

In this study we trace the expansion of Islam to Nairobi in light of the colonial factor. The study tries to show that colonialism actually had an effect on this expansion. The nature of this effect was partial and unpre-meditated. Partial in the sense that colonialism only contributed to the dispersal of Muslims and that of the potential converts to Islam to Nairobi. However, it was inconsequential in the conversion of these potential converts (the upcountry peoples) to Islam.

Even in its dispersal role, it was not an intended contribution. It did not seek to provide conditions for the dispersal of Muslims; let alone the Islamization of the interior. Yet, the coincidence between Islamic expansion to Nairobi and the colonization process appears undeniable.

This is shown through tracing the possibilities of a pre-colonization Islamic expansion to Nairobi which we found wanting. Yes, evidences are there that the interior peoples may have known about the coast - the depository of Islam-; but their knowledge of Islam as a religion could not be identified. It was not until the era of the caravan trade that the first discernible manifestations of the Muslims as a people in the interior became evident.

As a result, faint evidence of the interior people's familiarity with Islam as a system of belief is betrayed. And, even then, traces of the Islamization of the interior are still wanting. However, the intervention of the Europeans provided some impetus to such traces. This provision was in the context of the elevated position that the Swahili society was to enjoy in the new world that came into being at the onset of European intervention.

This intervention also facilitated Islamic expansion in as far as it caused into being circumstances that made Islamization of the interior a possibility. In one respect, it led to the rise of a metropolitan and cosmopolitan city, Nairobi. And, second, it created a state of affairs within the interior societies which, in concert with other factors such as natural calamities, saw the rise of "refugees" who sought sanctuary in Nairobi. Here, they came into contact with the Swahili immigrants, and in the light of circumstances that had brought the interior peoples to Nairobi, the process of Islamization assumed shape.

However, it is argued that colonialism had little to offer with respect to this process of Islamization. On the contrary, the Swahili society and its dynamics then, is held as accountable for the resultant upcountry Muslim demography in Nairobi. This is substantiated by a demonstration of the fact that this resultant demography was initially called Swahili rather than Muslim.

Hence, in the conclusion, it is adopted that though colonialism provided the historical factors for the Islamization of Nairobi, it was inconsequential in determining the interior African peoples' acceptance of Islam. Put differently, colonialism accounts for the dispersal of Muslims and the potential converts to Nairobi. However, it does not account for the spread of Islam in Nairobi.