



Graduate School of Development Studies

**Religion, Culture and Fisheries Co-management:  
A Case of Kuruwitu Beach Village in North Coast  
Kenya**

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*Jazakallahu kbeir.*

## Dedication

.....to those I hold close at heart.

*Nishi*

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## List of Acronyms

AOA - *Actor Oriented Approach*  
BMU- *Beach Management Unit*  
CBNRM-*Community Based Natural Resource Management*  
DFO-*District Fisheries Officer*  
FAO-*Food and Agriculture Organization*  
FGD- *Focus Group Discussion*  
IMF-*International Monetary Fund*  
IUCN- *International Union for Conservation of Nature and Natural Resources*  
KCWA - *Kuruwitu Conservation and Welfare Association*  
MoFD-*Ministry of Fisheries Development*  
MPA- *Marine Protected Area*  
NGO-Non- *Governmental Organization*  
UNCED- *United Nations Conference on Environment and Development*  
UNDP-*United Nations Development Programme*  
WB-*World Bank*  
WCED-*World Conference on Environment and Development*

## **Abstract**

With concerted effort being put in making natural resource management an all inclusive participatory bottom up process with a deliberate action to involve local communities, minimal focus has been given to the two prime social aspects of most local communities especially in Africa; culture and religion. This study looked at fisheries co management and specifically focused on the role cultural repertoires and religion may have in influencing local community participation in fisheries co management. A case study of Kuruwitu beach village in the North Coast of Kenya was selected. It sought to establish if the cultural repertoires' and religious beliefs of the Giriama community informed fisheries management and further on investigate if they still influenced modern-day fisheries management under the fisheries co management approach recently adopted by the Ministry of Fisheries Development. Ultimately, the study sought to find out if it would be imperative to incorporate such social aspects in the management framework.

Primary and secondary data findings give an indication that the Giriama community still largely values their cultural and religious practices that revolve around fisheries management and this has however not been integrated in the co management regime implemented through the Beach Management Units (BMUs). Further analysis suggests that may be it would be prudent for policy makers and development interveners to incorporate these positive aspects while planning with such communities as this makes them own the process hence a more fruitful venture.



## **Relevance to Development Studies**

At the core of development is sustainable natural resource management which recognizes the inexorable role of decentralization of natural resource management to the local communities through co- management. This study takes this further by seeking to establish the role social aspects; religion and culture may have on community's engagement in natural resource co-management with a special focus on fisheries resources in the North Coast of Kenya. Lessons learnt here can be applied in other natural resource management cases for policy makers and development interveners.

# Chapter 1

## Introduction

### 1.1 Background of the Study

Despite criticisms that there was oversimplification in his work, Hardin in 1968 brought to the limelight the concept of the tragedy of the commons, which centred its argument on the risk facing unregulated resource exploitation on the commons. He however suggested that only centralized resource governance or privatization could save the situation, totally ignoring the effort of the many social groups in resource management (Diertz et al. 2003). Diertz et al. (2003) acknowledge that indeed there is a problem in management of the commons as depicted in this quote, ‘In the absence of effective governance institutions at the appropriate scale, natural resources and the environment are in peril from increasing human population, consumption, and deployment of advanced technologies for resource use, all of which have reached unprecedented levels. For example, it is estimated that “the global ocean has lost more than 90% of large predatory fishes” with an 80% decline typically occurring “within 15 years of industrialized exploitation” The threat of massive ecosystem degradation results from an interplay among ocean ecologies, fishing technologies, and inadequate governance’ (Diertz et al.:1907).He however does not agree with Hardin’s claims that only centralization and privatization will save the commons from perishing but rather advocates the consideration of locally devised ways of managing resources in an adaptive governance style.

This piece of literature shows that there was a growing recognition that the commons were at a risk and some governance system had to be thought of to save the resource base as well as save humanity. With the advent of massive environmental and resource degradation and depletion, the concept of sustainable development which recognizes the inexorable link between ecological and social well being was adopted following various conferences with the most pivotal ones being the United Nations World Commission on Environment and Development (WCED) held in 1987 followed by the United Nations Conference on Environment and Development(UNCED) held in 1992 which gave the concept a huge momentum (Garcia et al. 2003). Agenda 21 born of the UNCED contains chapter 17 that focuses on the world’s oceans and seas and crystallized growing world community concern with problems of marine fisheries management (Garcia et al. 2003). Such developments notwithstanding, most of the marine fisheries in the world were largely unregulated despite several agreements such as the 1982 United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea, FAO Compliance Agreement, FAO International Plans of Action, Jakarta Mandate, United Nations Fish Stocks Agreement to mention but a few having been negotiated to streamline marine fisheries governance (Juda 2002).

