decision at other state fora, but eventually she is forced to accept what state officials have defined as true.

Fourth, truth is conceptualised as less embodied than it is in oath-taking. As discussed, in oath-taking ceremonies the truth is associated with the divine or the social realm, and speaking the truth is conceptualised as a function of one’s integration. Virtuous people are close to God and speak the truth, while those under the influence of sorcery or other malignant forces lie. Because divine and malignant forces are largely invisible and operate via the body, and human beings including oath-takers may have no awareness or control over them, people’s words and mental states are of little value in assessing their divine or social integration. If one wants to know the truth value of words, or the speakers’ degree of integration, one needs to test their bodies. *Baraka*, or poison, will not affect those well integrated for they already embody the divine, but the bodies of malign others are affected, as they need to be purged. It is a perception of the body that is likewise manifested in performances of an Islamic dance group in Bairro Acordado, loosely associated with one of the local Sufi mosques. During the performance, dancers pierce their own tongue with small daggers as drummers chant Qur’anic verses. The absence of pain and blood evince the dancers’ closeness to God. In oath-taking ceremonies the body is similarly used to test divine or social integration.

The state regime of truth holds, in contrast, that truth can be known, which gives the infliction of bodily pain a new dimension. It is not uncommon in Bairro Acordado for state agents to use physical violence to extract confessions. The idea is that if a sufficient amount of pain is inflicted, the accused will eventually stop lying and reveal his or her ‘true’ inner states – I was told by former inmates that if one does not confess after three



days of torture, there is nothing to be disclosed and one is considered innocent. More common, however, is for physical punishment to be inflicted at a later stage in the prosecution process, when it is revealed through other means of investigation that a person was lying. “They made the police work, so now they must suffer,” people explained to me. They were referring to the case of two young women who were flogged by the police after it was discovered that they had been lying when telling the police that they did not know the whereabouts of their wanted boyfriends. Similarly, the former head of the community police of Bairro Acordado who is feared for his disposition to use violence – he was said to have punished someone by burning his back with hot iron – was adamant that he had never tortured people as a means to confession. Instead, he would use it to instill in them a commitment to truth. I only beat people when they lie to me, he said, so that they learn not to lie again tomorrow.

Together, these techniques produce evidence and truth claims embedded in notions of personhood and the body, which are different from the ones involved in oath-taking ceremonies. I do not mean to claim that as the truth regime operated by the state spreads and becomes entrenched in people’s lives, this entirely replaces the regime of truth represented by oath-taking. The tensions generated by ‘traditional’ and state discourses as competing bases for truth claims, and people’s ability to manipulate these, have been well-documented in studies of legal pluralism in Mozambique (Bertelsen 2008; Jacobs 2010; Obarrio 2007; West 2005). The two often appear to reinforce rather than substitute for each other, or at least exist side-by-side. Indeed, by proposing oath-taking as an ultimate recourse, and by distancing himself from it, the judge president of Bairro Acordado’s community court can be seen to enhance his own authority, suggesting to disputing parties that they had better listen to his advice or they will have no other recourse but to revert to a practice as unpredictable and dangerous as oath-taking.

I think the effect of state truth regimes on the regime represented by oath-taking is more subtle. From my conversations with research participants about oath-taking I got the impression that, given the availability of state methods of truth finding, oath-taking has become more restricted. One participant, a *curandeiro*, told me: “It is not so necessary

anymore... We have secretaries and courts now.” He gave the example of vows and how people have come to prefer written contracts instead. Others, indicating that they evaluate oath-taking through the notions of proportionality and objectivity provided by the state regime of truth, said that they feel oath-taking is not appropriate for cases of adultery or theft. Even though it was used for this in the past, they consider its use excessive and ineffective. The exception is sorcery. Firmly situated in the invisible realm, it is the one domain where the truth regime advocated by the state is considered inappropriate, and where oath-taking is favoured. It is a division of labour the *alimos* appear to have accepted, and to an extent, encouraged. Just as state authorities emphasised the danger and opaqueness involved in oath-taking to bolster their authority, they emphasised the same, advertising their ability to manage cases that state authorities and their methods were unable to solve.

This is where I diverge from West’s (2005) claims with regard to authority and the invisible realm. While he treats *uwavi* as a ubiquitous diagnostic through which the work of both ‘traditional’, religious and state authorities is interpreted, I think that this applies to witchcraft cases, but not to other types of dispute, for which people have come to accept and prefer the state truth regime. Although they have not entirely replaced the dualist perception of reality structuring oath-taking ceremonies, the objectified definitions of truth promulgated by the state have restricted the applicability of this perception, at least in the domain of dispute management.

## **6.6 Speaking the truth**

Reformist Muslim leaders in Nampula City can be seen to be carrying on FRELIMO’s modernisation project, at least in their appeal to young Muslims. As mentioned in Chapter 1, there is a certain elective affinity between FRELIMO’s ‘scientific’ principles of governance, and the rational outlook of Islamic reformism. In Bairro Acordado, this is expressed in the reformists’ criticism of Sufi Islam. Casting themselves as modern and rational, and Islamic reformism as a rupture with the past, reformists denounce Sufi Muslims for their unreflective imitation of their ancestors, and for blending Islam as

originally revealed to Prophet Muhammad with local ‘customs’ and ‘traditions’. In doing so, they extend the range of practices taken to constitute ‘tradition’. Instead of referring only to the application of Islam in domains outside a strict definition of ‘worship’, the area previously targeted by the state, they now include the category of worship itself. Sufi Muslims do not worship God correctly, reformists argue. There is for example nothing wrong with *dhikr* (ecstatic prayer), but to perform it in the way Sufi Muslims do would invalidate the prayers, rather than bring Muslims closer to God. Chanting and bodily movement would undermine the intentionality of the speaker which reformists hold to be essential to worship. Reformists may similarly say *du’a* (supplication) after prayers, but without raising their hands, as there would be no scriptural basis for this. More generally, reformists condemn the performance of *dhikr* during funerals, the recitation of Qur’anic verses to the sick, remembrance ceremonies for the death and the annual commemoration of the birthday of Prophet Muhammad (*mawlid*), as these would not only be *bid’ah* (illicit religious innovation) and signs of *jahiliyya* (ignorance), but also border on *shirk* (idolatry).

Sufi *xehes* attempt to defend their practices, although within the framework of debate provided by reformists. They say that it is not they but reformists who are the ones innovating, as reformists import ‘foreign’ customs from the Middle East to Mozambique, the *hijab* for example, which has no basis in Islamic scriptures, but is a cultural phenomenon mistaken by reformists as Islamic. Recitation to the sick and remembrance of the death would have nothing to do with idolatry of the Qur’an or ancestors, but it is about asking God for mercy and about showing compassion and solidarity, qualities Sufi Muslims say reformists lack. Reformist Islam is simplistic, they add, made as undemanding as possible, so it appeals to inactive Muslims. It encourages them to explore their faith, which is commendable, but reformist leaders should not claim to know better than others do what constitutes correct worship – only God knows.

Nevertheless, several adaptations can be noted in Sufism in Bairro Acordado. *Dhikr* has become the exclusive domain of women, as men no longer engage in it, and a number of mosques have banned *dhikr* meetings from their precincts, requesting those who want to

engage in it to do so at home, often the home of an elderly Sufi leader. There, it is taking on connotations of cultural rather than religious practice, in the same way that Islamic dance groups have come to be seen as ‘cultural’ and are no longer organised by mosques. Also, Qur’anic recitation competitions are becoming less popular and *madrassa* education is increasingly standardised, both in Sufi and reformist mosques. Sufi *xehes* no longer appear to place much emphasis on *ijazas* (certificate of learning) and their position in a line of spiritual succession, or their embodiment of *baraka*. Fewer mosques are now the private property of *xehes*, as mosques are organised into formally registered associations.

Directly relevant for reformist criticism of oath-taking ceremonies is that reformists see the Qur’an primarily as a guide for how to organise one’s life, and place less emphasis on the efficacy of Qur’anic verses. In the previous chapters, I already mentioned that Islamic reformism favours an individualised understanding of the self, premised on the unique relation of each person with God. I also mentioned that God is seen as non-interventionist, due to beliefs of predestination. Let me add here that, similar to what has been found for the case of Protestantism in Christianity (cf. Keane 2007), this more or less salvationist interpretation of Islam comes with a distinct truth regime. Truth becomes further objectified and disentangled from social relationships, as reformists accentuate their contract and direct relationship with God, requiring no intermediaries other than for pointing out the ‘proof’ for specific readings of the truth in Islamic scriptures. To illustrate this, reformist Muslims, when they discuss differences between their preachers and those of Sufi mosques, laud reformist preachers’ perceived impartiality. One young man commented on funerary practices:

They (reformist preachers) speak the truth! It does not matter whether you are rich or poor... When you do not practice your faith, you cannot be given a Muslim funeral! Not like these others (Sufi *xehes*) who think like, he is the son of a *xeh*, of someone with money, it is OK, perhaps I will get something if I do it (lead the ceremony). But they know it is not right!

Islamic reformism further advocates a notion of truth as adversarial. Whereas Sufi Muslims rarely speak out against the religious practices of others, attending funerals of their Christian neighbours for instance and maintaining that everyone should do as they see fit even when defending themselves against reformist critique, reformists commit themselves to ‘correcting’ practices they perceive to be ‘un-Islamic’ and hold their interpretation of Islam to be exclusively ‘true’. The bodily motion of the hand expresses this. Whereas Sufi Muslims, as mentioned, open their hands after prayer in a gesture of acceptance, the hand movements of reformists are characterised by the pointing of their finger. In sermons and everyday conversation, they typically point the index finger of their right hand upwards to point to God, thereby accentuating their words as singularly true.

Meanwhile, the notion of truth is linked to intentionality. Reformist *xehes* instruct their followers that for them to be saved, what matters is not what they do, but that they do it with the right intentions. Giving to charity, they say in a jab at wealthy Indian Sufi entrepreneurs handing out food to the poor during the month of Ramadan, will not be rewarded if it is done to show off, out of pride, rather than as an act of worship. Similarly, reformists criticise students at Sufi *madrakas* for teaching students to rock their bodies as they recite the Qur’an, as this would distract them from God, and they place much emphasis on saying their prayers with the required intentionality, which is reflected in the moment they take to focus their mind before they start praying. Illustrative in the latter regard was the time a reformist *xeh* told me about a man he had reprimanded for attending prayers in a t-shirt with text printed on the back. According to the *xeh*, the text could distract other worshippers from their prayers, meaning that these prayers would not count towards their salvation. Indeed, the highlighting of the importance of intentions appears to be a common aspect of Islamic reform movements across the globe. McIntosh (2007: 133-136) describes how reformists in coastal communities in Kenya highlight the salience of intention to faith, and they criticise Sufi Muslims for their perceived lack of intentionality and reflection in their religious practice. Rosen (1992) suggests that the emergence of Islamic reformism in Morocco facilitates a shift from determinist forms of legal reasoning, in which responsibility is allocated by looking at circumstances and

outcomes of behaviour, to voluntarist ones that determine guilt on the basis of information about one's mental state.

In the context of Bairro Acordado, the turn inwards advocated by Islamic reformists has, parallel to the Protestants studied by Keane (2007) in Indonesia, a double effect. On the one hand, intentions become objectified as reformist Muslims attempt to fashion their interiority to match a state of *taqwa*, making for self-screening and for a more stable, individuated sense of the self, available for inspection along a temporal line (see Chapter 5). On the other hand, reformist Muslims seek to make their outward behaviour match their internal states, for example through sincere speech. Lying is not about hiding or withholding information from others, in their point of view, but about deception and the sin of misrepresenting one's own mental states to others. "It is better to stay quiet than to tell a lie," reformists say, and they abhor the frequency with which others in Bairro Acordado can be heard to invoke God as their witness. One should always be sincere and speak the truth, which makes oaths redundant. Mental states also play an important role in the way reformists evaluate others. A somewhat unusual illustration of this comes from the domain of offences discussed in Chapter 5. Historically, when a person sought to insult someone in Nampula, he or she would call the other by the name of an animal, a sorcerer, spirit or uncircumcised person. In other words, he or she would doubt the human status of the target of the insult. During colonial and postcolonial times, a range of novel insults was introduced that called into question the personal qualities of the offended party, especially in relation to work: attributes referred to included laziness, a lack of discipline, prostitution, troublesomeness, and so on. Reformists have added three new insults to this repertoire in Bairro Acordado: unbeliever, ignorant, and hypocrite, all referring to mental states.

