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The Morality of Schooling: Women's Education as an Arena for Social Tension in Cabo Delgado

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Abstract

In this article, I reflect on education as a continuing arena of tension for people in Cabo Delgado. The tension between formal (state-sponsored) and religious education as a backdrop of the conflict in Cabo Delgado has been widely mentioned but largely misunderstood. Scholars have consistently mentioned poverty and people's lack of access to formal education as drivers of the disenfranchisement that has led to violent extremism in the province. There are also references to how the insurgent movement has shunned formal education in favour of Islamic teachings. The existing literature about the insurgent's rejection of state-sponsored education, especially for girls, fails to address a trajectory whereby formal (state-sponsored) education has been a field of tension for a long time. Similar tensions happened across the Swahili coast in both English and French colonies. From interviews focused on women's relationships and experiences with both the colonial and postcolonial state, it emerged that Muslim populations in Cabo Delgado, particularly on the coast, have a long history of suspicion towards state-sponsored education. This includes showcasing a locally established practice for women's education that predated and existed alongside formal education. This follows that cultural and religious dynamics do not preclude women's influence in society, particularly education. In fact, it relies on her active participation. At the same time, despite potential violent cooptation, in the context of the conflict, the insurgent movement is able to tap into the existing tensions, including that around state-sponsored education. Evidence from the field indicates that, despite the disadvantages of resisting formal education, religious education remains central to most people, not just those following the extremist movement. What may appear to be an extremist rupture from mainstream practice should be understood within a logic operating on shared and familiar values.

Keywords

Women's education, religious education, state-sponsored education, conflict, Cabo Delgado

Introduction

This article is part of my postdoctoral research on gendered aspects linked to the recent insurgency in the northern Mozambican province of Cabo Delgado.[1] I arrived in Pemba in late February 2022 for the first of three data collection trips. On the first trip, I intended to identify the relevant actors with whom I could discuss women's situation and whether there had been significant changes because of the conflict. At the end of the three visits I had conducted interviews with 25 individuals (men and women), who were members of the local government, non-governmental organisations, religious-based organisations, customary and religious leaders and school managers. I also conducted three group interviews with female neighbourhood leaders and displaced and non-displaced female traditional leaders.

I had not been to Pemba since 2015, two years before the insurgency started. The city was already booming, and buildings in the expansion neighbourhoods, which started being planned in 2005, were slowly being populated. When I arrived in 2022, these neighbourhoods were entirely inhabited and showing signs of overcrowding. Before, the town was sleepy. Most of its activities were related to Government work because Pemba is the province's capital. It was also where non-governmental organisations (NGOs) operating in the province had their headquarters. Generally, passing through Pemba on the way to other places in the province, like Montepuez, Mocímboa, Palma or across the border to Tanzania, was unnecessary. Now, there were motorcycles everywhere, including spots where taxi-bikes gathered awaiting clients.

I questioned my taxi driver about the many half-finished high-rises. According to him, most were being built by the Chinese. Most of the constructions, he reiterated, stopped during the COVID-19 pandemic when the Chinese left. On the way to one of my scheduled meetings, we passed the main opposition party, Renamo, headquarters, where several women stood outside. I realised then that I had not planned to interview women from the opposition. I asked the taxi driver whether he knew any influential women from Renamo. He said that he knew one in his neighbourhood. We agreed that he would arrange a meeting, which only happened when I was almost done with the initial stay, a month later.

The house where she was waiting for us was in Nanhimbe, one of the expansion neighbourhoods. She was a woman around sixty years old, medium built. She wore the expected *capulana*[2] around her waist and as a headscarf. Her white t-shirt had an anti-child marriage campaign slogan. She looked at me with some suspicion as she signed for me to sit in one of the three chairs she had prepared in the yard. I sat in one, she on one beside mine, but at a certain distance. The taxi driver sat in the third, further away.

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1 Research for this article was carried out in the context of the research project nr. 316070, Cabo Delgado: Conflict, Resilience and Reconstruction, funded by the Norwegian Research Council. I would like to thank, among others, Anne Bang, Liazzat Bonate, Paolo Israel and the two anonymous reviewers, for their insightful comments on early drafts. I would also like to thank Pauline Lemaire for laboriously developing the map of the missions.

2 Coloured patterned cloth used by women for multiple purposes, including clothing and headcover.

I introduced myself and the study and purpose that led me to her. Early in the conversation I complained that I was finding it difficult to meet and interview traditional female leaders.

> Carmeliza: When I talk to people around here and ask, 'are there queens?'[3] They always say, 'no, there are no queens here because women are very low [in status]. They are not regarded here in Cabo Delgado.'
>
> Mama Renamo: No, no, no. Even there at the Renamo delegation, we are used to receiving queens. Even in the districts, yes.
>
> Carmeliza: Then why are people not seeing that there are queens here? […]
>
> Mama Renamo: They are ignorant and greedy. Some people, yes, they are ignorant and greedy. […] and their greed is like this… There are some women who did not study; they are illiterate. But even the Quran, it is study. Between the Quran and Portuguese, there is no difference. It is only different because the Portuguese is more elevated and more developed. That is why they are saying that there are no queens. It is a lie![4]

From this exchange I was confronted with several issues that have permeated my reflections about the situation of women and the current conflict in Cabo Delgado. One of them was the issue of the study of Quran, ostensibly in the Arabic script and the study of Portuguese and the Latin script. Liazzat Bonate's[5] work underlines how Ajami literacy (Arabic script used for writing African languages) was gradually replaced as a form of literacy with the colonial conquest in favour of the Latin script. This hierarchy prevailed in the postcolonial era, too. This obscured an important form of communication for a large part of the Muslim communities in Northern Mozambique. As will be discussed later, in this region, at least up until the late 1990s, Ajami continued to be used in personal communication and was commonly taught in *Quranic* schools, locally called *madrassa*. The decrease in the use of the Ajami script was largely due to changes within the Muslim community. These changes reflected the hierarchy of influence regarding Islamic education between more traditional leaderships embedded in local matrilineal kinship networks and the *ulama*[6] graduated from Islamic institutions abroad and who shunned these networks, authority and customary practices.[7]

The above dynamics reflect some (self-)exclusion and tension that are played out in the education arena, both within the Muslim communities and in relation to the non-Muslim state under which they exist. Literature about the insurgency mentions this arena as one that manifests as both a driver of violence and extremism and an