In Kenya, and despite the recent enactment of fisheries laws and regulations, many fisheries have continued to be open access resources according to an unpublished module, Orientation of roles of Beach Management Units (BMUs) on Co management in Coastal and Marine fisheries resource (Ochiewo 2004:390).

In the context of coastal fisheries in Kenya, community participation in natural resource management has been embraced through a co-management approach. 'Co-management is considered to be an alternative management strategy that merges the interest of government to achieve efficiency and sustainability with local community concerns for self-governance and active participation (Jentoft 1989:137-54). The simplest definition according to Pomeroy (1998) is that it refers to a form of dual arrangement between the state and the local community where ownership of a resource is vested in the state and use is by the people as of right but where neither party has overall claim for managing the resource. Focusing on the Kenyan scenario, the Fisheries Act CAP 378 and the Environment Management and Coordination Act of 1999 both provide for community participation in natural resource management. Under the Fisheries Act, through the Fisheries regulations of 2006, communities are required to form a Beach Management Unit (BMU) which is given exclusive rights to manage fisheries resources at a specific landing site in collaboration with the government. This legislation forms the bedrock for the initiation of fisheries co management at the Kenyan Coast.

## **1.2 Problem Statement**

Fisheries management in the Kenyan Coast has undergone various management paradigms in a bid to sustainably manage fisheries resources over the years; from common property regime to state led top down regime to open access and then to a more inclusive co management approach. This has been due to the recognition that collective action is a powerful alternative to deal with complex resource management problems such as those faced in fisheries management. One of the definitions according to Sen et al. (1996) is that co management refers to an arrangement where responsibility for resource management is shared between the government and user groups. Thus it implies that placing the two main stakeholders (government and user groups) at the extremes of a power continuum, co management rests in the middle of this continuum. As such Community Based Natural Resource Management and other traditional system that do not include the government (and other development agencies) in decision making thus do not fall under co management. Looking at Kenya, the kind of arrangement in fisheries management qualifies to be co management as defined by Sen et al. (1996) since local communities and the government as well as other relevant stakeholders together manages the fisheries resource.

How fishing communities managed this resource was highly mediated by their cultural repertoires and well as their religion, which formed the bedrock for their management practices. Management measures were mainly in form of checks and controls such as restricting fishing/harvesting activities during specific time, restricting the gears or technology of fishing, restricting the species to be caught and even quantity among others (McClanahan et al. 2005). Other than having control measures that guided fishing activities to ensure no destruction and wastefulness, they also had cultural and religious practices that promoted fisheries management through mainly acting as an intrinsic motivation to do good. Just as with religion, respect for cultural beliefs maintained order in many traditional African communities. One thing clear is that traditional fisheries management methods generally aimed at sustaining sea harvests or catches in the medium and short term. However the modern-day management measures are geared towards the protection of the local flora and fauna for its own sake and the sustainability of the fisheries resources.

With co management initiated by the government, similar if not the same management strategies are applied only that they are now founded on scientific research of managing fisheries resources and are reinforced by guidelines entrenched in Acts of Parliament. This means that ideally two bodies of knowledge are operating concurrently with the same intentions of sustainable fisheries management only that they are founded on different schools of thought, one on science and the other on years of experience with fisheries activity and greatly influenced by religion and culture. With the management of the resource undergoing changes, this means that the fisher folk have to contend with the new laws and management strategies that come along with it. This shift implies that the communities' ways of managing the resource are either ignored or incorporated in the co management arrangement. Depending on how these two knowledge systems are harmonized, this intersection of different views regarding fisheries management can determine the success or the failure of the venture. It is in this light, that this research paper seeks to investigate the establish bearing in mind that fisheries co management in Kenya is a fairly new concept.