I think that it is against this backdrop that the reformist opposition to oath-taking ceremonies needs to be understood. Either one believes that truth is located in a divine or social reality, diffuse and outside individual control, and that this reality needs to be brought to bear on the individual to elicit truth, but to believe so is *shirk*, for no man or object has that power. Or, as reformists propose, truth is located inside the individual and

is a property of mental states, which makes oath-taking as a technique for truth finding redundant. The fear of God that the ceremony evokes may generate a commitment to truth, but this is unlikely, for if the oath-taker feared God, oath-taking would not be necessary. Relevant here is also that reformists, following their non-interventionist view of God, believe that oath-takers will only be held to account for perjury in the afterlife.

Reformists I spoke with do not agree with the use of violence by the state, at least not as a method of truth finding. There is no point in beating people if you want them to be truthful, reformists I spoke to reasoned, they will just tell you what you want to hear. Instead, reformists prefer witness statements and cross-examination. Compared to others in Bairro Acordado, they are quite confident in their own abilities to read off from someone's appearance whether he or she is telling the truth. This is presumably linked to their coupling of inner and outer states. *Dona Jamila*, the wife of the leader of the Anwar mosque (see Chapter 2), often complained to me about the neighbourhood's community court. "That court, it has nothing to do with justice," she said. "Have you seen that old judge, the blind one? How can he adjudicate like that?" I would object, saying that many people in the neighbourhood find his blindness an attribute, one which might prevent him from taking people's status or looks into account. "No," she insisted, in contrast with the *alimos* telling oath-takers that they need to cover their eyes during the ceremony: "Come on, Christian, without seeing, how will he know if the person sitting in front of him is speaking the truth?"

Again, changing truth regimes affect individual reformists differently. Some disagree with the practice of oath-taking ceremonies, but they do not readily turn to state institutions when it comes to disputes. The Mozambican state is secular, for which reason some reformists stay away from it as much as they can (see Chapter 1). Particularly problematic for reformists are sorcery disputes. Due to their success and privacy, neighbours sometimes maintain that they are sorcerers (see Chapter 4). Reformists reply that such accusations are a sign of ignorance, and their affiliation with reformist mosques can be seen as a reaction to sorcery accusations, but at the same time, they do believe that sorcery exists, which puts them in a difficult position when they feel that they or their

relatives are the victims of a sorcery attack – reformist *xehes* teach them that there is nothing they can do other than ‘thank God’ for testing their faith, and warn them not to go to *curandeiros* for treatment, as this would constitute *shirk*. Many end up going to *curandeiros* after all, unable to resist the pressure from their relatives, and several *curandeiros* told me gleefully they charge reformists double, “for criticising us.”

## 6.7 Conclusion

To summarise, in this chapter I have situated Islamic reformism in the historical context of northern Mozambique. Focusing on changes in the involvement of Sufi *xehes* in oath-taking ceremonies, I showed that the emergence of reformism and its critique of Sufi Islam builds on earlier campaigns by the socialist postcolonial state against ‘tradition’. Specifically, I argued, Islamic reformism represents and contributes to broader epistemological shifts. Whereas Sufi Islam, in line with Makhuwa conceptions of reality, conceptualises truth as located in the workings of an invisible realm, the uncovering of which requires specialist knowledge, perceptions of reality are becoming increasingly objectified under the influence of truth regimes introduced by the state and Islamic reformism.

This process of objectification is correlated, I demonstrated, with the conceptions of personhood analysed in previous chapters. It also has implications for people’s attitudes to accountability. The individualised conceptions of personhood favoured by Islamic reformists lead them to see action as structured by intentions, which increases their willingness to hold others individually to account. In the next chapter, I will analyse in more detail the cultivation of Islamic reformist truth preferences, and their political implications.



## CHAPTER 7. MUSLIM POLITICS

### 7.1 Introduction

The past decades have seen a burgeoning anthropological interest in Muslim politics, particularly in how changing patterns of cooperation and contestation over form, practice and interpretation within the Muslim community relate to transformations in the engagement of Muslims with the polity at large (cf. Eickelman and Piscatori 1996: 21). The majority of studies focus on the emergence of Islamic reformism and its impact on the Muslim public. Notably, Eickelman and colleagues (Eickelman and Piscatori 1996; Eickelman and Anderson 2003; Eickelman and Salvatore 2004) build on Habermas' study (1989) of the genesis of the public sphere in 18th Century Europe, to claim that Islamic reform movements in the Middle East constitute an emerging public sphere in which citizens are free to debate and evaluate ideas on their own merits. Especially in countries where such spaces are otherwise lacking, Islamic reformism would foster the materialisation of democratic meta-norms and nurture civic virtues by encouraging Muslims to seek knowledge and make up their own minds. It brings people together, motivates them to collective action, and provides a common repertoire for the rational exchange of ideas and the levelling of criticism at the government. Hefner (2000) speaks in this regard of "civil Islam": he shows that Islamic reform movements in Indonesia have been instrumental in the development of civic traditions and in the promotion of women's rights and democratic ideals.

These arguments have since been criticised and revised. Kaarsholm (2005, 2009) argues in respect of Muslims in Durban, South Africa that public spheres need not necessarily be homogeneous, state-oriented and transparent. In the setting he studied, there are multiple public spheres operating alongside each other. Formal politics relating to the procedural and constitutional aspects of democracy are channelled through national media and non-public party-structures. Access to this arena is highly unequal. Critical public debate, meanwhile, find expression through moral debates about crime, HIV/AIDS and ideas of a 'healthy community', and through the alternative channels for communication of African

traditionalist, Christian, Muslim and other local cultural institutions of ‘hidden’ politics. Hirschkind (2006) and Deeb (2006), on the other hand, are critical of the liberal, rational and teleological connotations implied in theoretical constructs of the public sphere. They argue that in Egypt and Lebanon, respectively, reform movements facilitate the spread of specific modes of reasoning, cultivated affect and embodied dispositions, which do not fit Habermas’ emancipatory model. Nevertheless, the consensus remains that Islamic reformists exert a powerful influence over politics and public debate, forcing politicians and other publics to adapt if they are to make themselves heard (see also Marsden 2005; Schulz 2007).

Based on the literature, it is unclear how such transformations play out in Mozambique. As mentioned in Chapter 1, Mozambican Muslims’ political engagements have historically been structured by processes of social exclusion and marginalisation, first by the Portuguese colonial administration and the Catholic Church, and after 1975 Independence by Southern-based Christian-educated FRELIMO elites (cf. Alpers 1999; Bonate 2006; Cahen 2000). In this context, Morier-Genoud (2000, 2007) argues that emergent Islamic reformism reduces rather than reinforces the political influence of the Muslim community. It introduces social divisions and rifts among Muslims, providing political and state actors with novel opportunities for manipulation and divide-and-rule strategies. For example, when a cross-party coalition of Muslim Parliamentarians attempted to pass a law in 1996 that would turn the Muslim festive dates of Eid al-Fitr and Eid al-Adha into public holidays, the attempt failed amidst political machinations – in part – because Sufi Muslims and reformists could not agree on the correct methods of sighting the moon to determine the dates (see Chapter 1). The failure led Morier-Genoud (2007) to speculate that if Muslims want to have political influence in Mozambique, their only chance might be the development of a secularised political culture, acknowledging and accepting the separation of faith and politics.

Kresse (2009) offers a similar reading of the situation in Kenya. As in Mozambique, the Kenyan Muslim community faces pressure from the upcountry postcolonial state which is predominantly Christian in orientation, treats Muslims as second-class citizens and

invokes principles of secularism to divide Muslims from outside and keep them politically marginalised. According to Kresse, coastal Muslims have been able to resist some of these pressures through a knowledge economy based on notions of mutuality and reciprocity. Owing both to Swahili understandings of the self as fundamentally interdependent and Islamic obligations of ‘commanding the good and prohibiting evil’, people would see it as their duty to look out for each other, share their knowledge, teach one another proper conduct, and correct their social peers whenever their commitment is perceived lacking or erroneous; this contributed to a sense of sameness and unity, as evinced by various successful demonstrations of Muslim solidarity vis-à-vis the state. Since the 1980s, however, when Islamic reformism became more manifest as coastal Muslims began to be incorporated into competing factions of the wider Muslim *umma* through Islamisation efforts of Saudi-funded reformists and Iran-funded Shi‘ite organisations in the form of scholarships, salaries and the construction of mosques and *madrasas* (Islamic schools), this knowledge economy has been undermined. Not only do the attempts to bring local understandings of Islam in line with those of the respective factions result in insecurities about what counts as proper conduct, about coastal Muslims’ limited command of Arabic and about their standing as Muslims in the *umma*. Competition between the factions also results in the replacement of the emphasis on sharing and reciprocity with a focus on difference and disunity according to which others are no longer fellow Muslims in need of advice, but enemies. While Kresse observes that these developments may in the long run prepare Muslims for life in an increasingly globalised world and equip them with the skills required to navigate this environment, he suggests that for the time being a divisiveness already encouraged by the upcountry state is further entrenched by Islamic reformism (see also Kresse 2013).

In this final chapter, I will reflect on these issues from the vantage point of my own fieldwork. I shall pick up the thread from the previous chapter and describe how the reformist attitudes to knowledge and personhood go beyond the objectification of knowledge and assertions that truth can and should be known. Knowing the truth also comes with the responsibility to pronounce it. While the impetus behind the spread of such attitudes comes, just as in Kresse’s case, from Islamic students returning from their

studies abroad and from Islamisation initiatives financed by foreign donors, and while these attitudes also produce a heightened awareness of marginality in relation to the *umma*, reformism does not undermine forms of mutuality and exchange. Rather, in a setting where truth and speaking are intimately associated with power and where publicly correcting others is seen as shameful and therefore suppressed, it *generates* these forms. To the extent that the emergence of these novel forms produces dilemmas at the individual level and social tensions, it upsets the existing order. It thereby disunites and can be seen as weakening the Muslim community. However, I shall argue that it is precisely because of their disuniting effects that Islamic reformists are capable of influencing the country's political class in ways that have not been seen before in Mozambique.

In what follows, I will first describe how Islamic reformists have introduced novel mechanisms of knowledge transmission in Nampula City, and how these facilitate the surfacing of concerns with the pronunciation of truth, with sharing knowledge and with commanding the good. I shall then analyse the upsetting effects of these attitudes at the local level. In the final section, I turn to the national level and discuss how these same effects have structured a successful initiative by Nampula City Muslim leaders in overturning a decision by the government to ban female students from wearing veils to school.

## **7.2 Changing patterns of knowledge transmission**

In the previous chapter, I described how patterns of Islamic knowledge transmission in northern Mozambique have historically been organised through branches of Shadhiliyya and Qadiriyya Sufi orders. At the nodes of these branches stood the *xehes* (Islamic leaders). They were a select group of men of learning, connected to one another via personalised chains of transmission. These chains extended to the headquarters of both orders on Mozambique Island and to the Sufi Indian Ocean networks beyond. Zanzibar and the Comoro Islands constituted important centres in regional Sufi networks. Several Mozambican Sufi leaders went to study there under reputed *shaykhs*. For instance, the late Sayyid Habibo Bakr, one of the Qadiriyya leaders based on Mozambique Island, studied

in the 1950s under Sayyid ‘Umar ‘Abdallah, then-principal of the Muslim Academy of Zanzibar (Alpers 2001: 84-90).