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3 By 'queens', I meant women who are part of the traditional leadership structures, even if not recognised formally by the state.
4 Interview, Mama Renamo, Pemba, 10 March 2023. Names have been changed to protect the participants' identities.
5 L. J. K. Bonate, 'A Escrita Árabe no Norte de Moçambique', *Revista África e Africanidades*, XIV, 39, 2021, 12; L. J. K. Bonate, 'Islam and Literacy in Northern Mozambique: Historical Records on the Secular Uses of the Arabic Script', *Islamic Africa*, 7, 1, 2016, 60–80.
6 Religious scholars.
7 L. J. K. Bonate, 'Islamic Education in Mozambique', *Anual Review of Islam in South Africa*, 9, July 2006, 53–57; L. J. K. Bonate, 'Roots of Diversity in Mozambican Islam', *Lusotopie*, VIX, 1, 2007, 129–49.

expression of the cleavage between the state and adherents and supporters of the insurgency. Maquenzi and Feijó argue that sustained poverty and increased inequalities, particularly in extractive industry areas, added to the tension and violence in the region.[8] Opportunities for education and economic improvement were perceived as purposefully denied to Muslims. Others discuss how the adherents of the insurgency gradually distinguished themselves from other Muslims by, among other things, shunning formal education in favour of exclusively Islamic teachings.[9]

Habibe et al. argue that the lack of uniformisation of the *madrassas*' curriculum creates fertile ground for radicalisation.[10] This presumes that a uniform curriculum could prevent radicalisation, and *madrassas* could eventually serve as spaces for deradicalisation. This perspective is not new. During the colonial period, the Portuguese state also considered that *madrassas* were fertile ground for stirring anti-Portuguese sentiment, undermined the 'portugalisation' of the native population, and, in Northern Mozambique, had an undue connection with mosques in Tanganyika. Reaction from the Portuguese state went from the closure of *madrassas*, which was met with resistance from the religious leaders, population and even some colonial administrators, to coaxing sympathetic religious leaders and insisting on Portuguese as the teaching language in *madrassas*.[11] Similar approaches were taken by the Mozambican state in their relationship with the Muslim religious leadership and in reaction to the insurgency. The postcolonial government's Marxist ideology led to the restriction of religious activities in the late 1970s and early 1980s, which was met with great resistance. A policy change incentivised the development of an organisation which could represent the interests of the Muslim community. The Islamic Council of Mozambique, which has developed close ties with the Mozambican state, emerged as the most influential and since the 1990s has been harmonising the curriculum in *madrassas* under its influence. It has also sponsored schools which offer subjects from the secular national curriculum in addition to religious education, though it has not been the only organisation to do so.[12] In Pemba, two private Muslim schools administer the national curriculum. One is sponsored by the Africa Muslim Agency, while the other is managed by a member of the local chapter of the Islamic Council of Mozambique.

In the existing analyses, women are either absent or portrayed as non-actors, namely 'easy to indoctrinate' or 'forced to marry or have sex with leaders of the Al-Shabaab'.[13] About women's subservience, authors also mention that 'women had to wear the *burqa*', 'the group forbid women to do any work outside the home',[14] and the

8 J. Maquenzi and J. Feijo, *Pobreza, Desigualdades e Conflitos no Norte de Cabo Delgado* (OMR, 2019).
9 S. Habibe, S. Forquilha and J. Pereira, *Islamic Radicalization in Northern Mozambique* (IESE, 2019); E. Morier-Genoud, 'The Jihadi Insurgency in Mozambique: Origins, Nature and Beginning', *Journal of Eastern African Studies*, 14, 3, 2020, 396–412; T. Heyen-Dubé and R. Rands, 'Evolving Doctrine and Modus Operandi: Violent Extremism in Cabo Delgado', *Small Wars & Insurgencies*, 33, 3, 2022, 437–66.
10 Habibe, Forquilha and Pereira, *Islamic Radicalization in Northern Mozambique.*
11 M. A. Machaqueiro, 'O Ensino na Política Islâmica do Moçambique Colonial: Da ansiedade islamofóbica à miragem do "Islão português"', *Cadernos de Estudos Africanos* [Online], 25, 2013, http://journals.openedition.org/ cea/859.
12 L. J. K. Bonate, 'Islam in Northern Mozambique: A Historical Overview', *History Compass*, 8, 7, July 2010, 573–93.
13 Habibe, Forquilha and Pereira, *Islamic Radicalization in Northern Mozambique*, 28.
14 Morier-Genoud, 'The Jihadi Insurgency in Mozambique', 399.

group openly rejected 'the (secular) state and preventing their children from going to school'.[15] Moreover, the province of Cabo Delgado is portrayed as neglected and marginalised,[16] as reflected in lower levels of literacy, particularly among women.[17] Only one study reflects on the roles of women in the current conflict, which is in many ways similar to the dynamics of previous armed conflicts and Islamist insurgencies in other geographies.[18] It mentions the active indoctrination of women as wives, mothers and educators, 'responsible for inculcating what is called the correct principles of Islam'.[19]

The existing literature about the insurgents' rejection of state-sponsored education, especially for girls, fails to address a trajectory whereby formal (state-sponsored) education has been a field of tension for a long time. Similar tensions happened across the Swahili coast in both English and French colonies. This historical tension suggests that a religious-cultural logic may have challenged and exacerbated diminished opportunities. This paper intends to reflect on this line of analysis by focusing on the historical tensions between state-sponsored and religious education in Cabo Delgado to deepen our understanding of the conflict. This includes showcasing a locally established practice for women's education that predated and existed alongside formal education. I argue that cultural and religious dynamics do not preclude women's influence in society at large and education in particular. In fact, it relies on her active participation. At the same time, despite potential violent co-optation, in the context of this conflict, the insurgent movement is able to tap into the existing tensions, including those around state-sponsored education. What may appear to be an extremist rupture from mainstream practice should be understood within a logic operating on shared and familiar values.

In doing so, the article aims to explore the tensions in the education field and their historical roots and dimensions. Additionally, it aims to insert women as equally interested parties in the processes of exclusion, self-exclusion and radicalisation in Cabo Delgado. To achieve these objectives, I will first contextualise similar processes that occurred on the Swahili coast under different colonial powers, namely regarding tensions between religious and state-sponsored education, particularly regarding the education of women. I will follow this by highlighting how similar processes manifested historically also in Northern Mozambique. Following this, I will exemplify, using the narratives of some of the study participants, how the Muslim community in Cabo Delgado adjusted to the changing education policies and makes sense of the purpose and opportunities made available by the different forms of education. This meant either adapting and reaping the state-sponsored education's possible benefits or self-excluding and isolating within the local Muslim community or its regional network. An important discussion regarding education involves imaginations of

15 Morier-Genoud, 'The Jihadi Insurgency in Mozambique', 402.
16 e.g. Heyen-Dubé and Rands, 'Evolving Doctrine and Modus Operandi'.
17 E. Motolinia, 'Main Sociodemographic Indicators of Cabo Delgado 2022' (UNICEF, 2022).
18 J. Feijo, 'O papel das mulheres no conflito em Cabo Delgado: entendendo ciclos viciosos da violência' (Friedrich-Ebert-Stiftung, Peace and Security Centre of Competence Sub-Saharan Africa, 2021).
19 Feijo, 'O papel das mulheres no conflito em Cabo Delgado', 18.

modernity. The last part of this article will be devoted to discussing how modernity is iterated by the study participants and what it means to its relationship with non-religious education spaces, particularly for women.