### **1.3 Relevance and justification**

Fisheries contribution to Kenya's economy is relatively small compared to other sectors such as tourism or agriculture, but the fact that it is a lifeline for most of the Kenyan riparian and coastal communities (Winter 2009) makes this study worth undertaking. Bearing this in mind, the importance for the participation of local community stakeholders cannot be over emphasized. In the 2005 Yaounde Declaration on community development, this was reiterated as a key condition for the attaining sustainable development in Africa. .. 'governments should support processes which enable collective participatory decision-making at all levels of society and strengthen the capacity building of all relevant actors and stakeholders in the development process' (Dorsner 2007:414). The report further acknowledges that participation is a rather

ambiguous concept that encompasses a lot of other issues that determine the attainment of meaningful community participation in any development agenda.

The declaration, through the work of Plummer (2000) however recognized that there exists various issues affecting the meaningful attainment of community participation in development projects, *inter alia*, people's culture and religion (Dorsner 2007:413). These, among others influence levels of community participation as well as how they respond to external intervention.

The choice of this topic was also largely motivated by my experience while working with a local Non Governmental Organization on a Marine and Coastal Livelihoods Project. Based on my experience and observations, the concept of co management in fisheries management which is aimed at empowering fisher communities through the BMU's to participate in managing their fisheries resources was done with absolutely no deliberate consideration of neither their cultural nor religious beliefs. Noble as it may be, the discourse of co management-at least in the Kenyan context- has ignored the role people's cultural repertoires and religious beliefs could play in the success or failure of development projects, and in this case, promotion of a sense of ownership and responsibility over fisheries resources. This was evident during the formulation of the BMU guidelines and By Laws in a task force that I participated in. Besides, on a number of occasions, community members would base their stand points during project implementation on cultural or religious beliefs, and my experience as a development worker is that, none of these two factors was ever viewed as worth deliberate consideration in fisheries when co management planning was done. Against this backdrop, I feel, and basing my view on my personal experience as well as from scholarly work and as will be seen later from my field results, a cultural and religious turn in operationalizing the fisheries co management strategy would probably positively influence its implementation and success.

Other than this, most scholars who have written about the Kenyan Coastal fisheries such as Mc Clanahan, Wamukota, and David Obura among others have mainly focused on traditional and modern-day fisheries management. They however accord insufficient focus on the influence cultural and religious factors have on fisheries co management and particularly how they influence communities' participation in fisheries co management. Community participation in co management ultimately determines the level of success or failure of conservation and development efforts. In addition to this, the studies done have mainly focused on the South coast of Kenya and further North in Watamu all the way to Lamu, sort of leaving the area of my study not well explored. These factors have greatly contributed to my interest to carry out this study.

## **1.4 Research Objective and questions:**

This study was aimed at contributing to the existing academic literature on fisheries co-management, precisely on if peoples' cultures and religion influence their engagement in fisheries co management. In order to achieve this objective, one main research question and two sub questions seeking to answer the main question were posed;

How do peoples' cultural repertoires and religious beliefs mediate their participation in fisheries co management?

Sub questions:

1. What are the people's cultural repertoires, religious beliefs that relate to fisheries management? This question was posed to establish the cultural and religious aspects of the Giriama community that have influenced fisheries resources management since in the past when fisheries management and governance was based on traditional institutions. Further probing would find out if these aspects are still rife today.

2. Is there co existence of modern-day fisheries management ways and traditional fisheries management and particularly do cultural repertoires and religious beliefs affect co management efforts? This question sought to establish the state of affairs in fisheries management in the area since the adoption of fisheries co- management, specifically seeking to find out if the cultural and religious beliefs of the community conflict or are in harmony with modern –day fisheries management ways. It also sought to know if the local community members' engagement in co –management was affected by their culture and religion.

## **1.5 Methodology and Study Design**

The overall approach to this study is both qualitative and explorative. Qualitative research is informed by an interpretive or constructivist paradigm (Crotty 2003; Merriam 2002b) and (Glesne 1999) describes this as a “paradigm, which portrays a world in which reality is socially constructed, complex and ever changing” (p. 5). As a researcher, one should aim at understanding the original meaning people have constructed about their world and their experiences (Merriam 2002b). (Bogdan & Biklen 1998; Glesne 1999 share the same sentiments that discovering; Patton 2002) also the meanings people have made of their lived experiences is central to qualitative research. Importantly as Crossley and Vulliamy (1997:6) wrote, ‘culture, meanings and processes are emphasized, rather than variables, outcomes and products. Qualitative research is inductive (Merriam 2002b; Patton 2002) as instead of testing preconceived hypotheses, it mainly aims at generating theories and hypotheses from the data gathered during on site visits (Crossley & Vulliamy 1997).As a result, this research has no ‘null hypothesis’ to prove or disprove. It is also is richly descriptive as shall be seen in the field results chapter. Targeted were respondents from various stakeholders, particularly from the Beach Management Units (BMUs), Ministry of Fisheries Development (MoFD) and

NGOs working in the area and who directly engage with the local community in a co management arrangement in managing fisheries resources.