People living in or near Nampula City would turn to Sufi *xehes* in their communities when they needed someone to lead Islamic prayer ceremonies, life cycle rituals, oath-taking ceremonies and healing and the production of amulets. Sufi *xehes* were also in charge of spreading knowledge. For children, the focus of knowledge transmission was on Qur’anic education and rote memorisation. Students generally attended these classes for a couple of years, until they had learned the requisite verses by heart. Particularly talented children might be sent to Mozambique Island or to *xehes* living elsewhere in northern Mozambique to continue their studies. With regard to adults, knowledge transmission centred on collective performances of *dhikr* (ecstatic prayer). Men’s and women’s groups would come together twice a week to recite their remembrance of God in congregation, often under the direction of the *xehes* themselves or with figures appointed by *xehes* for the task. Recitations consisted of the repetition of the names and attributes of God and *du’a* (supplications), and this was combined with breathing techniques and physical movements, in a manner similar to that observed by Trimingham (1964: 96) elsewhere in East Africa. In performances I witnessed in Bairro Acordado, recitations would sometimes take the form of *daira*, with participants moving around in a circle while they were chanting.<sup>25</sup>

In the 1990s, under the influence of foreign Islamic donors, the Muslim community of northern Mozambique came to be incorporated into networks of the global *umma*, which resulted in the shifting away from the Indian Ocean as the imagined centre of belonging toward the Middle East (see Chapter 1). Some of the dynamics of competition between different factions of the *umma* encountered by Kresse in Kenya can be observed in Mozambique as well. Thus, while Islamic charities such as the Kuwait-based Africa Muslims Agency (AMA) and Munazzamat al-Da’wa al-Islamiyah (MDI) from Sudan, together with private donors from the Middle East, Malawi, South Africa and from Mozambique itself, broadly represent Salafi-inspired Sunni reformism, the Aga Khan

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<sup>25</sup> See Lambek (2006) for a description of similar performances in Mayotte.

Foundation (AKF), the Bilal Muslim Mission and private donors from India, Iran and Pakistan can be argued to further the spread of Shi'ite understandings of Islam in the country – the latter operate through the local Ismaili community.

However, in Nampula City I found that Shi'ite donors, after launching a number of outreach initiatives in the late 1990s, have opted to limit their support and direct it exclusively toward the Ismaili community itself. This community comprises a small group of Mozambicans of Indian descent living in the city centre. Salafi-inspired reformist donors, meanwhile, are active in the peri-urban neighbourhoods of the city and in Nampula province where they target the Muslim population of African descent and seek to reform established Islamic practices associated with Sufism and 'chiefly' Islam (cf. Bonate 2006). This population constitutes the majority of Muslims in northern Mozambique, meaning that the main framework for Muslim politics in the region is that of more or less localised forms of Sufism pitted against a more globally-oriented Salafi-inspired reformism.

Incorporation into the *umma* has altered the dynamics of knowledge transmission in the region. From the personalised chains of transmission characteristic of Sufi learning, Islamic learning has become more standardised, professionalised, decontextualised and targeted at adults. In short, transmitted knowledge is being objectified. The history of the Anwar *madrassa* in Bairro Acordado illustrates these changing patterns.

The *madrassa* was originally established in the 1970s by *xehé* Abubacar (see Chapter 2). At the time, there were two Sufi mosques in the rural parts of the neighbourhood, both of which operated *madrassas* for children, and there was one Sufi mosque without a *madrassa* in the central part where he lived. As the population of the area began to grow, the *xehé* saw fit to start teaching children from a small building next to his house. He was working at the railways company in those years and devoted his spare time to the *madrassa*. Initially, he concentrated on rote memorisation, following the methods of instruction he had grown up with, but this changed when he became interested in Islamic reformism under the influence of a preacher from Tanzania. This preacher worked at a nearby

mosque and in his sermons, he criticised Sufi funerary rites and saint worship for their implied ancestor veneration. The critique made sense, *xehé* Abubacar told me in an interview. He thought it fit with FRELIMO's more general opposition to 'obscurantism' (see Chapter 1). Whereas Islamic leaders in the area either stayed out of politics or clandestinely supported RENAMO, *xehé* Abubacar had been one of the few to become involved with FRELIMO after Independence. He incorporated some of the reformist teachings in his classes for more advanced students at his *madrasa* and organised a study group for adults to discuss the issues. This put him on a collision course with the Sufi establishment in the area. Stones were thrown through the windows of his *madrasa*, he was threatened and, at one point, an *imam* from a neighboring mosque lodged a formal complaint against him with the Governor of Nampula province. After the Governor discarded the complaint, the threats stopped.

In the 1990s, when the end of civil war and democratisation resulted in more freedom for religious organisations to proselytise and move around the country, *xehé* Abubacar's *madrasa* began to receive frequent visits from representatives of both Sunni reformist and Shi'ite organisations, coming to select students for scholarships. Several of his students went to study at the Hamza *madrasa* in Matola in South Mozambique, headed by the reformist *xehé* Aminuddin Mohamad, the current chairperson of the Islamic Council of Mozambique, while four students were selected by Shi'ite representatives for advanced studies in Dar es Salaam, Tanzania.<sup>26</sup> In 2002, *xehé* Abubacar decided to found an association with a group of like-minded reformists from Bairro Acordado. The idea was that having the official status of an association would make it easier for them to gain access to the Sunni reformist sources of funding that were increasingly becoming available. The association succeeded in attracting financial support from a Mozambican businessman living in Maputo for the construction of a mosque next to the *madrasa*,

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<sup>26</sup> Research participants named the Shi'ite organisation involved Ahl al-Bayt. This suggests that the students pursued their studies in Dar es Salaam at the Ahl al-Bayt Teachers Training College, an institute for advanced Islamic studies run by the Bilal Muslim Mission. The latter is a Shi'ite charity focused on Islamic education. It is headquartered in Dar es Salaam, with offices in Tanzania and Kenya, and has activities in countries across the world including Mozambique (cf. Chanfi 2009: 432-434).

while the *madrassa* itself was renovated with support from a visitor from Malawi, introduced to *xehe* Abubacar via the Nampula branch of the Islamic Council. This was when it was named the Anwar *madrassa*. Through his FRELIMO contacts, *xehe* Abubacar arranged for the then Minister of Agriculture to come and inaugurate the mosque in 2007.

The transformation of the *madrassa* into an association, and the fact of its external funding, resulted in a number of changes. The Anwar *madrassa* currently features daily classes for both children and adults, for men in the early mornings and for women in the afternoons. The didactic materials used are produced and provided by AMA. AMA also organises the curricula and supervises the periodic examination of students. *Xehe* Abubacar himself no longer teaches at the *madrassa*, but delegates the task to *malimos* recruited from advanced colleges of learning such as an Islamic boarding school located just outside Nampula City. Whereas *xehe* Abubacar depended on donations in kind and on occasional monetary rewards when he taught, the current group of *malimos* receive a monthly stipend. These stipends are paid for by an external source, a Mozambican businessman living in the centre of Nampula City, who also donates money to cover the costs of utilities. All in all, Islamic education at the Anwar *madrassa* has become more professional.

To give an impression of the functioning of the Anwar *madrassa*, let me describe the women's classes in which I participated on and off during fieldwork. These took place on the porch behind the mosque, as the two rooms of the *madrassa* itself were being used to teach children. Classes lasted approximately two hours, with a break in the middle for the *Asr* prayer. Between 20 and 30 women attended, sitting on mats while the *malimo*, a man in his late twenties, addressed them from his chair next to the blackboard. The students came from various backgrounds. A few were in their early twenties, two or three were in their fifties, but the majority were about 30 years old. Compared with their neighbours, most of them but not all were relatively well-off, living in concrete houses near the mosque and with husbands working in trade. Several women ran small businesses of their own; selling ice cream for example, rice cakes, cloth or jewellery. The main reason the women gave for attending classes at the *madrassa* was religious duty: studying was seen



as an intrinsically virtuous affair, to be duly rewarded by God, and also as a means to gain the knowledge required to stay on the righteous path and avoid sin. The women mentioned companionship as well. The *madrasa* provided virtually their only opportunity to move beyond the household. Other reasons included looking for strength to deal with infertility or the death of children, or to stay off alcohol. The *madrasa* operated according to a weekly schedule: Mondays were reserved for *Hadith*, the sayings of the Prophet; Tuesdays for *fiqh*, Islamic jurisprudence; Wednesdays for the history of Islam; Thursdays for Arabic language training; and on Fridays students practiced Qur'an recitations.

Scholarships and financial support for mosques and *madrasas* are not the only means through which reformist donors facilitate the reconfiguration of the northern Muslim community. They also fund the publication of Islamic literature. More recently, MDI has taken the initiative to finance the establishment of Radio Haq, Nampula City's Islamic radio station. Literally meaning Radio Truth, the station was founded with the specific objective of 'Islamising' Mozambique. This does not refer to converting non-Muslims, I was told by a representative of the Nampula branch of the Islamic Council who is involved in the operation of the radio station. Rather, it is about correcting the understanding of Islam of those already considering themselves Muslims, about teaching them how to conduct themselves properly and about combatting 'ignorance'. The latter specifically referred to Sufi interpretations of Islam, which the representative considers mistaken innovations.

The station features various programmes to realise these aims. The majority rely on contributions from local Islamic leaders who have studied at Medina University in Saudi Arabia and at the International University of Africa in Sudan on scholarships from AMA, and who have since returned. The most popular programme of the station is a show called *Islão em Foco* (Islam in Focus). Broadcast Monday to Friday from 9 to 11 am, it features a discourse by an invited preacher on two themes, with a host asking questions and introducing members from the audience who participate either via phone, SMS or by email. Themes range from fasting and Islamic conceptions of virtue to divine punishment for adultery, with listeners generally asking for concrete advice on situations they

encounter in their daily lives, such as whether it is lawful for vendors to sell food during Ramadan. While the broadcasts are for technical reasons currently restricted to Nampula City and the provinces of Nampula, Cabo Delgado and Niassa, there are plans to roll out the network nationwide.

### **7.3 Emergent forms of mutuality**

Elsewhere in this thesis, I have outlined how Makhuwa self-understandings are structured by the notion of *okhalano* (see Chapter 4). It literally means being together, but it comes with a sense of duty and the perception that each individual plays a specific role in relation to a larger whole. The nature and workings of this larger whole are invisible, but one can sense it via embodied capacities for respect, compassion and shame. Together, these capacities constitute the basis of Makhuwa sociality. As people progress through the life cycle, they develop their acquired capacities, meaning that they improve their ability to distinguish and manipulate invisible forces. This ability is further enhanced by their increased proximity to *minepa* (ancestral spirits). Their greater knowledge is reflected in positions of socio-economic and political authority, with knowledge being intimately associated with power. In this conception of knowledge, the emphasis is on the control and monitoring of the distribution of knowledge. The idea is that access to true knowledge should be left to those in power, as they are better equipped to use it responsibly for the greater good, rather than for the pursuit of individualist desires and destructive purposes.

I have also suggested that people in northern Mozambique largely understand Islam and Sufism in relation to this invisible realm. Claims of proximity to God and of the ability to transmit *baraka* are interpreted in terms of insight into the workings of the universe, creating popular perceptions of Sufi *xehes* as both powerful and dangerous. Islamic knowledge is valued for its efficacy, and the transmission of Islamic knowledge by Sufi *xehes* is, then, an exercise of power, facilitating bonds of dependence. Meanwhile, I have argued, FRELIMO's Socialist and post-Socialist discourses of the self and knowledge represent a certain break with these conceptions, as the self comes to be identified in

relation to the nation state and to modernity, while knowledge becomes more objectified and the nature of reality deemed more visible. Let me add here, however, that even if FRELIMO's power is not interpreted as a function of the ability of FRELIMO authorities to see and manipulate invisible forces, there is the understanding that they do control some of the material forces of socio-economic development and modernisation they claim to have knowledge of, which also fosters dependence.

The latter can be observed in practices of public critique. Like other post-Socialist regimes, FRELIMO has a long history of using public criticism as a policy device. From the bush schools during liberation war; to self-criticism at party congresses; to the national campaigns against corruption; to public criticism as a method of punishment of offenders in popular courts; to the recent Open Presidency meetings – the party sees criticism, at least in name and although its enthusiasm for it has waned, as a method of learning from past mistakes and of making future improvements. Dialectical criticism would, to put this differently, allow for the revealing and exposing of the forces that keep the country from achieving progress. But, as several authors have noted (Dinerman 2006; Hanlon and Smart 2008: 97; Newitt 1995: 544) and as I have also observed during political rallies in Nampula City, the criticism formulated at public events follows a distinct format. Speakers first expressed their gratitude to FRELIMO for its past achievements, they then listed a number of public needs the party had not yet addressed, and they concluded by expressing their hope that the party would do so in the future. Public criticism was voiced through an idiom of dependence, in which FRELIMO's superior knowledge of questions of development was acknowledged, its power legitimised and speakers confirmed their shared commitment with party figures to a common cause. It thus reinforced the status quo.