As mentioned above, the study is based on multiple interviews conducted with 25 individuals (women and men) and three group interviews with influential female community leaders in February, March and October 2022. The fieldwork (interviews and observation) occurred in the City of Pemba, in a Resettlement Camp in Metuge and another in Montepuez. Interviewees were selected through the snowballing method, with initial interviewees suggesting and facilitating contact with further research participants. Additional data includes sample sermons collected from WhatsApp groups focused on Islamic teachings. Interviewees have been anonymised to protect participants' privacy. From social media, only material deemed public (i.e. public sermons) was used.

Colonial tensions of religious and state-sponsored education on the Swahili coast

The history of Cabo Delgado should be understood both in the context of Mozambique and in its relationship with the wider Swahili coast. As such, it is important to understand how the different Swahili communities related to the different colonial powers and their educational policies. Below, I present examples of different colonial administrations, German, English and French, and how they have affected and shaped the education of Muslim populations in Tanganyika, Zanzibar and the Comoros.

One of the most important aspects, which remains contentious is the issue of language of instruction. In Tanganyika, German missionaries and colonial administration introduced Swahili as a language of instruction in the nineteenth century. The British followed a similar policy from 1919, when it became a British colony. Up until 1961, Swahili was the language of instruction in lower primary school, and English was gradually introduced from fifth grade and fully at the secondary level. This policy carried on until 1966, when Swahili became the sole language of instruction in both lower and upper primary education. English remained the language of instruction at the secondary level.[20]

In Zanzibar, however, until the twentieth century, the language of instruction was Arabic in the Quranic schools. Public schools promoted by the colonial administration were introduced in 1905, with Arabic and Swahili (in the Arabic script) as languages of instruction. Swahili (in the Romanised script) was introduced in 1910. This led to a decrease in attendance and the reintroduction, in the 1920s, of Arabic as a language of instruction, along with the Romanised version of Swahili for translation support.[21]

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20 I. N. Swilla, 'Languages of Instruction in Tanzania: Contradictions between Ideology, Policy and Implementation', *African Study Monographs*, 30, 1, March 2009, 2–3.

21 C. Bolton, 'Making Africa Legible: Kiswahili Arabic and Orthographic Romanization in Colonial Zanzibar', *American Journal of Islamic Social Sciences*, 33, 3, July 2016, 69.

Quranic schools have been equally important in the Comoros, with Arabic script and Comorian (in its four variants) as the language of instruction.[22] In public schools, however, French was introduced as the language of instruction at the beginning of the twentieth century, when it gradually began to overtake Swahili as the official mode of communication. However, it was only in the 1960s that it became compulsory for parents to send their children to the so-called 'French schools'.

The emphasis on the French language in the Comoros reflected the markers of French colonial education, namely the focus on assimilation into some form of 'French consciousness'. They kept religious and secular education separate, with centralised secular teachings. Portugal would eventually follow a similar assimilationist approach to coloniality.

Due to the separation of secular and religious education, Quranic schools were particularly important in the Comoros. Children (both boys and girls) were enrolled in these schools two to three years before entering primary school. According to Abdourahim Saïd Bakar, 'the role of the Koranic school […] is considered a 'religious shield' against the devil's influence and teaching of the "Kafirs" – the infidel Christians'.[23] From the late 1970s, these schools became an integral part of the Comorian educational system, showcasing the importance of religious education.

Whereas the influence of Christian values was a concern for all children, there were particular worries about girls. Corinne Decker, on the access of girls to secular education in colonial Zanzibar, mentions that the Quran was a symbol of education in itself.[24] To counter communities' preference for religious education, the educational policy in this protectorate partially integrated secular and religious education, after one of the markers of English colonial education, cultural 'sensitivity'. Through this, education was supposed to be 'adapted to the mentality, aptitudes, occupations and tradition' and 'rooted in an appreciation of this cultural diversity'.[25] When, from the 1920s, Swahili and Arabic were reintroduced as the language of instruction, English was also offered as a subject. According to Decker, the latter was more appreciated by the girls than their parents. As she argues, English literacy led girls in Zanzibar, particularly in the 1930s through the 1940s, to challenge the then-accepted parameters of respectability or *heshima*. Some of the ways this was challenged was because aside from the ability of reading the Quran, general literacy had been taboo for girls.[26]

The design of education programmes in Zanzibar from the 1930s attempted, then, to accommodate local sensitivities like the issue of respectability of unmarried girls. According to Decker, 'in addition to practical considerations for upholding the laws of purdah (female seclusion), parents demanded that Quranic instruction be the foundation on which the schools were built to ensure their girls would grow

22 A. Saïd Bakar, 'Small Island Systems: A Case Study of the Comoro Islands', *Comparative Education*, 24, 2, 1988, 181–91.
23 Saïd Bakar, 'Small Island Systems', 183.
24 C. Decker, 'Reading, Writing, and Respectability: How Schoolgirls Developed Modern Literacies in Colonial Zanzibar', *The International Journal of African Historical Studies*, 43, 2010, 89–114.
25 B. W. White, 'Talk about School: Education and the Colonial Project in French and British Africa (1860–1960)', *Comparative Education*, 32, 1, 1996), 19.
26 Decker, 'Reading, Writing, and Respectability'.

into good Muslim women'.[27] This meant teaching domestic science at girls' schools. Parents were particularly concerned with the 'usefulness' of teaching and its moral content and were still suspicious of the colonial authorities' programme.

> As one parent wrote in a local newspaper, schools should 'teach our children what will be useful to them in this world and the next'. Not content with Islamic schooling in Swahili translation and limited memorisation of the Qur'an, some parents suspected that the Islamic curriculum was created by Christian missionaries.[28]

The colonial authorities expected that the focus on domesticity for girls, as part of what they perceived as acceptable for parents, would make them more prone to enrol their daughters in state-sponsored schools. Parents' mistrust of colonial education was associated with their perception that colonial education 'increased promiscuity and the loss of moral and religious beliefs'.[29] To this, it was added that many schools were funded and managed by missionaries. This posed a challenge in majority Muslim areas along the Swahili Coast, where parents worried that their children would be converted to Christianity.