The question is how these understandings of knowledge are affected by reformist initiatives to incorporate Mozambique's Muslim community into the global *umma*. On the face of it, there appears to be an emergence of novel perceptions of marginality, just as Kresse found in coastal Kenya. Reformists lament that Islam is "not very developed" in Mozambique, they emphasise the need for Islamisation and find their own and other

people's command of Arabic wanting. Consequently, a great deal of effort in reformist *madrasas* for adults is spent on mastering the correct pronunciation of Qur'anic verses. A typical class at the Anwar *madrasa* for women in Bairro Acordado, for instance, began with the *malimo* writing a short text in Arabic on the blackboard. Students had arrived earlier, chatting amongst themselves and reciting the Qur'an individually or in small groups, correcting each other as they waited for the *malimo*. The women copied the text from the blackboard. When everyone was finished, the *malimo* would read it out and the women repeated what he said. He corrected them when he felt that their pronunciation or intonation was wrong, and would go over it again, several times if needed. This routine was followed regardless of whether the theme for the day was *Hadith*, *fiqh* or history, and it took up the better part of class.

At the same time, although reformism creates these experiences of living on the periphery of the global *umma*, it also leads to Muslims feeling more central within their own community. Research participants described to me how their studies at reformist *madrasas* gave them the confidence that they need not depend on learned others for knowledge transmission; they felt capable of doing this themselves. Indeed, the active participation of students as peers in a community of learning was a recurrent theme in classes at reformist *madrasas*. The emphasis was not on deliberation and the sort of emancipatory reasoning predicted by the theories of Eickelman and colleagues. Rather, from the focus on the correct pronunciation of Qur'anic verses in Arabic followed a more generalised concern with the pronouncement and propagation of revealed truth. Students were frequently reminded to publicise what they have learned and share their knowledge with others in their surroundings.

This concern with pronouncement takes several forms. First, as discussed in the previous chapter, it relates to sincerity. Muslims should speak the truth and say it as it is. Secondly, pronouncement refers to the externalisation of interior states. "To believe in the truth of God's words and commands is not enough," said the *malimo* of the women's group at the Anwar *madrasa* during one class. One needs to affirm this conviction and publicly pronounce it as true, both in speech and in one's behaviour. The latter will be the basis for

deciding people's fate on Judgement Day. In the same manner, one of the students of the *madrasa* described her wearing of the *hijab* as showing others in the neighbourhood that she is Muslim and that God had commands that women ought not to show their bodily shapes – through her *hijab*, she pronounces her belief in the truth of God's commands. Thirdly, pronouncement constitutes a form of *da'wa*, of calling others to Islam. The *malimo* of the Anwar *madrasa* encouraged his students in this regard to pronounce themselves vis-à-vis their neighbours and become exemplars for them. "Go and tell your neighbours the truth: they should come to the *madrasa* like you do, because they need to learn about what is required and what is forbidden in Islam; Hell awaits those who sin." Finally, pronouncement translates into preoccupations with commanding the good and prohibiting evil. A *malimo* working at another *madrasa* explained to me how he tried to teach his students that they not only have a duty to live by what they know, they should also seek to correct others when they find that the behaviour of others does not meet Islamic standards. An example he gave was that of how he himself reacted when he saw vendors at the market grope female clients. In this case, he said, he approached the *imam* of the mosque where the vendors prayed and asked him to address the issue in a sermon. Alternatively, one could talk to the vendors directly and try to show them the wrongness of their ways. Being knowledgeable of the truth of Islam, the *malimo* suggested, comes with social responsibility.

Together, these concerns with pronouncement suggest that under the influence of Islamic reformism novel articulations of mutuality surface in northern Mozambique, rather than being undermined by it as Kresse said to be the case in Kenya. In the next section, I shall analyse in more detail how these developing forms of mutuality collide with existing understandings of knowledge, but here, I note that it comes with a specific set of expectations and demands of leadership, which are distinct from the relations of dependence described above.

This is most evident in the disillusionment reformist research participants in Bairro Acordado claim to feel in relation to Sufi authorities. Whereas researchers working in settings of Islamic reformism elsewhere (Eickelman and Piscatori 1996; Kresse 2009;

Schulz 2007) report that criticism of conventional religious authorities tends to be framed in terms of allegations of materialism, moral corruption and connivance with the political class, the dominant theme in northern Mozambique is that Sufi leaders refuse to share their knowledge, “hide reality” and “do not want to speak the truth”. Both the relative lack of opportunities at Sufi mosques for formal adult education and Sufi practices such as collective performances of *dhikr*, which reformists consider illicit innovations and aberrations from the Prophet’s true example, are cited as evidence for this. Materialist desires would be one reason for the perceived unwillingness of Sufi *xehes* to transmit what they know, but mostly, Sufi *xehes* are accused by reformists of envy and of not wanting to allow others to become knowledgeable. While such accusations clearly serve the rhetorical purpose of discrediting competitors in a religious marketplace, they also indicate a shift in expectations; rather than controlling access to knowledge, leaders are expected to facilitate its distribution.

On Radio Haq, such sentiments can also be heard. For example, in one episode of Islam in Focus, broadcasted on Monday 27 August 2012, the invited preacher talked about the special duty of *xehes* to follow Islamic prescriptions because of their advanced knowledge and because everyone looks up to them. This duty can be compared to carrying a heavy weight, the preacher claimed:

Therefore, we have a heavy weight on our heads that we cannot drop. We have to kneel to leave it in the hands of someone else. That person puts it on his head, and so on, until the message reaches far. Because if not, we commit a wrong that not even the unbeliever committed, which is disavowing the Qur’an in practice. The unbelievers disavow the message. When God says to pray, the unbelievers say: What is prayer? But when a Muslim does not pray, he is disavowing in practice.

To illustrate his claim, the preacher gave the example of a *xeh* foregoing daily prayers while travelling to the coast. If co-travellers follow his example, the *xeh* will be partly to blame, because he led others to believe that foregoing prayers is permissible:

How to recuperate the faith of a person who was believing that in truth, this is true, and you changed her thinking to non-truth?

In other words, the preacher instructed the audience of the radio station that, apart from expecting their leaders to spread Islamic knowledge so that the “message reaches far”, leaders should serve as role models. Again, this involves a degree of change from patterns of dependence according to which knowledge transmission is a more one-sided affair. The continuation of the preacher’s discourse in the radio programme underscored this point, as he went on to state that responsibility for the sins of others works both ways. Just as *xehes* should try and keep followers from sin, members of the Muslim community should endeavour to keep their leaders on the right path, for if they do not do so, they only have themselves to blame.

From my conversations with research participants, they appeared to value Radio Haq for broadcasting these perspectives. On one occasion, I was chatting about the radio station with the female students of the Anwar *madrasa*. Most of them listened to Radio Haq. They saw it as another means to religious education, similar to the *madrasa*. When I asked the women which contributor to Islam in Focus they liked best, one of them explained her preference for one particular preacher as follows:

He is good, because he no longer hides things... (another woman agrees, saying that he hides nothing)... He really speaks. These are things that really happen... Like when you encounter a group of women... Women who do not wear the *hijab*... Sometimes, when I pass them, they feel the need to speak badly of me. Yes. And in truth, he says this there (on the radio), speaking about women who when they sit together start insulting other women. And this is true.

This reference to speaking the truth about religious discrimination came out of the blue. The student was referring to an experience other reformist Muslims had mentioned to me as well during fieldwork; that they received verbal abuse from others in Bairro Acordado and in Nampula City more generally for their style of dress or for their beliefs. In saying that the preacher “no longer hides things”, the suggestion was that others, be they political leaders, government administrators or other Muslim leaders, had done precisely this, keep discrimination under the cover, thereby negating its reality. Other research participants claimed that this was part of a broader agenda to exclude Islam from the public domain.

By pronouncing the truth in public, the presenter made others see reality for what it was, and taken a first step toward the public inclusion of Muslims. The student indicated that it gave her and other reformists recognition. For her, what mattered above all when it came to leadership was that leaders are sincere.

#### **7.4 Muslim politics**

These emergent forms of mutuality do not operate in a vacuum, but are conditioned by existing attitudes to Islamic knowledge. This can, at times, create tensions and disruption, as different perceptions of knowledge collide. Below, I will present two cases to explore these dynamics for the context of Nampula City. I will first describe both cases, and then analyse them together.

The first case is that of Ali, the reformist Muslim who featured in Chapter 1. I knew him from early on in fieldwork when he lived with Rajah and his father in Zona Melhorada (see Chapter 4). Ali later moved to his mother's house elsewhere in Bairro Acordado, and it was there that one day he had a run-in at a local mosque. Formerly a Sufi mosque, it had recently been taken over by a new leadership with reformist orientations. Since the take-over, Ali had attended evening prayers there. Because of its location, it was safer and more convenient for him to go there than to his regular mosque. It had been a positive experience for him until the other night. As the *imam* was absent, one of the elderly mosque members had volunteered to lead prayers. To Ali's irritation, he "had no knowledge": "He made mistakes, in pronunciation and words... As Arabic is a foreign language and most people do not know it, they repeat his mistakes... Everyone becomes responsible for his errors in that way... Their prayers may not count."

This was unacceptable, according to Ali: "Religion does not instruct us like that... It has to be someone who knows."

Ali was sure that he was not the only one to notice, but others stayed quiet. "The others do not have the power to say what they feel." Ali decided differently. The next day, he



took the matter to the *imam*. The *imam* told him that he was right and promised to take it up with the man in question, which was what he had subsequently done. When other members of the mosque heard of what had happened, “it became a big problem.” Ali was called “vain” and a “show-off” for putting himself before “a man of age”. News that the mosque has “a youth who considers himself better than others” quickly spread. Upon learning of this, his mother became very concerned. She was afraid that people would see her son as ambitious, and that they would seek recourse to sorcery to stop him. Her eldest son had been killed like that; he died shortly after he had been elected *imam*, allegedly as a result of spells cast by jealous others who wanted his position for themselves. Ali’s uncle warned that, apart from questions of jealousy, the elderly man and other elders at the mosque might retaliate, because they considered Ali’s behaviour disrespectful. The uncle had pointed to his limping leg: “This, I got because I used words in the mosque that some people did not like.” Ali’s relatives thought it better that he stopped attending evening prayers at the mosque.

Ali had half a mind to heed his relatives’ advice, he told me. He felt that he had been caught up in a controversy over the direction of the mosque between the mosque’s old guard – he called them “ignorants” and *nakasako*, a derogatory eMakhuwa term for Sufi Muslims – and its new leadership. He did not put it past the mosque elders to use him as an example; he suspected that they were well-versed in sorcery’s secrets. It was not that he thought that he had done anything wrong. To the contrary, he was glad that he had not stayed quiet like the others:

That (staying quiet) is not exactly a sin, but it is not, how shall I put it, great either, you know... You have to tell the truth, to tell it directly... When someone does something bad and you know that... Maybe he does not (know), that is a prejudice for him... You should counsel him.

The mosque elder should be grateful, Ali continued. He had learned something new, something good. “He should know that you cannot sit back, you cannot think that you know it all, you have to keep studying.” And anyway, all Ali had done was “speak the truth.”

He received little support from other reformists at the mosque and from the mosque's new leadership. Instead, they reprimanded him. Ali had certainly been right to tell the man the truth, as one of the mosque leaders explained to me. Speaking the truth was to be preferred in cases like this, because it prevented the sin from being repeated, and a failure to do so would have been sinful on Ali's part. But he should have approached the man in a different way, in a manner that was non-confrontational and in private, without getting the *imam* involved. The man had been older than Ali and needed to be treated with respect. The man felt ashamed and was hesitant about leading prayers now for fear of doing it wrong, he had told the leadership. Ali should be careful, because he would not be the first to die of a witchcraft attack over these matters, the mosque leader had advised Ali.

However, Ali was eventually persuaded to carry on coming to evening prayer. It was the *malimo* from the *madrasa* at the other mosque, the reformist one where Ali was a regular member, who convinced him to stay. "I know what you are thinking," the *malimo* said to him, "you want to quit praying there because you are afraid." The *malimo* told him not to do that, for it would constitute a sin, *shirk* (idolatry) to be specific, for it meant he let his fear of other people rather than his fear of God decide his actions. If anything was to happen to him, that would be part of his destiny rather than something he might prevent by leaving the mosque. Ali concluded: "It may be that they already attacked me, but that it did not get to me, because God did not allow it... After I heard that, I felt more relaxed."

The second case is set at the women's group of the Anwar *madrasa* in Bairro Acordado. Xehe Abubacar had arranged a visit from a representative of the *Organização da Mulher Moçambicana* (OMM) (Organisation of the Mozambican Woman), FRELIMO's women's arm. The representative was the sister of the Mayor of Nampula City who was there to rally support for FRELIMO. Upon her arrival, she was offered a chair in the middle of the room normally reserved for the teaching of girls. The female students sat on mats on the floor surrounding her, while neighbourhood administrators and I were given chairs outside. It was unusually hot. Wiping the sweat off her face with a handkerchief,

the representative quickly went through the customary slogans. “OMM oye! Women of Mozambique oye! FRELIMO oye!” She thanked everyone for their presence and explained that she had come to introduce herself and tell them about the importance of voting FRELIMO. Municipal by-elections were coming up in the northern cities of Cuamba, Pemba and Quelimane and there were rumours that people there would support the opposition. “I am here to warn you,” said the representative: “When we will have elections here next year, do not experiment with another party. You do not know how they think, you are going to suffer. Look at the hospitals and schools FRELIMO has built. Go with experience!”

After finishing her speech, she asked if there were questions. One woman had a question. She stated her name and said that she wanted to know about the money from the so-called *7 Milhões* (7 Million) initiative. This is a fund distributed by the national government to districts for the financing of local initiatives of small entrepreneurs in the form of soft loans. In Nampula City, the municipal government is responsible for its disbursement and the woman said that she had submitted a proposal but had not received a reply. She knew that some of the people close to FRELIMO had already received their money. How was that possible? There was no reply. The administrator sitting next to me moved uncomfortably in his chair, while the representative fumbled for an answer. *Xehe* Abubacar intervened. Addressing the student of the question in eMakhuwa, he told her that this was not the time to ask these questions and that she should have patience, because the government was distributing the fund little by little; she would hear the outcome in due time. The student wanted to respond, but *xehe* Abubacar interrupted her, leading to a murmur of disapproval as he wrapped up the meeting.

When I later asked *xehe* Abubacar about why he had intervened, he indicated that the student’s question had been inappropriate. It had been embarrassing – to the representative but to *xehe* Abubacar as well, given that he had invited her – for the student to put the representative on the spot as she had done. He feared that, next time, FRELIMO representatives might not be as forthcoming in accepting his invitations, and suggested that if the point of the student’s question had been to enlist the support of the OMM

representative in finding out the outcome of her application, she might not have done herself any favours. When I asked one of the students of the *madrassa* for her opinion on what had happened, she did not agree with the assessment of *xehe* Abubacar. It had been wrong of the *xehe* to intervene, she felt. The student had spoken the truth; everyone knew that there were problems with the distribution of money from the 7 *Milhões* fund.

The situations described in these two cases are diverse, but they have in common is reformists' apparent preparedness to pronounce truth in public. If they consider these truths objective and worthy of being stated up front, the authority figures to whom they are addressed find them painful. They feel exposed and embarrassed. In fact, as the cases demonstrate, the upset is such that they are silenced by the reformists' speech. In the context of northern Mozambique, where truth is associated with power, speaking the truth turns out to be a powerful device. The key term appears to be shame or embarrassment. Both are translated in eMakhuwa as *ehaya*. *Ehaya* is a relational concept, with one person's perceived lack of shame causing shame to their partners in interaction. It is intimately associated with prevalent notions and practices of knowledge, in that it is structured by ideas of control and dependence; shame typically involves the failure to be awarded the respect one thinks one is due. When done in public, the failure to respect a figure of authority produces a sort of self-reinforcing effect, whereby one person's lack of shame increases the public visibility of the shamed target and it attracts the gaze of others. This gaze is unidirectional, meaning that the relations of dependence between the authority figure and the wider community are undermined; in short, a lack of respect produces a loss of social esteem and of power. As also observed by Kottak (2002: 225-235), this feeling of exposure is accompanied by bodily sensations of 'being eaten' and of shrinking. Just as social isolation more generally leads to feeling weak and getting ill, experiencing shame is conceptualised in terms of reduced vitality.

What is also evident, however, is that the different perceptions of knowledge do not completely overlap. While the socially disembedded truth claims articulated by Islamic reformists are powerful in the sense that they negate understandings of dependence, they do not negate the perceptions of reality on which relations of dependence are based.

Reformists are aware of this divergence, and it generates insecurities and uncertainties on their part and on behalf of those around them. Thus, Ali's relatives try to impress upon him that while he may be justified in pointing out that the mosque elder's command of Arabic is insufficient for him to lead prayers, the elder's position of authority in the mosque community does not derive from scripturalist understandings of Islamic knowledge. Rather, the efficacy of Islamic knowledge in manipulating invisible forces of construction and destruction is what gives the elder his authority, and both his relatives and Ali deem the elder's knowledge of Islam vastly superior to Ali's in this respect. They are afraid that the elder will use it to retaliate and reinstate order.

Likewise, *xehé* Abubacar fears that the student's critique of the disbursement of the 7 *Milhões* fund might have alienated FRELIMO representatives from his mosque community, and the opportunities for political sponsorship and the resources these representatives command. It is striking thereby how the pronouncements of reformist Muslims generate ruptures not only between reformists and the political community at large, but also within their own group. Ali had perhaps expected that his intervention would be supported by other reformists at the mosque, who unlike him, did not have "the power to say what they feel", or at least by the reformist leadership. But, the sole support he received was from a relative outsider to the mosque community. Others drew away from him, and the mosque leadership reprimanded him. The same happened, in a different way, to the student at the Anwar *madrassa*, who was corrected by *xehé* Abubacar.

I think the latter effects of rupture within the reformist community are not only structured by the collision of reformist attitudes to knowledge with existing attitudes, but also result from two paradoxes intrinsic to the engagements that Islamic reformists advocate. The first paradox is especially noticeable in the first case of Ali, and it relates to questions of mutuality. On the one hand, their perception of themselves as truth bearers gives reformists like Ali a sense of responsibility. They have to live by this truth themselves and, when they perceive others to commit sin, they feel obliged to speak out so that the other will know the truth as well. It makes for a novel sense of connectedness between reformists and others in their social surroundings. On the other hand, as Ali suggests, his

motivation for telling the mosque elder the truth is that it would be sinful for him not to share his knowledge now that it has been activated. Even if his perception of himself as truth bearer makes him feel connected to the other man, the incentive is to undo this connection and avoid shared responsibility; the engagement stops once Ali has communicated the truth to the man, as it is now between the man himself and God whether or not he decides to act on his newly acquired knowledge. The duty of pronouncement, in other words, produces mutuality on one level, but it also works against it on another.

A similar paradox applies in the case of hierarchy. Although Islamic reformists are encouraged by their readings of Islamic scriptures to expand their knowledge and become exemplars for others, any claims to leadership they might derive from their Islamic expertise are simultaneously undermined. To put this differently, the moment people increase their knowledge of Islam this places the burden on them to share their knowledge and erase any differences between themselves and others in their surroundings. Reformist attitudes to knowledge, then, both create and counteract hierarchy.

Combined, these two paradoxes make for a counter-public which is simultaneously egalitarian and atomistic: while undermining leadership claims, Islamic reformism contributes to mutuality as well as disunity.

### **7.5 Challenging the ban on veiling**

In this last section, I will discuss the manifestation of reformist Muslim politics and the above dynamics on the national stage. As mentioned, Mozambican Muslims have experienced marginalisation under both colonial and postcolonial regimes. The Portuguese colonial administration repressed public demonstrations of Islam on the grounds of its concordat with the Vatican and because it feared Islam's potential for rallying opposition to the regime in a manner that traduced and cross-cut primordial loyalties like kinship ties. It later moderated some of its policies and introduced divide-and-rule tactics to prevent northern Muslim leaders from joining the various anti-colonial

liberation movements (cf. Alpers 1999). After Independence, FRELIMO leaders from the Christian-dominated South continued to exclude Muslims from public participation. Through a combination of repression, co-optation and ostentatious support, they sought to establish their own hegemony (cf. Morier-Genoud 2007: 264).

There was a moment in the mid-1990s when genuine inclusion of Muslims in the polity seemed possible. The 1992 General Peace Agreements had resulted in the introduction of multiparty democracy in Mozambique, and keen to win the Muslim vote, FRELIMO integrated a number of prominent representatives of Muslim associations into its candidate lists for the 1994 parliamentary elections. They were allowed to swear allegiance on the Qur'an and appointed to positions of power after the elections. It was in the wake of these elections that Muslim Parliamentarians formed a cross-party coalition to 'officialise' Islamic holidays. However, as I described in the introduction, the attempt failed, and when FRELIMO subsequently broke its alliance with Muslim associations and removed their representatives from its candidate lists for the next elections to replace them with Muslims of secular orientation, this had no noticeable impact on the results (Morier-Genoud 2007: 265-266). In sum, the historical influence of the Mozambican Muslim community on public policy has been minimal.

This changed in 2012 with the initiative of the Muslim community to stop the government from formally banning the use of veils in schools. The initiative was kick-started by a circular from the Ministry of Education, issued on 31 July 2012, which stressed the need to standardise procedures for the use of the headscarf and *burqa* in all public and private institutions of education. It instructed schools that during Ramadan Muslim students would be allowed to wear headscarves as long as they asked permission from their school directors two weeks in advance. *Burqas* would not be allowed, nor was the wearing of headscarves after Ramadan. The sanction for either infraction was suspension.

The circular came against the backdrop of international debates about the wearing of Islamic veils in the public domain. Specifically, it was triggered by an incident one year earlier at a private Islamic secondary school in the city of Pemba in the northern province

of Cabo Delgado. A student at the school had decided to start wearing a *burqa* to class, and in protest, a number of teachers at the school refused to teach either her or her classmates, insisting that effective teaching requires face-to-face contact. The student had the support of the school director and of AMA, the owner of the school, but the teachers persisted. It was Mozambique's Minister of Education who personally settled the matter by travelling up to Pemba to suspend the student, stating to the press that the Mozambican state is secular and that any manifestation of religion on school property is prohibited. This had sparked a public debate in the media about secularism, and some Muslim leaders registered their protest, but the response from the Muslim community had been mostly muted; many saw the *burqa* as an imported foreign custom for which there was no legitimate basis in Islam (O País 09/06/2011).

The reaction to this new circular was different. The new policy covered the wearing of headscarves as well as *burqas*, including at private schools, and this was something Mozambican Muslims could relate to. Up until that point, there had been no legislation on the matter in Mozambique. Veiling had been considered part of uniform policy and as such, the government had left it to the discretion of school boards to decide whether students were permitted to wear veils or not. While this had meant in practice that most schools did not allow it, there had been exceptions. Furthermore, in Islamic private schools, funded by foreign donors, veiling had been the norm; for a number of Muslim parents, this had been the reason to send their children there. Widespread opposition ensued. Nampula City-based Muslim leaders were at the forefront, demanding in broadcasts of Radio Haq, in statements to the media and in press conferences that the government revoke the circular; it should authorise the wearing of headscarves to all schools and apologise for issuing the circular when the month of Ramadan was about to commence (Verdade 16/08/2012). Several Muslim leaders from Maputo also got involved and Muslims across the country took to social media. As the campaign gained momentum, a number of novel demands were added, ranging from the wearing of *hijabs* on ID pictures and in the workplace, to critiques of the teaching of evolutionism in schools. Eventually, the Indian business community of Maputo spoke out as well, claiming that the government's ineptitude in the face of a wave of kidnappings affecting



their community resulted from the same anti-Islamic attitudes which the banning of headscarves had revealed on the part of the government; it accused the Mozambican government of treating Muslims as second-class citizens (Verdade 24/08/2012).