Meanwhile, the girls were more interested in the secular content, like English and Arabic (unconnected to religious teachings), and the ability to read and write in multiple languages. As Decker explains, this gave girls access to 'modernity', which for parents equated to the loss of morals and distancing from religious values and propriety expected from women. Women, in particular, had an important role in controlling the education of children, both boys and girls, within the domestic sphere.[30] As I will present below, in Mozambique, parents had similar concerns. Currently, they (particularly mothers and grandmothers) continue to view formal schools as spaces of moral corruption, especially due to the risk of girls getting pregnant prior to finishing school or getting married.

The colonial and postcolonial continued exclusions in Northern Mozambique's coast

There are important frictions within the Muslim community that have surfaced since the arrival of two new Sufi Orders (Shadhuliyya Yashrutiyya in 1897 and Qadiriyya in 1904/5) to Mozambique Island. These orders challenged the control of Islamic education and associated rituals held by the local *mwene* and their matrilineal kinship networks. Despite this, the Sufi practices still offered a 'framework in which women had the chance to rise within a religious hierarchy, to become *khalifa*,[31] i.e. leaders of

27 Decker, 'Reading, Writing, and Respectability', 94.
28 C. Bolton, '"Useful" Knowledge and Moral Education in Zanzibar Between Colonial and Islamic Reform, 1916–1945', *Islamic Africa*, 12, 1, 2022, 30.
29 C. Decker, *Mobilising Zanzibari Women* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan US, 2014), 24.
30 E. A. McDougall, 'Hidden in the Household: Gender and Class in the Study of Islam in Africa', *Canadian Journal of African Studies / Revue Canadienne Des Études Africaines*, 42, 2/3, 2008, 508–45.
31 Spiritual guide of a religious order.

zikiri[32] celebrations, to be teachers in the *madrassa* and, in general, to enjoy the prestige that the community ascribes to leaders of these activities'.[33] According to Bonate, the coexistence of matriliny and Islam in Mozambique was helped by incorporating matrilineal ruling lineages into the colonial administrative system.[34] Likewise, the postcolonial state, by attempting to undermine and then control the often conflicting Islamic and traditional authorities, contributed to reinforcing matrilineal practices.[35]

Like elsewhere on the Swahili coast, under colonial rule, the focus on domesticity for girls was also common in Mozambique.[36] Similarly to other colonies in the region, schools were largely run by missionaries. In the Portuguese territories, the Catholic church was the most prominent, although there were also protestant missions.[37] The Catholic church's influence increased particularly from 1940, when the New Portuguese State signed a Concordate with the Holy See. This gave the Catholic church supremacy over state-sponsored education, over Muslim religious confessions, but also protestant and even the non-Portuguese Catholic religious orders.[38] In Cabo Delgado, the majority of the missions were in the interior of the province, giving the coastal populations less access to state-sponsored education.

As Bonate explains, in the period of the effective imposition of administrative and political control, following the Berlin Conference of 1884–1885, 'African Muslims of Northern Mozambique, unlike in previous historical periods, suffered a complete marginalisation within the European rule'.[39] Prior to this period, the Portuguese had not developed specific policies for the governance of the Muslim population. With the need to consolidate their administrative presence, however, 'Portugal actually "encountered" Mozambican Muslims […] and transformed them into colonial subjects'.[40] Despite this encounter, proper governance of Islam was not attempted until the 1960s, shortly before the liberation war started. Until then, there was a perception that Muslims were allied with the Pan-Islamist doctrine and were 'impervious to Portuguese "Western" values'.[41] The narrative about this population began to change in response to the independence movement when the Portuguese colonial movement attempted to coax some Muslim leaders to ally with the colonial project.[42]

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32 Ritual recitations and songs in the context of ceremonies and rituals (see S. Tarsitani, 'Mawlūd: Celebrating the Birth of the Prophet in Islamic Religious Rituals and Wedding Ceremonies in Harar', *Annales d'Éthiopie*, 23, 1, 2007, 153–76.

33 F. Declich, 'Transmission of Muslim Practices and Women's Agency in Ibo Island and Pemba (Mozambique)', *Journal of Eastern African Studies*, 7, 4, November 2013, 589. See also McDougall for more examples of female Islamic leaders within Sufi orders and lineages.

34 L. J. K. Bonate, 'Islam and Matriliny along the Indian Ocean Rim: Revisiting the Old "Paradox" by Comparing the Minangkabau, Kerala and Coastal Northern Mozambique', *Journal of Southeast Asian Studies*, 48, 3, October 2017, 436–51.

35 L. J. K. Bonate, 'Matriliny, Islam and Gender in Northern Mozambique', *Journal of Religion in Africa*, 36, 2, 2006, 139–66.

36 K. Sheldon, '"I Studied with the Nuns, Learning to Make Blouses": Gender Ideology and Colonial Education in Mozambique', *The International Journal of African Historical Studies*, 31, 3, 1998, 595.

37 T. Cruz e Silva, 'Educação, Identidades e Consciência Política. A Missão Suíça No Sul de Moçambique (1930–1975)', *Lusotopie*, 1998, 397–405.

38 'Concordata Entre a Santa Sé e a República Portuguesa de 1940', <https://www.vatican.va/roman_curia/secretariat_state/archivio/documents/rc_seg-st_19400507_santa-sede-portogallo_po.html> (accessed 1 October 2023).

39 L. J. K. Bonate, 'Divergent Patterns of Islamic Education in Northern Mozambique: Qur'anic Schools of Angoche' in *Islamic Education in Africa* (Indiana University Press, 2016), 99.

40 L. J. K. Bonate, 'Governance of Islam in Colonial Mozambique' in *Colonial and Post-Colonial Governance of Islam* (Amsterdam University Press, 2011), 29.

41 M. Machaqueiro, 'Ambivalent Islam: The Identity Construction of Muslims under Portuguese Colonial Rule', *Social Identities*, 18, 1, January 2012, 40.

42 Bonate, 'Governance of Islam in Colonial Mozambique'; Machaqueiro, 'O Ensino na Política Islâmica do Moçambique Colonial'; Machaqueiro, 'Ambivalent Islam'.

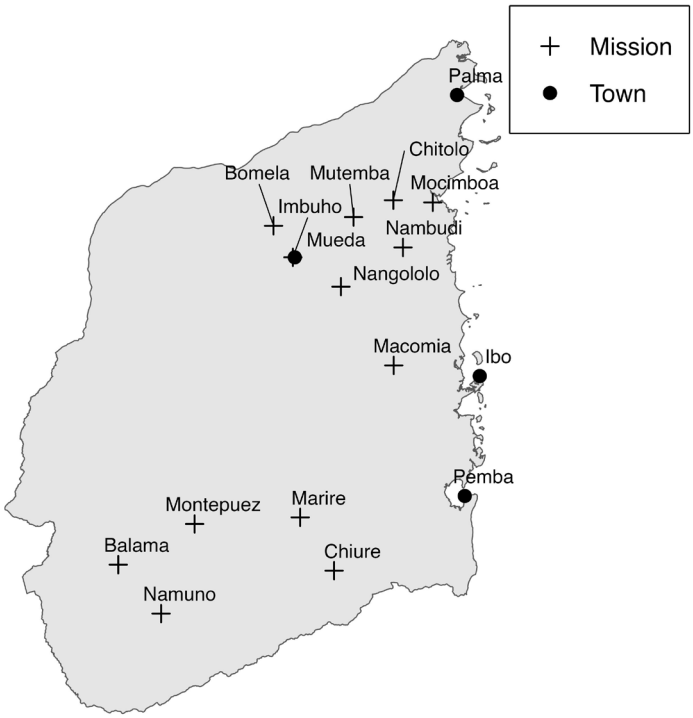

Fig. 1. Map of Catholic Missions in Cabo Delgado.[43]

General policies aimed at African colonial subjects affected African Muslims, concentrated in Northern Mozambique, differently from non-Muslim Africans. In particular, the *Indigenato* system,[44] which created a possible avenue of inclusion for Africans through assimilation of European values and education, was generally inaccessible to the Muslims, as the Portuguese viewed Islam as an incompatible if alternative form of 'civilisation'. Until 1942, there were provisions for workers' children's elementary education under the 1928 Statute of Indigenous Labour Regime (Decree no. 16:199). The responsibility of educating the indigenous children was transferred from the Portuguese state to the Catholic church in 1942 through the Missionary Statute (Decree no. 31:207, art. 66). Only in 1953, under ordinance no. 14440, non-Catholic children were permitted to be educated by the state. Prior to this, all enrolled children were baptised. Meanwhile, most Muslim children whose parents resisted continued to be educated within the *madrassas* and were excluded from state/mission-sponsored education.

43 Map built through a combination of information from interviews, H. G. West, *Kupilikula: Governance and the Invisible Realm in Mozambique*, University of Chicago Press, 2005 and E. Guambe, 'A administração "unificada» do Estado Novo: de um projecto uniformizador a uma prática diferenciada', *Renegociar a Centralidade do Estado em Moçambique*, Africae, 2019.

44 Legislation and institutions that distinguished between the settler and native populations, and their rights (see e.g. B. O'Laughlin, 'Class and the Customary: The Ambiguous Legacy of the "Indigenato" in Mozambique', *African Affairs*, 99, 394, 2000, 5–42).

The years immediately before independence mark the increasing influence of the graduates of Salafi[45] Islamic institutions abroad. These became dominant within the Islamic Council of Mozambique, established in 1981, and which has national reach. Starting in the social, political and economic liberalisation period of the 1990s, the Islamic Council sponsored the creation of new types of Islamic schools able to participate in 'modern' society, with both secular disciplines (national curriculum) and religious education. Emphasis was given to the Arabic language, marking a departure from the relationship with the Ajami script that had prevailed until then.[46]

Due to their access to missionary education, Christianised communities in the interior of the province and the Mueda plateau have been consistently better positioned to access the few opportunities available to the native population during colonial times and the rural population in postcolonial times.[47] For example, as Signe Arnfred mentions, mission-educated women substituted the female guerilla fighters in the leadership of the Mozambican Women's Organization (OMM) following independence. Additionally, education in the missions and subsequently state-sponsored schools benefited individuals irrespective of political affiliation or ethnolinguistic background. However, filiation in Frelimo constituted an added advantage. [48]

Literacy has always been high on the independence project agenda. In the liberated zones, in Cabo Delgado and Niassa, women assisted in the social institutions, such as elementary schools and adult literacy.[49] The social institutions in the liberated zones served as experiments of the postcolonial state building project. After independence, the process of forced villagisation, for example, intended to bring services like health and education closer to the population. How these services were organised and delivered mimicked the arrangements of the liberated zones.

The independent Mozambican state formally adopted a policy of secularism, i.e., of separation of church and state, and centralised the responsibilities of providing social services. According to Severino Ngoenha, the policy was more anti-religious than secular.[50] The nationalisation of private property also included religious infrastructures. This targeted chiefly the Catholic church, which had held an almost monopoly of social services in collaboration with the colonial state. In this, the new socialist state had, in fact, followed a closely Portuguese anti-clerical law from 1910/11, extending it to all religious confessions. In 1910, the new Portuguese Republic confiscated the church's assets, prohibited public cults without a state permit, nationalised the church's assets, and cancelled the Catholic church's judicial existence.

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45 A movement that tries to emulate the practices of early Muslims, who lived during the lifetime of the Prophet Muhammad. As such, they follow a more literal interpretation of the Quran and the hadiths. They also strive for a full application of the *sharia* (Islamic law) (L. J. K. Bonate, 'Transformations de l'islam à Pemba au Mozambique', *Afrique contemporaine*, 231, 3, 2009, 61–76).

46 Bonate, 'Islamic Education in Mozambique'; Bonate, 'Roots of Diversity in Mozambican Islam'.

47 Y. Adam, *Escapar aos dentes do crocodilo e cair na boca do leopardo: trajectoria de Moçambique pós-colonial (1975–1990)*, Colecção Identidades, 31 (Maputo, Mocambique: Promédia, 2005).

48 S. Arnfred, 'Women in Mozambique: Gender Struggle and Gender Politics', *Review of African Political Economy*, 15, 41, 1988, 5–16.

49 H. G. West, 'Girls with Guns: Narrating the Experience of War of Frelimo's "Female Detachment"', *Anthropological Quarterly*, 73, 4, 2000, 180–94; Arnfred, 'Women in Mozambique'.

50 C. N. Castel-Branco et al. (eds), *Desafios para Moçambique, 2022*, (IESE, 2022), 77.

Moreover, for all the anti-colonial rhetoric adopted by the independent Mozambican state, the socialist policies that it implemented were also modernist/civilisationist in nature. This was most strongly expressed in the anti-traditionalist policies that vied to eliminate traditional leadership structures, allegedly for their co-optation by and collaboration with the colonial state. It also sought to abolish practices deemed obscurantist, among which the female (and male) initiation rites were and continue to be important spaces for civic education of girls (and boys).

The modernist project called for the emancipation of women on equal footing as men by transforming traditional institutions and labour practices. This meant turning all labour force, including the peasantry, into wage labourers, with women's full participation in public and social life. However, the vision of women still entailed their domestic role 'as true companions [to men] and revolutionary educators'.[51] This means that women were and continue to be mostly seen in their caregiving and reproductive roles, in addition to contributing to productive activities. Currently, in the context of the insurgency, like in other regions grappling with violent extremism, the inclusion of women in countering extremism taps primordially to their roles as 'mothers, wives, caregivers, partners and sisters'.[52] This ignores them as agents of grievance and radicalisation, which would include decisions or at least influence over decisions about the best sources of education for their children.