The characteristics of Islamic reformism analysed in the previous sections surfaced during the campaign. Firstly, just as the students at the Anwar *madrassa* emphasised their independence from authority figures, there was the denial of relations of dependence with FRELIMO. Literally, reformist Muslim leaders threatened that Muslim voters would favour the opposition in the next elections if FRELIMO did not meet their demands. The Nampula branch of the Islamic Council wrote, for instance, in a letter (08/08/2012) addressed to the Council of Ministers of Mozambique:

The Ministry's arbitrary decision is an abuse of power, taken without consulting theologians, *'ulama*, of Islamic organisations. This reveals an absence of a culture of dialogue, of democracy and reveals disrespect for the Muslim community... When the government makes laws that contradict sacred orders or the belief of the people, they will not obey and will no longer be in their favour and their vote in the elections will be for others. This is natural and automatic.

Meanwhile, the Indian business community from Maputo – some wealthy members of which had been backing FRELIMO financially – threatened to strike by closing down business in protest of the discrimination of Muslims. There were also more implicit negations of dependence. Representatives of Muslim organisations contested the government's claim that the secular nature of the Mozambican state opposed the public manifestation of religion. Secularism, they argued, means freedom of religious expression rather than its restriction, and they pointed to government corruption to substantiate their claim that the Mozambican public would be improved by the inclusion of religious values. Their message was that the public belonged to the people, and that if it failed to recognise this, the government put itself at risk of substitution.

A second similarity with the characteristics of reformism analysed in the previous sections was that Muslim leaders used public pronouncements to shame and expose the

government. They referred to historical examples of discrimination of Muslims by the Mozambican state and suggested that they had long suspected that the current government was no different in this regard; now it had been confirmed. A particularly powerful condemnation of the government came during a public prayer ceremony organised for the celebration of Eid al-Fitr in Nampula City to mark the end of Ramadan. Several Muslim leaders took to the stage to call on FRELIMO to withdraw its ban on veiling. The crowd of worshippers stood together and concurred; they were the public, these were their demands – the government should listen. One of the Muslim leaders was a known FRELIMO member. Until that moment, he had stayed in the background, but now he spoke and called the ban on veiling discriminatory. “If the government does not reconsider its position,” he said, pointing around, “no one here is going to vote for FRELIMO.” It was his pronouncement, more than any of the others, that defined the success of the campaign. Coming from the mouth of a member of FRELIMO, the classification of the circular as discriminatory was no longer an allegation but the truth, and the statement about voting for the opposition not a threat but a fact.

A third similarity was that the campaign was largely characterised by its lack of coordination and by its spontaneous, anarchic nature. Different Muslim leaders presented themselves as spokespersons for the wider Mozambican Muslim community at different moments of the campaign. There were North-South divisions, Sufi leaders remained on the sidelines and when a number of reformist *xehes* representing various Muslim associations organised themselves into what they called the *Comissão de Álimos de Nampula* (‘Ulama Commission of Nampula), its members continued to issue statements in their own name alongside the communiqués of the Commission. Another illustration of this fragmentary character was that the initiative of the Indian business community to strike against the discrimination of Muslims in the country took the northern Muslim leaders by surprise and they were careful to keep separate the issues of the ban on veiling and the government response to kidnappings.

After three weeks, the government bowed to the pressure. The original circular had by then been recalled. It had been replaced with a new circular stipulating that students did

not need permission from school directors to wear veils during Ramadan. The prohibition on wearing veils during the rest of the school year had, however, been maintained (O País 13/08/2012). On 22 August 2012, the Council of Minister retracted this prohibition as well, and it formally approved the wearing of veils to school. The Ministers of Education and of Justice jointly travelled to Nampula City to bring the news to the city's Muslim leaders in person. After the meeting, the Minister of Justice explained the decision to authorise the wearing of veils to school to the press, saying that the Mozambican government favours dialogue, and that the government is prepared to listen when the population has a grievance. The Minister of Education no longer spoke; he had been stripped off his authority to pronounce on the issue by the Council of Ministers. Like the leaders featuring in the previous section, the Islamic reformists' effective speech had silenced him (O País 22/8/2012).

Of the above three characteristics, the main factor in the campaign's success was the denial of dependence. By the time of the campaign, the mayoral by-elections of December 2011 had taken place, and FRELIMO had lost the northern city of Quelimane to the Movimento Democrático de Moçambique (MDM). Quelimane is the fifth most important city of Mozambique. Having previously been defeated by the same party in Beira, the country's fourth city, in Central Mozambique, FRELIMO feared that it might lose Nampula City in the upcoming municipal elections of 2013 to MDM as well, leaving only the southern cities of Maputo and Matola to FRELIMO. This was something the ruling party was understandably anxious to avoid. By meeting the demand of the Muslim lobby to revoke the ban on veiling, the party was arguably seeking to prevent alienation from its Muslim voter base.

However, the other two characteristics mattered as well. The timing of the government's decision to revoke the ban is indicative of this. It came just after the prayer ceremony for the occasion of Eid al-Fitr, during which the Muslim leader pertaining to FRELIMO publicly denounced his own party. As he explained to me in an interview, he subsequently received a phone call from the party's leadership requesting his presence at FRELIMO's provincial headquarters, so that he could explain the view of northern

Muslims on the matter. Following the meeting, he was told that his message would be relayed to the Council of Ministers, and the decision to authorise the wearing of veils was taken two days later. As this timing shows, his exposure of FRELIMO as a party which discriminates Muslims and which lacks popular support had been effective. Just like the elder from Ali's mosque and the OMM representative, FRELIMO showed itself to be sensitive to being shamed in public.

Meanwhile, the government's decision coincided with the emergence of the Indian business community and their grievances about kidnapping as a new front in the articulation of Muslim anti-FRELIMO sentiment. The decision of the government to send two Ministers to the North and announce its authorisation of the wearing of veils there can be seen as an attempt to nip spreading Muslim discontent in the bud and prevent northern and southern Muslims from forming a united front. If this was indeed what the party leadership had in mind, it worked. After their meeting with the two Ministers, the Muslim leaders from Nampula City were asked by journalists to comment on the Indian business leaders' plans to strike. The northern leaders replied that they had no knowledge of what was happening in Maputo, but in general, they were against the manipulation of religion for political ends. This was duly reported in the media, and a few days later, the strike was cancelled (Verdade 26/08/2012). While one could interpret this as evidence of disunity within Mozambique's Muslim community, and of FRELIMO's ability in exploiting internal divisions, such would ignore the historical success of Muslim leaders in repealing the ban on veiling. Disunity, their success shows, can also be powerful. By creating multiple fronts, it increased the pressure on FRELIMO and forced the party to compromise.

## **7.6 Conclusion**

In this chapter, I continued the investigation into reformist conceptions of truth and knowledge and analysed their political implications. I discussed how the arrival of foreign donors has altered the dynamics of knowledge transmission in northern Mozambique by replacing personalised bonds between students and Sufi xehes and their emphasis on the

embodied, efficacious aspects of knowledge with the standardised, objectified and professionalised forms of education on offer at reformist madrasas. In these madrasas, I demonstrated, adult students learn to trust and use their own capacity for the pronouncement of truth. Such attitudes result in the emergence of novel forms of mutuality as well as in the spread of new modalities of public engagement which collide with existing modes of relating to authorities, characterised by understandings of dependence. At the local level, the divergence leads to confrontations of reformists with authority figures, of both religious and state types, which result in authority figures being upset and ashamed, while reformists feel insecure and left to their own devices. The latter effect is enhanced by disuniting tendencies intrinsic to reformist attitudes to knowledge, which undermine claims to leadership. Similar dynamics play out at the national level. In analysing a successful campaign by the country's Muslim community to overturn an initiative by the government to ban the wearing of veils to school, I argued that disunity can be a powerful asset for campaigners, in that it multiplies the pressure on the government and forces it to respond.

In relation to findings from studies of Muslim politics elsewhere, this means that the emergence of Islamic reformism in Mozambique does produce some of the emancipatory effects Eickelman and others postulate, but not in terms of reasoning, deliberation or interpretation. Rather, pronouncements are a key form of expression and articulation through which the reformist counter public is mediated. Emancipation is thereby not the only effect. Just as Hirschkind found in Egypt, Islamic reformism introduces novel constraints which are as powerful as the ones they replace. In the case of Mozambique, however, these constraints are less related to practices of listening but focus on acts of speaking. Illustrative in this regard was the affirmation by the malimo of the Anwar madrasa that believing in the truth of God's words and commands is not sufficient. If they want to be saved, the malimo instructed his students, they need to publicly pronounce their convictions as true. This task is not easy, suggested the invited xehe on Radio Haq as he explained the special duties of xehes to follow Islamic prescriptions. It can be compared to carrying a heavy weight which requires careful handling, so that the message reaches far.



## CHAPTER 8. CONCLUSION

This thesis began with an anecdote involving Ali, a reformist Muslim youth living in the urban periphery of Nampula City, who was one of the participants in my research. He had become involved with the city's Islamic reform movement several years earlier, and actively tried to model himself and his life after the example of Prophet Muhammad. One of his ways of doing so was to attend evening prayers at the mosque instead of praying at home, even though this was dangerous, given the high crime rates in the locality. Aware of the danger, Ali normally took the precaution of leaving his phone at home when he went out for prayers in the evening, but one night he forgot to do so and was assaulted on his way back from the mosque. The assault left Ali with a dilemma: his phone had been stolen and he debated whether he should report the theft to the police or not. His relatives wanted him to file a report, but he considered the police ineffective and corrupt, and felt strengthened in his reluctance by teachings at his reformist mosque that the police do not abide by Islamic norms and are therefore best avoided. In the end, Ali followed the advice of his relatives and went to the police, but the decision led him to bemoan the difficulties of being a reformist Muslim in Mozambique. In his words, Mozambique is a "country of trial".

This perception of Mozambique as a testing environment is indicative, I argued in discussing Ali's dilemma, of the experiences of many Islamic reformists in Nampula City. Like Ali, they have enthusiastically embraced globally-oriented, Salafi-inspired interpretations of Islam, which a growing number of reformist mosques transmit (with the aid of Islamic donors) to their constituents in the city's urban periphery. These interpretations furnish reformist Muslims with new horizons, ideas of virtue and modalities of belonging, premised on scripturalist understandings of Islam. Yet, they also produce feelings of uncertainty and inadequacy, as reformist Muslims find it difficult to observe their faith under the conditions of religious and legal pluralism that characterise life in peri-urban northern Mozambique. These difficulties lead them to reflect unfavourably on their own situation in comparison with that of Muslims living in countries with a Muslim majority such as Saudi Arabia.

In order to study these different sentiments and understand the appropriation, impact and contestation of Islamic reformism in Nampula City, I opted to focus on two themes in this thesis: one, the articulation of Islamic reformism in the context of pluralism, and secondly, its manifestation in the domain of dispute management. Based on a discussion of the research literature on Mozambique, I situated these themes in relation to several sub-themes, namely authority, decentralisation and normativity.

Below, I shall offer a few final reflections on perceptions of life in Nampula City as a 'trial'. This is followed by a summary of the findings of my research, and an overview of what I see as the main contributions of these findings to a wider anthropological literature. By way of conclusion, I will outline two points for further research.

### **8.1 A country of trial**

Ali's classification of Mozambique as a 'country of trial' was coloured by his experience of living in a peri-urban neighbourhood of Nampula City, which I have named Bairro Acordado in this thesis. This neighbourhood of over 50,000 inhabitants constituted the primary site of my fieldwork. As I have described in Chapter 1, Islamic reformism is a recent but fast-growing phenomenon in this neighbourhood. While the first reformist mosques appeared in the mid-2000s, an estimated third of Bairro Acordado's total Muslim population considered themselves reformist Muslims by the time of fieldwork in 2010. The rapid growth of Islamic reformism came at the expense of local branches of Shadhiliyya and Qadiriyya Sufi orders. Reformist Muslims, seeking to bring understandings of Islam in line with Salafi interpretations and return Islamic practice to the model provided by the first generations of Muslims, criticised their Sufi counterparts in the neighbourhood for introducing what they considered elements of *bidah* (illicit innovation) into Islam. They further encouraged Muslims to take Islam as the primary frame of reference by which to negotiate every aspect of their lives. This was evinced by such outward manifestations as the growing adoption of the Islamic dress in Bairro Acordado. Their work was financially supported by a variety of local and international



Islamic benefactors, who funded the rehabilitation and maintenance of mosque buildings, as well as the operation of *madrasas* (Islamic schools).