Historical pathways of accommodation, exclusion and self-exclusion

Several people I interviewed mentioned the fear of children being converted to Christianity as a deterrent for parents to enrol their children into either mission or even postcolonial non-denominational state-sponsored schools. I first heard of this from an elderly *shehe* (Muslim cleric). He explained how, when he was younger, during the colonial period and attended third grade in Pemba (then Porto Amélia), he was chosen by a priest to continue his studies at the Marire Mission in Ancuabe. As he explained, his father's reaction was very negative.

> Now, I went to tell my father; my father said: 'I don't want you to go to Marire to study there. Because if you do, you will become a Christian. You are not Christian. You are *muisslam* [Muslim)].'[53]

This fear manifested in the belief that children were being fed pork meat in school. Mama Renamo, whom I mentioned earlier, repeated the same: 'In fact, in the past, they used to say that my daughter or my son cannot go to school because they will eat pork'.[54] After independence, the fear continued in relation to non-denominational

51 Arnfred, 11.
52 I. Ndung'u and M. Shadung, 'Can a Gendered Approach Improve Responses to Violent Extremism?' (Institute for Security Studies, 2017), 7.
53 Interview, Anakajako, Pemba, 10 March 2023.
54 Interview, Mama Renamo, Pemba, 13 March 2023.

state schools. Eating pork, as a forbidden and impure food in Islam, was considered the ultimate form of betrayal of faith.

In conversation with different study participants, they suggested that the communities in coastal Cabo Delgado were more prone to these cleavages than in the interior of Cabo Delgado. One teacher, who was also a *shehe* and the director of one of two Islamic private schools in Pemba, suggested that this was because the Islam from the coast was stronger, influenced firsthand by exchanges with Zanzibar and Comoros. Whereas the one in the interior, according to him, was weaker and developed second-hand from Islamised coastal traders. He also referred to the fact that there were fewer Catholic missions on the coast while there were several in the interior.

In our conversation, he referred to the importance of *madrassas* up until the 1990s as the most relevant source of education for the coastal Muslim populations beyond the religious text. Bonate found a similar dynamic in the *madrassas* in Angoche, although she found that there Ajami was still used beyond this period.[55] The same educator recounted how when he frequented the *madrassa* education, students were required to write a letter to their parents in KiMwani Ajami as a final test of their skills. This was required both of boys and girls. In our exchange, he also described the gradual decline in the use of Ajami as a form of communication in the following terms:

> Carmeliza: You wrote in [Ki]Mwani or in Arabic? I mean, the letters were in Arabic [script], but the language…
>
> Teacher: But the language is Mwani! It was Mwani. […] If it was Makhuwa, one would also write in the Arabic script, but what did one speak? Makhuwa.
>
> Carmeliza: What years were these?
>
> Teacher: The 80s.
>
> Carmeliza: The 80s. So, even after independence.
>
> Teacher: Yes, yes, the 80s. In the years, let's suppose… I am talking about the 80s because it is my phase, right? So, before that, it was also a habit, right? In the 70s, also the ones before. […] Before it was also done. So, there was communication. There was communication through letters. I would write a letter to my father, to Ilha [de Moçambique], using the Arabic script but speaking Mwani. He understood and replied in the same way.
>
> Carmeliza: So, there was this correspondence. This is to say that when one says that people were illiterate, they were illiterate in Portuguese. Even today, the *mualimo* still teach in this way?

55 L. J. K. Bonate, 'Divergent Patterns of Islamic Education in Northern Mozambique: Qur'anic Schools of Angoche' in *Islamic Education in Africa* (Indiana University Press, 2016), 95–118; Bonate, 'Islamic Education in Mozambique'.

Teacher: […] There is an evolution because there are book prints. Let us suppose that there are books with diverse uses. They come with different syllabi that the student takes and starts copying with the pen to his notebook. But in Arabic. […]

Carmeliza: But is it still Ajami? Or is it just Arabic now? Ajami is in Arabic script, but the student is writing Mwani or Makhuwa.

Teacher: That is one's choice. You will choose if you want to write Makhuwa […]. But lately […] it is difficult. Now what he does if he writes, he writes in Arabic, to speak the Arabic proper. […] Neither Makhuwa nor Mwani.

Carmeliza: When did this change start to happen?

Teacher: This change started after the 90s something […]

Carmeliza: And it is along the whole coast? Or are there parts of the coast where people continue to write Ajami?

Teacher: On the coast, they still write, but in the cities […], it is outdated. [56]

By considering the Ajami script outdated, this educator is, unsurprisingly, embracing a reformist approach to Islamic education. After all, he leads an educational institution that was initially funded through the Salafi aid network. With this, Ajami becomes obsolete, and Arabic script should be used to write exclusively in Arabic, while *madrassa* education becomes more standardised.

Despite the decline of the Ajami script and increased uptake of formal education sponsored by the state and by religious organisations like his, this participant mentioned that some coastal populations still resist formal education. He gave the example of Ibo Island, where school enrolment is lower than in the rest of the province, whereas *madrassas* still abound. According to him, the state authorities, together with religious leaders, are trying to convince parents to enrol children in both.

Tensions in the educational arena are by no means exclusive to the province. A popular northern Sheikh, adept in the use of social media, gave a sermon in 2019 where he chided the Muslim community, in particular the entrepreneurs, for driving the 'weak' Muslims into 'Christian' institutions and even terrorist organisations.

The Muslim construct schools.[57] There are many schools here in the name of Islam. Aren't there? How much is the enrolment fee? The first grade, second grade, third grade only. I will not talk about the fifth, sixth, eighth, nor tenth or twelfth. Enrolment, how much is it? If you go to the cheapest of the cheapest school, *Allahu 'alam* (God knows). If you miss [a payment], your child [is sent] home. This Muslim is not going to study. So it's one less who is not studying. We are looking a lot to how am I going to make money

56 Interview with Islamic private school educator, Pemba, 24 October 2022.

57 The cleric is referring to schools run by Muslim private individuals and organisations, offering education from the national curriculum, as well as religious and civic education following Islamic principles, rather than *madrassas*, offering exclusively Islamic education.

> and not how to resolve the problems of the 'weak' Muslim. There is another side here in this country. The Christian school. [It has] breakfast there, it has lunch there, from first to third grades. But the objective for your child to study is to go back and participate in the masses. To participate there and there. You, who want your child in school, what will you do? You will say, 'my child, we are Muslim. What is important is for you to study, at least have third grade.' The Muslim school is for the poor or the rich? The Muslim hospital is for the poor or the rich? Then so, where are the 'weak' Muslims? It is them who are victims to be enticed into terrorism.[58]

This cleric's discourse, though conservative, is not extreme in relation to others' currently circulating for the wider Muslim community, even as it rehashes an opposition between Islam and a generalised Christianity, which stands for a euphemism for the world of unbelief. In saying, 'the objective for your child to study is to *go back* and participate in the masses', he seems to be alluding to the time when the implication of studying in non-Muslim schools was equivalent to Christianising the children. Granted, the comparisons he is making are between private teaching institutions and not with state schools.