The growth of Islamic reformism was the latest in a series of historical changes in Bairro Acordado. During colonial times, parts of the neighbourhood were inhabited by the region's autochthonous population. While they fell under the jurisdiction of 'traditional' leaders, areas closer to the city centre were urbanised and populated by settler citizens as well as an emergent middle class of African descent, who responded to the colonial administration. After Independence in 1975, Portuguese citizens left and FRELIMO substituted traditional authorities with local-level structures of governance such as neighbourhood secretaries, tasked with the realisation of the party's socialist agenda for the country. Bairro Acordado began to attract a growing number of urban migrants during those years, especially after civil war broke out between FRELIMO and RENAMO in the 1980s and the rural population fled to the city. The late 1980s and early 1990s were characterised by democratisation and neo-liberal economic reforms. Many residents lost their jobs as a result, but liberalisation also provided opportunities for traders and entrepreneurs, some of whom were members of reformist mosques. These differences in prospect were further exacerbated by the influx of foreign investment into the local economy. In the meantime, FRELIMO sought to increase its legitimacy by implementing a policy of decentralisation, which gave state recognition to Bairro Acordado's traditional leaders, as well as renewed impetus to institutions such as the neighbourhood's community court. Together, these changes resulted in a pattern of social organisation characterised by a mixture of principles of Makhuwa kinship and post-socialist citizenship, while religious life was dominated by Sufi Orders, the Catholic Church and Makhuwa ritual specialists.

Ali was, in this context, not the only reformist Muslim to experience life in Bairro Acordado as a trial. The chapters of the thesis featured a number of reports from other reformist Muslims describing the tribulations they encountered in their daily endeavours to fashion themselves after the example of Prophet Muhammad.

One type of trial involved navigating Bairro Acordado's multifarious system of dispute management. This domain was populated by a multitude of different actors, ranging from family members, neighbours, healers (*curandeiros*) and representatives of legal associations, to semi-state actors like community court judges and state actors such as the police. As Ali noted in his assessment of the police, these actors generally did not abide by Islamic norms. Instead, they resolved disputes according to an elastic set of kinship and state norms, whereby the weight placed on either pole varied, per actor and per case. This left reformist Muslims, seeking to settle disputes in accordance with Islam, with few options. There was the alternative to consult Islamic leaders from reformist mosques and ask them for their counsel or mediation. However, their effectiveness depended on the cooperation of both disputing parties, which was not always forthcoming. Moreover, even when people were disposed to adhere to Islamic norms, it was not necessarily clear what these norms were. The case of Alima (see Chapter 3) showed that different Islamic leaders give contradictory advice, based on their interpretations of Islamic scriptures. The discrepancy left reformist Muslims in the neighbourhood confused as to whose recommendations they should follow.

A different type of trial was constituted by people's worldly concerns. Based on their Salafi readings of Islam, reformist mosques formulated a number of demands about how their followers in Bairro Acordado should behave and organise their everyday lives. For example, mosque members were told that they should not go to *curandeiros* to protect themselves against sorcery attacks, or that women should stay at home and not engage in small trade. In a setting of poverty and health problems, these demands were difficult to negotiate. While reformist Muslims frequently ended up disregarding the advice they were given at mosques and established a compromise between their various commitments, there were also times that they privileged their religious engagements. An illustration of the latter was provided by the owner of a bar opposite a former Sufi mosque in Bairro Acordado (see Chapter 5). When this mosque was taken over by a reformist association, the new mosque leadership counselled him to turn the bar into a shop, because, they explained to him, selling alcohol is illicit (*haram*). He followed their advice, but his shop went bankrupt and he felt abandoned by the mosque leadership for

not doing more to support him. Yet, despite his financial loss and this falling out, he told me that he did not regret the decision, nor did he plan to reopen his bar. He had come to see his hardship as a trial for him to endure.

A third type of trial concerned the difficulties reformist Muslims experienced in an environment of religious pluralism, where many did not share the same beliefs. Examples of this included the normative expectations of people in Bairro Acordado regarding participation in social and ritual life in the neighbourhood. For instance, when there was a death in the family, residents invited their relatives and neighbours to attend the funeral and the ensuing ceremonies, regardless of their religious differences. Similarly, with reference to initiation rites, many residents considered these an essential part of socialisation, for initiates as well as for participating adults. In both cases, reformist Muslims felt ambivalent about taking part, on the grounds that they deemed these ceremonies and rites un-Islamic and sinful. However, if they refused, they risked isolating themselves socially. Somewhat similar dynamics could be observed in relation to violations of public decency. Whereas most people in Bairro Acordado did not react when they are confronted with transgressive behaviour of this sort, reformist research participants indicated that they felt compelled to approach the offender in question and offer their counsel, even though this frequently proved counter-productive, as it provoked the ire of the other party.

Finally, the state of Islamic knowledge in Bairro Acordado was experienced as a source of trial by reformist Muslims. As I showed in this thesis, once people became more involved with Islamic reformism, they came to regard Islam in Mozambique as 'not very developed'. Among other indicators, the command of the Arabic language of Mozambican Muslims was considered deficient. Furthermore, reformist Muslims found the Islamic practices of their ancestors and Muslims in their surroundings sinful. Sufi leaders shared the blame for these shortcomings, according to reformist Muslims, because they were believed to subvert the truth of Islam and keep Islamic knowledge for themselves, for their own financial gain. It was in relation to this perception of trial that comparisons with Muslim countries like Saudi Arabia were most pronounced. The

initiatives of reformist donors to incorporate Mozambique's Muslim community into the Salafi faction of the global *umma* had the effect of orienting reformist Mozambican Muslims toward the Middle East as the centre of 'true' Islam. This novel sense of belonging became a measure for evaluating local understandings of Islam, and it fostered perceptions of marginality and of living on the periphery of the *umma*. However, as I demonstrated in the thesis, it also led reformist Muslims to feel more central within the bounds of their own community, and endowed them with the confidence to publicise and transmit Islamic knowledge to their fellows.

The latter marks an important point about these different connotations of trial. The examples outlined above evince an element of struggle. One could conclude that Islamic reformism is a burdensome affair for the Muslims participating in Nampula City's reform movement. Indeed, the material presented in this thesis suggests that the articulation of Islamic reformism in the pluralist environment of Bairro Acordado often involves unhappy compromise: in negotiating their religious engagements with other commitments, there is a sense of sacrifice among reformist Muslims, and that they cannot do right, whichever choice they make. This raises the question of what draws them to reformism, or to put this differently, why Islamic reformism is successful in Bairro Acordado.

I think that there are, essentially, two answers to this question. First, while Islamic reformism is difficult to implement, it simultaneously strengthens people, both in their social interactions with others, as well as in dealing with life's challenges. The observation about reformists feeling more central to the neighbourhood's Muslim community is an illustration of this, but the thesis included other examples. For instance, Rajah and her husband turned to Islamic reformism after suffering from a series of misfortunes (see Chapter 4). They attributed these events to sorcery attacks by their rural kin. While their engagement with Islamic reformism resulted in a certain anguish about seeking out *curandeiros* for protection, it also taught them to accept their suffering as fate. They took solace from this acceptance.

Secondly, and following on from the example of Rajah and her husband, this empowering effect is fostered by the salvationist outlook of Islamic reformism. Reformist mosques instruct their followers in Bairro Acordado that, before they were born, they signed individual contracts with God, stipulating their lives and their promises of worship. Any challenges people meet on the way, whether in terms of poverty, health or emanating from their social environment, are therefore predetermined and a test from God, to see if they can keep their promise in the face of adversity and social pressure. If they do, they will duly be rewarded on Judgement Day, when the faithful gain access to Paradise, while those who have sinned are punished. This message is attractive, because in defining the testing conditions of life in Mozambique as a trial, it gives these circumstances meaning.

Seen from this perspective, classifications of Mozambique as a ‘country of trial’ are not merely lamentations by Ali and other reformist Muslims, or articulations of their experiences of marginality in relation to their social surroundings, or the *umma* more generally. Rather, they are expressions of the specific doctrine of reformism, and convey that Nampula City reformist Muslims derive a certain pride from the lot they have been given in life. Compared to Muslims living in Saudi Arabia, it may well be challenging for Mozambican Muslims to meet the standards required by Salafi interpretations of Islam, yet, to be a reformist Muslim in Mozambique was also seen as an opportunity, to keep faith, be grateful and show trust in God.

## 8.2 Findings

Against the backdrop of these observations, my research resulted in the following findings about the appropriation, impact and contestation of Islamic reformism in peri-urban northern Mozambique. To start with the question of its appropriation, I found that this is centred on people’s conceptions of personhood. Many residents of Bairro Acordado conceptualise the self in terms of interdependence, following Makhuwa notions of relatedness. As is captured by the eMakhuwa term *okhalano* (being together), they understand themselves to be fundamentally interconnected with others in a larger whole, both in terms of their wellbeing as well as through their embodied capacities for respect,

compassion and shame. Religious affiliations and notions of post-socialist citizenship superimpose a layer of individuality and independence on this understanding of the self. These different understandings are, however, ultimately combined with and interpreted through Makhuwa narratives of the self. Islamic reformism represents a radical break with these self-understandings. As the above discussion of perceptions of life being trial indicates, Muslim reformists define themselves primarily in relation to the divine. Seeking to emulate the persona and habits of Prophet Muhammad, they objectify the self, in order to make it available for continuous self-monitoring as they cultivate a sense of *taqwa* (fear of God). In the process, the self is individualised and abstracted from its social embedding.

The impact of this reorientation of the self, and therefore of Islamic reformism in general, lies in its epistemological ramifications. Makhuwa conceptions of the self in terms of interdependence are correlated, it emerged from my research, with the dualist perception that events in this world are structured by invisible forces. These forces are potent: they determine the social distribution of wellbeing, and can be manipulated for constructive as well as for destructive purposes. Hence, a significant amount of effort is dedicated toward their control. This can be observed at the individual level of people visiting *curandeiros* and being careful to avoid the wrath of others. But concerns about the invisible realm also permeate social organisation, as is evinced by a variety of social forms in northern Mozambique. Neighbourly relations, for example, are characterised in Bairro Acordado by material exchange and mutual assistance, meant to reduce the chances of sorcery attacks by neighbours looking to usurp or destroy each other's vitality. Similarly, in the past, the administration of justice involved the use of oath taking ceremonies. These ceremonies facilitated the reconciliation and social integration of disputing parties, and by that means, contained their destructive desires. Meanwhile, in politics as well as in Islamic knowledge transmission, relations of dependence predominate. Authority figures are thought to derive their power from their superior insight into the workings of the invisible realm, and they are thus relied upon to administer and guarantee social order.

The attempts of Islamic reformists to orient themselves towards God lead them to perceive reality, in contrast, in more singular, objective terms. Reformists do not deny that invisible forces exist, but, following their belief in predestination, argue that these can only affect them if this is part of God's plan. Instead of trying to control the invisible realm, they focus their attention on the worship of God and on their own salvation, whereby they take the revealed truth of Islamic scriptures as their guide. Consequently, their participation in the aforementioned social forms changes. In their interactions with neighbours, I discovered, reformists privilege the observance of Islamic norms over participation in networks of exchange. The same applies to other practices of Makhuwa kinship which function to alleviate social tensions and sorcery fears among kin and neighbours. In the domain of dispute management, they favour adversarial procedures of truth finding and the production of one single truth, rather than social integration. Whereas others in Bairro Acordado thereby say that they find it difficult to know what goes on inside the heart and emphasise the prevention of future wrongs over questions of what motivated disputing parties, reformists feel that inner states can and should be known, and they scrutinise people's intentions to determine culpability and hold offenders to account. Lastly, with regard to politics and the transmission of Islamic knowledge, Islamic reformists insist on mutuality, not dependence. They see themselves as part of a community of learners and consider it their individual duty to God to speak the truth whenever their religious knowledge leads them to detect the need to do so, regardless of the social consequences and even if this upsets authority figures.