Symptomatic of the plurality of Islam in Northern Mozambique, other clerics had previously expressed a sense of exclusion due to multiple forms of prohibition of women's use of the Islamic veil. In 2012, the Comissão de Álimos de Nampula[59] province submitted a formal letter to the Council of Ministers requesting an apology from the government for its discriminatory treatment of the Muslim community of the country. The letter requested that women be allowed to 'use the Islamic veil in public and private institutions in a systematic and permanent way'.[60] Two circulars from the Education Ministry triggered the letter from the *ulama*. One forbade Muslim students from wearing a headscarf during Ramadhan, except with explicit permission from the school's director.[61] The second revoked the first circular a mere ten days later and authorised the use of the veil during the 2012 Ramadhan period.[62] The government finally relented and lifted the ban on the headscarf (the *burqa*/veil is still forbidden), even beyond the Ramadhan period. However, they considered some of the positions expressed by the *ulama* as extreme, as they had threatened to 'undergo a series of activities to force it [the state] to reflect about the issues at stake'.[63]

The public schools' reluctance to comply with the above permission was brought to the fore when a new office from the Education Ministry[64] had to clarify that permission was still in place. In it, the minister responded to a letter from the

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58 Promotional teaser: S. N. Mecupa, 'Responsabilidade dos Muçulmanos Fortes sobre os Muçulmanos Fracos', (WhatsApp Video), 12 October 2023.
59 Ulama Committee of Nampula.
60 'Muçulmanos exigem desculpas ao governo moçambicano', *Voice of America*, 16 August 2012, https://www.voaportugues.com/a/bissau-investigation-murder/1489820.html.
61 Circular no. 1387/2012 of 31 July.
62 Circular 06/GM/MINED/2012 of 10 August.
63 'Muçulmanos exigem véu; Governo permite lenço', https://verdade.co.mz/muculmanos-exigem-veu-governo-permite-lenco/ (accessed 11 March 2024).
64 Office no. 1868/GM/MINEDH/15 of 20 October.

Islamic Council's president, who showed dissatisfaction with complaints from parents whose daughters were forbidden from attending school dressed 'according to Islamic principles'.[65]

Modernity, vision and the place of women

As mentioned previously, among the Muslim populations, those families that sent their children to missionary schools enjoyed better opportunities both in colonial and postcolonial society. So did those affiliated to the Muslim leaderships allied with the colonial and later the postcolonial state and the ruler party.[66] There are important fissures within the Islamic community that increase the likelihood of exclusion, even for those who had opportunities to study but had done so in Muslim countries.[67] There is an increased realisation, among some youth, of the utility and importance of secular education and the disadvantage in which Muslim youth still find themselves, as was expressed by a member of a Muslim youth organisation.

> [Youth organisation] is an organisation formed mainly by students [in 2006]. The majority of our members are university students. Many of them are already doctors, teachers, engineers, many. One of the purposes was to try to ensure the purpose of the religiosity of the Muslim youth – also, the issue of access to higher education. Because we saw that there wasn't any space where a young person could feel at ease to prepare to enrol in higher education, we also have this component of training or capacity building of the youth to prepare them, for them to have tools to apply for higher education. So, one of the visions that we had is that the [youth organisation] should serve as a link of the Muslim youth, to dissipate the idea of what today […] I mean, what happened today it almost looks like we knew that in some time people would express themselves in this [violent] way. So, our focus is to educate the youth. And the youth also educate other youth to have access to higher education.[68]

However, as several other participants also mentioned, education is not an aspiration for all, and some families still prefer that girls marry early. Naturally, this is not necessarily an end to their access to education or literacy, even if it may preclude them from certain opportunities in the current society. One issue that concerns parents relates to morals and respectability, which families still do not trust the state-sponsored schools to guarantee. According to the educator mentioned previously, *madrassas* provide the moral aspect, and the religion also requires continuous learning.

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65 Ibid..

66 L. J. K. Bonate, 'Roots of Diversity in Mozambican Islam', *Lusotopie* (Online), XIV, 1, 2007. http://journals.openedition.org/lusotopie/1074.

67 E. Morier-Genoud, 'A Prospect of Secularization? Muslims and Political Power in Mozambique Today', *Journal for Islamic Studies*, 27, 1, 2007, 240–75; Bonate, 'Roots of Diversity in Mozambican Islam'.

68 Interview with Islamic youth organisation leader Pemba, 08 March 2022. The name of the organisation has been omitted to protect the participant's identity.

> This particularity existed with the parents, that only the *madrassa* will help. It is a moral aspect. It is true that in the *madrassas*, one learns civic and moral education and how to treat one's parents. How to live in a community. So, all this you will find in a *madrassa*. But there is another explanation because let us suppose this conflict that we are in now, there are some sects that appear and translate Islam, the essence of Islam on the contrary. The essence of Islam is that people have to learn morals and how to respect people. It also comes there in the Quran. It says that the first message revealed to prophet Muhammad (sallallahu alaihi wasallam) was read![69]

This participant conveys the imperative that Muslims place on learning, mentioned here as reading. The concern with protecting children, in particular girls from this imperative relates to environments where this learning is not compatible with the religious values or does not materialise expectations of modernity. This is where the control over girls' sexuality is of particular concern to older women, namely mothers, grandmothers and female traditional leaders, as is exemplified by the quotes below from Mama Renamo and a group of female traditional leaders from peri-urban outskirt[70] neighbourhoods of Pemba. They consider state-sponsored schools as spaces where girls are more exposed to the likelihood of meeting men and becoming pregnant. Mama Renamo particularly considered that aside from *madrassas*, female initiation rites were spaces where morality and protection from early pregnancies are offered. At the same time, in both interviews, the women acknowledge that girls have their own agency and may resist their control and advice.