The contestation of Islamic reformism – the final topic of my research – is concentrated on the fault lines between these different perceptions of reality. As I have analysed in this thesis, people in Bairro Acordado interpret the socially disembedded self-definitions and truth claims of Islamic reformists through the lens of their respective epistemological commitments. This was illustrated by an example from Ali himself, who became embroiled in an argument at his mosque when he publicly rebuked a mosque elder for his insufficient command of Arabic (see Chapter 7). Ali reasoned that he was doing this man and the members of the mosque community a service by protecting them from sin, but others did not see it in the same way: they considered his intervention a failure to respect

the elder's command of the invisible, and drew away from him. Such contestations generate uncertainty and insecurity, both on the part of Islamic reformists, as well as on that of others in their social surroundings. Reformists, as mentioned above, do not negate the existence of the invisible realm. They therefore worry that if they articulate their exclusive commitments to Islamic reformism too vigorously, they invite the retaliatory use of sorcery upon themselves. Others, at the same time, feel destabilised by the statements of reformists, and this leads them to question the truth of their own knowledge.

People's strategies for coping with these uncertainties vary. Sometimes, people harden their resolve and persist in their mutual differences. Following his argument at the mosque, Ali, for example, resisted pressure from his relatives to stop praying there and the incident bolstered his commitment to Islamic reformism. However, as the case of his assault and the discussion of reformists' experiences of trial in the previous section demonstrate, uncertainty also leads to negotiation and compromise, as people accommodate and adapt. The result is – either way – that Islamic reformism becomes mutually constitutive with other dimensions of social life. The appropriation and impact of Islamic reformism in peri-urban northern Mozambique, thus, need to be understood in relation to its contestation.

### **8.3 Contributions**

I think that these findings make several contributions to the anthropological literature. First, in relation to pluralism, I have outlined in Chapter 1 how this used to be an important theme in the analysis of Islamic reform movements. While Geertz (1957, 1968), for instance, highlighted the shaping of Islamic reformism by its socio-cultural and political environment (see also Gellner 1968), other anthropologists (Eickelman 1978; Lambek 1990, 1993; Messick 1993) situated Islamic reform movements in their epistemological contexts. The past decade, however, has seen less interest from researchers in these issues, as attention has shifted toward the study of ethical self-fashioning and the distinctive character of the self-models, modes of reasoning and affect Islamic reform movements propagate (Hirschkind 2006; Huq 2008; Mahmood 2005).



This shift has been criticised for its totalising nature and for its neglect of the complexity and multiplicity of the life worlds inhabited by Muslims (Soares and Osella 2009), leading several anthropologists to call for a return to the analysis of pluralism. Among others, Marsden and Retsikas (2013) argue for the study of articulations of Islam, as a way of exploring how Islam is mutually constituted in its enmeshment with other concerns of everyday social existence (see also Kresse 2013; Soares and Otayek 2007). Building on their proposal, I have analysed in this thesis how articulations of Islamic reformism in peri-urban northern Mozambique are structured by its pluralist context.

The above findings demonstrate the analytic merit of this approach. The results show that Islamic reformism in Nampula City cannot be understood without taking into account the heterogeneous nature of social life in the region. Specifically with regard to self-fashioning, the outcomes of my research demonstrate that the actualisation of the specific self-models of Islamic reformism depends on people's existing commitments, both in terms of the attractiveness of these models as alternatives to Makhuwa notions of relatedness, as well as in terms of their articulation and negotiation. As mentioned above, experiences of contingency and uncertainty are thereby no mere by-products of the encounter of Salafi-inspired reformism with prevalent modalities of belonging, but essential to the specific form this brand of reformism takes. A contribution this thesis makes to the proposal of Marsden and Retsikas (2013) is my focus on the articulation of Islam as a social phenomenon. Expressions of Islamic reformism influence others, I found, including those who do not share reformist beliefs. The responses of these others, in turn, structure the engagements of reformist Muslims with the world, and they should therefore be included in the analysis.

With regard to the second theme of the thesis, that of dispute management, I have discussed in Chapter 1 how the anthropological literature on this theme is dominated by the perspective of legal pluralism. A shift can be thereby be noted in the study of Islam and dispute management from early analyses of the interdependence of Islamic law with state orders and customary norms (Bowen 2000, 2003; Caplan 1995; Rosen 1989; F. von Benda-Beckmann 1979), to recent studies of people's strategies of forum 'shopping'

(Hirsch 1998; Stiles 2009) and their dilemmas resulting from their multiple allegiances to Islamic and state law (Agrama 2012; Shachar 2008). This novel focus has resulted in more attention from researchers for questions of agency, doubt and contingency. However, as I observed in my review of the literature, several issues remain under-explored. Firstly, except for references by Rosen (1989) and Bowen (1999) to the rigidification of boundaries between Islamic and other sets of norms, little is known about the effects of Islamic reformism on patterns of dispute management. It is also unclear how the interrelation between Islam and dispute management plays out in countries such as Mozambique, where the salience of Islamic law is limited while state law has little effectiveness. Furthermore, research on Islam and dispute management is weighted towards the study of family-related disputes, and the question is whether Islamic affiliation also influences how people deal with other types of disputes.

The previous sections provide several answers to these questions. In terms of types of disputes, the results of my research show that a variety of these are affected by the emergence of Islamic reformism in peri-urban Nampula City, including marital disputes, sorcery allegations, moral offence cases and political disagreements. Similar to what has been suggested by Franz von Benda-Beckmann and colleagues (2013) about religion in general, I found that Islamic reformism pervades these disputes in multiple ways. It influences people's forum 'shopping' behaviour, their views on divorce proceedings and their considerations of fairness in the allocation of marital property. It structures prevention and coping strategies in relation to sorcery. It directs people's reactions to offensive behaviour, their ethical sensibilities and their willingness to hold others to account. Furthermore, it affects patterns of reasoning about culpability, people's truth preferences, their public engagements, as well as their specific modes of relating to authority figures. As indicated above, conceptions of personhood and the associated perceptions of reality are major factors in determining these effects. This is the primary contribution of my thesis to the study of Islam and dispute management: its demonstration that changing religious understandings and beliefs structure disputing processes, even if they are not necessarily expressed as such in the context of disputes.

This brings me to the anthropological debate about the decentralisation policies of the Mozambican government. In Chapter 1, I mentioned that scholarship on Mozambique is divided on the effects of these efforts. Some (Bertelsen 2003, 2009; Florêncio 2008; Virtanen 2005; West 2009) claim that the reforms result in the proliferation of local power struggles, thus creating ambiguity over who has the authority in a given locality to provide adequate legal support. Others (Alexander 1997; Baker 2003; Buur and Kyed 2006; Orre 2007) argue that the reforms effectively make local power holders more visible to the state, as a result of which those who were previously able to act as sovereigns, due to the limited capacities of the state, are now made accountable to the government. In a related debate about normative underpinnings of social organisation in Mozambique, Obarrio (2007) argues that kinship norms become more prominent as a result of decentralisation. Kyed (2007), however, maintains that not kinship, but state norms and political sensibilities are reinvigorated.

My research results present a mixed picture in this respect. On the one hand, I found evidence of power struggles and an increased emphasis on kinship normativity in Bairro Acordado. For instance, in its rulings of divorce cases, the neighbourhood's community court used its decentralised mandate to position itself in opposition to state institutions and legal associations and promote kinship norms. Disputing parties could appeal these rulings elsewhere, but they were left to their own devices as to whose authority prevailed in such cases. On the other hand, a single direction could not easily be discerned. The same community court invoked its commitment to state law in other types of cases, for example when seeking to distinguish itself from *curandeiros*. In doing so, it appeared to contribute to the undermining of the latter's involvement in the domain of dispute management, and thereby restricted the available choices for dispute resolution in Bairro Acordado. This suggests that the effects of decentralisation depend on the specificities of different areas of social organisation. Nevertheless, what is clear from my findings is that state interventions in the social domain of peri-urban northern Mozambique are mediated by religion. State opposition to *curandeiros* intersects with condemnations of their work by Islamic reformists, while, from another standpoint, Islamic reformism reduces the dependence people feel toward FRELIMO and state figures in matters of governance.

Following the findings presented in the previous section, the epistemological orientations of Islamic reformists play herein an important role.

This emphasis on the epistemological dimensions of Islamic reformism is what I take to be a final contribution of my project to the anthropological literature. As mentioned in the above discussion of pluralism, epistemology is, in fact, a longstanding topic of interest among anthropologists of Islam. However, just as pluralism, it has gradually come to be disregarded under the influence of the so-called ‘piety’ turn (cf. Soares and Osella 2009: 10-12): the anthropology of Islam is currently dominated by the study of its ethical aspects. I have criticised this focus on ethics elsewhere in this thesis (see Chapter 4) for overstating the effects of self-fashioning on people’s normative commitments. Here, I argue in addition for a return to the analysis of Islamic reformism as a system of knowledge. My interest in this goes beyond processes of objectification and changing attitudes to Islamic knowledge itself, which have been well-documented by Eickelman (1978, 1992) and others (Brenner 1993; Eickelman and Piscatori 1996; Kane 2003). Instead, I propose to study intersections between Islamic knowledge, reformism and alternative epistemologies. As the outcomes of my project suggest, these are fundamental in structuring Islamic practice, as well as social organisation more generally.

#### **8.4 Further research**

The latter proposal is not new. Notably, as I have discussed in Chapter 1, Lambek (1990, 1993) developed a similar approach in his research on Islam, sorcery and spirit possession in Mayotte. Although Lambek’s work is mainly focused on synchronic relations between Islam and other disciplines of knowledge, and he is consequently less concerned with questions of Islamic reform and religious change, he shows persuasively that Islam, in conjunction with other modes of knowing, derives its relevance in social life primarily from its capacity to interpret and give meaning. More recently, Kresse (2009) has elaborated Lambek’s perspective by drawing attention to transactions of Islamic knowledge and to their centrality to broader dynamics of reciprocity and exchange among social actors. He conceptualises Islam as an economy of knowledge and demonstrates, in

his study of Islam in coastal Kenya, that this notion is particularly well-suited for analysing local manifestations of globally-oriented discourses of reform. My proposal to study Islam as a system of knowledge should be seen in the tradition of their work, as a call for this approach to be further developed. I have thereby identified two points for future research.

The first point concerns the relation between Islamic reformism and politics. As the findings of my project show, this relation is characterised in Mozambique by paradox and contradiction. On one level, from among the various political parties, Islamic reformists have the strongest affinity with FRELIMO, due to the overlap between their objectified perceptions of reality and the latter's socialist heritage of technocratic rationality. Yet, the two collide in practice: the emphasis of Islamic reformists on mutuality breaks the mould of the relationships of dependence FRELIMO seeks to cultivate through its professed control over forces of socio-economic development. The country's Islamic reform movement harbours herein the potential of a counter public, whereby its disuniting tendencies both undermine and strengthen its political impact. It will be interesting to see how this evolves in the future. One question in this regard is how reformist leaders, especially the ones involved with FRELIMO, deal with the contradictions inherent to this relation. The material presented in the last chapter suggests that they find it difficult to bridge the gap. Another question is how these dynamics play out at the level of peri-urban neighbourhoods. As mentioned in the chapter on fieldwork in Bairro Acordado, there have been a number of political developments since I left the field, including the opposition party MDM winning the municipal elections in Nampula City. MDM is currently in the process of replacing neighbourhood authorities with its own appointees. This is bound to result in politicisation of social relations at the local level, and the question is how Islamic reformism taps into these new developments.

The second point for future research is the comparison with evangelical Pentecostalism. At various points in this thesis did I draw on the research literature on Christianity to elucidate the working of Islamic reformism in peri-urban northern Mozambique. For example, I have shown that Islamic reformism mirrors evangelical Pentecostalism in its

renunciation of the social channels of sorcery. Although it does so less conclusively, this makes it attractive to first-generation urban migrants who fear sorcery attacks by their rural kin. Similarly, Islamic reformism shares elements of its objectified conceptions of truth with salvationist interpretations of Christianity. This overlap between the two forms of religiosity suggests that there may be more commonalities, and this warrants a comprehensive comparison. As has been proposed by Larkin and Meyer (2006), similarities and differences should thereby be analysed within a single conceptual framework. In the case of northern Mozambique, for instance, evangelical Pentecostalism is growing, just like Islamic reformism, and many of the members of evangelical churches are converts from Catholicism, drawn by the global orientations of Pentecostalism and its association with modernity. This raises the question of whether the impact of Pentecostalism on the economics of knowledge exchange in North Mozambique is similar to what I found in relation to Sufi Islam and Islamic reformism.

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