> The teachers let the [female] students run around, but the initiation rites are correct. And also, marrying early depends on the heart. I have my granddaughters here who are studying. They are going to school, one in eighth [grade], others in ninth, others in eleventh. They are still studying. They still haven't conceived. They haven't thought of being with men. It depends on the heart of each girl.[71]

The tension and conflicting expectations opposing the state, women and girls were particularly evident in the words of female traditional leaders from the peri-urban area of Pemba:

> Queen Metula: In school, I cannot tell you what they learn there. They don't go with me to the *madrassa*. Now, here in the community, we appeal to them, our daughters: 'You cannot go with men before you reach the age to do so. First study, to conclude [your education].' We tell them, 'Look, try to study until you find a job. If you do not manage to get a

69 Interview with Islamic private school educator, Pemba, 24 October 2022.
70 Unlike expansion neighbourhoods, outskirt neighbourhoods have existed longer and are more rural. Just like expansion neighbourhoods, they have become more overcrowded lately.
71 Interview with Mama Renamo, Pemba, 13 March 2022.

job, at least study until you finish school.' But it is not easy, we are not managing.

Queen Mahati: We tell them, 'You are not of age to get married. If you become pregnant, it will be a problem.'

Queen Metula: 'When you deliver the baby, we will hear that you have lost your life.' You don't even reach the end of the conversation. The next day, you hear that someone is pregnant.

Queen Mahati: Some listen, but when you take them to the hospital [after they fall pregnant, the hospital staff says] 'you are not educating your children'.[72]

The traditional leaders allude to their lack of control over what is taught in schools or *madrassas*, as well as to the girls' agency. They expect that a formal education will lead to opportunities like employment. In fact, education is seen by them as valuable in and of itself. The biggest fear remains the possibility of girls getting pregnant and ruining their future perspectives and potentially even dying.

The issue of early pregnancies is thus a concern shared with that of the state, which introduced in 2019 a law to prevent early marriages.[73] In it, marital unions of any sort, including religious or traditional, are forbidden to people under 18 years of age. Parents who allow and authorities who facilitate them are liable to fines and imprisonment. However, despite acknowledgement of the value of education and interest in postponing young girls' pregnancies, Mama Renamo particularly insisted on schools being unsafe spaces for girls.

Carmeliza: But, this issue of the initiation rites, for example… the government is saying… also the organisations which are working to raise women, they say that the initiation rites make women marry early.

Mama Renamo: No, no, no, no. […] It's not the initiation rite that is making children marry early. No. It's the school – the teachers.

Carmeliza: The teachers?

Mama Renamo: The teachers are badly educated.

Carmeliza: How so?

Mama Renamo: For example, it was in 2018 or, I mean, 2017. Up here, Wimbi. There is a school there, SOS. It forbade children from wearing long skirts. What the teachers liked were students with short skirts. The teachers don't manage even the girls there in the school. They don't have good advice.[74]

Her indictment is the manifestation of a desire for a space for education where girls' bodies and behaviour are also controlled. That includes regarding their cloth-

72 Group interview with female traditional leaders from Metula, Mahati and Muxara neighbourhoods, Pemba, 20 October 2022.
73 Lei n.º 19/2019, Lei de Prevenção e Combate às Uniões Prematuras, I Série – Número 203 (22 October 2019).
74 Interview with Mama Renamo, Pemba, 13 March 2022.

ing. In 2016, the Ministry of Education introduced a regulation which established, among others, parameters for clothing. Girls were demanded to wear skirts by their ankles. This was protested by feminist civil society organisations[75] due to its implicit blaming of girls' clothing and behaviour for any eventual harassment or sexual abuse and violence to which girls are often exposed, exempting the male aggressor's responsibility. Parents (not only Muslims) and society at large seemed to be generally satisfied with the measure, and what was introduced as a measure for Secondary schools in Maputo city expanded to the rest of the country. At any crossroads, girls seem to be caught between their families' and communities' values and state vision and policies. These sometimes coincide, but more often are at odds with each other. State-sponsored education, even when accepted by families as an added value and with potential for social mobility, continues to be perceived as insufficient in terms of the transmission of important societal values.

Conclusion: education and conflict

In this article, I attempted to present the tensions within the education arena in Cabo Delgado from a historical perspective and in relation to broader national and transnational dynamics, namely in relation to the Swahili coast. Through presenting a historical account of recurring resistance to state-sponsored education, I have showcased how education is a long-standing arena of tension for Muslim populations in Cabo Delgado, particularly in the coastal areas. State-sponsored education has not been equally accessible to all and has been an important form of exclusion both during colonial and postcolonial times.

Colonial educational policies, the monopoly of the Catholic Church from 1940, and the geographical distribution of the mission schools favoured children non-Muslim and inland attending these schools. This advantage prevailed in postcolonial times, as mission-educated children were able to access better opportunities under the new regime, too. Some families, particularly in urban areas, have become more open to both secular and religious education, enrolling their children in both. Muslim organisations are also promoting initiatives to improve the opportunities of young Muslims in the current context, clearly acknowledging that they have been at a disadvantage. However, there is still some resistance and self-exclusion, especially when state educational spaces are perceived as not providing useful skills or facilitating immorality, such as early pregnancies, which greatly disadvantage girls.

Madrassas and initiation rites were mentioned as safer spaces for learning important social values and morals. Older women– mothers, grandmothers and traditional female leaders – and girls have important agency in preferences and resistance to

75 See e.g. 'As Maxi-Saias – do Resgate da Decência à Feminização da Indecência nas Escolas', *WLSA Moçambique* (blog), 30 March 2016, https://www.wlsa.org.mz/as-maxi-saias-do-resgate-da-decencia-a-feminizacao-da-indecencia-nas-escolas/; 'N'weti - Mulheres e Raparigas Dão Um Basta Com a Violação...,' https://www.facebook.com/nweti.org/photos/a.443691520699/10153870363810700/?type=3 (accessed 11 March 2024).

education choices. Repeatedly, women find girls defiant to religious and traditional values, incurring risks from which the older women do not feel able to protect girls from.

From the above, I would argue that to truly understand how women, particularly Muslim girls and women, are included or excluded, it is important to consider all the sources of education that they have access to. This includes *madrassas* and even sources mediated exclusively by women, like initiation rites, which include important moral and religious components. Most importantly, these are meaningful spaces for the communities with which state-sponsored education will compete continuously. Efforts to undermine them, if not provided with acceptable substitutes, will continue to be resisted.

It has been suggested that *madrassas* have a state-sanctioned universal curriculum, including as an avenue for deradicalisation. This is a project that the Islamic Council has been pursuing in the *madrassas* under its sponsorship. However, in Mozambique, there are still important cleavages within the Muslim community that make this challenging. Moreover, due to the lack of trust in public educational institutions, particularly regarding moral concerns, *madrassas* will continue to fill a vacuum beyond religious education. Also, due to their decentralised and often informal nature, *madrassas*, like smaller denomination churches in rural and peri-urban areas, are difficult to regulate.

In the fight against religious extremism, there has been an appeal to address more structural issues, including real and perceived historical grievances. Education, particularly in remote rural areas, is an arena where there have been long and continued tensions and grievances regarding state-sponsored education and where these are not seen as able to provide additional useful skills to what *madrassas* already provide.