## 1.6 The Study Area

Kenya's coastline runs for some 600km bordering the Western Indian Ocean, with extensive mangrove forests, a complex wetland system, bays and some coral islands. The Kenyan coast supports about 9% of the national population (English 1996) and fisheries contribute to the livelihood of the coastal people by approximately 6% (Mc Clanahan et al. 2005). According to Crona (2006), the Coastal population of Kenya comprises two main ethnic groups: the Mijikenda of Bantu origin and the Swahili who are of mixed Bantu, Asian, and Arabic descent. The Mijikenda comprise nine tribes, of which Giriama is one of the biggest and the predominant ethnicity of inhabitants in the study area.

Kilifi District is one of the seven districts that constitute the Coast Province that borders Taita Taveta to the west, Malindi to the northwest, Mombasa and Kwale to the south. Administratively, Kilifi district is divided into seven divisions namely: - Kaloleni, Bahari, Chonyi, Kikambala, Ganze, Vitengeni and Bamba. Kuruwitu area is a sub location of the Junju location, Kikambala Division, Kilifi District, Coast Province. The sub location spans approximately 10 kilometres of coastline, with 6 sandy beaches that serve as the landing sites where fishermen 'land' their fishing boats and supplies. From the north, the sites are namely: Mwanamia, Kijangwani, Kuruwitu, Kinuni, Vipingo and Bureni<sup>1</sup>. This study was conducted in the six landing sites. The majority of the inhabitants in Kilifi District are Mijikenda except in major towns where the population is cosmopolitan. In Kikambala Division, the majority of the inhabitants are the Mijikenda except in the fast growing cosmopolitan town of Mtwapa town. In Junju location, the main sub-tribes are, Chonyi, Giriama, and Kauma (Kilifi District strategic Plan 2005-2010).

Coastal rural inhabitants are generally poor and rely on simple and traditional means of food production. They mainly engage in subsistence farming and artisanal fishing. The Mijikenda were originally farmers living on the Coastal plateau and Coastal range and only moved into the coastal strip in over the last century and half and began fishing in large numbers in the 1960's. They were traditionally from a farming background and lived on the coastal plateau and coastal range. In fact Glaesel (1999) claims that the Mijikenda did not have a tradition of sea fishing, and thus have very little knowledge on fisheries management. Except for the Digo people in the south, most Mijikenda adhere to traditional African beliefs or to Christianity. According to Degen et al. (2010:298-300) the inhabitants here are mostly

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<sup>1</sup> Cited from <http://kuruwitu.org/about/the-region/>

Christians (43 percent) but some are Muslims (29 percent) or practice African traditional religion (27 percent). This backdrop is of great importance to this study as it fleshes up the concepts of cultures and religion which are the main concepts of investigation alongside co management.

Worth mentioning about this study are is the community conserved area known as the Kuruwitu Community Conservation Area, the first community owned marine park in Kenya, located at the Kinuni landing site. The Kuruwitu Conservation and Welfare Association of stakeholders (with strategic partner support from the East African Wildlife Society; the organization I worked for ) voluntarily agreed to temporarily close part of their fishing grounds in 2005 to conserve coral reefs and increase fish stocks(Muthiga et al. 2008). This was supposed to be a seasonal closure in that once fish stocks had regenerated; they would open it and fish and close off another area. This however was eventually closed off permanently for ecotourism purposes and only the spill over fish could be caught outside the conservation area. This community project is supported by the BMU regulations that allow the community to formulate sustainable fisheries management ways such as temporary or permanent closures have been advocated for as a way of sustainable marine fisheries management. Permanent closures have for long only been done by the government through creation of Marine Protected Areas (MPAs).

## **1.7 Population and Sampling**

The study targeted Kuruwitu beach community and key informants from the development community whose lives are directly and indirectly affected by the fisheries activities in the surrounding 6 landing sites.(Bureni, Vipingo Kinuni, Kuruwitu, Mwanamia and Kijangwani).

The respondents for the Focus Group Discussions (FGD) as well as the in depth interviews were purposively selected given that the study is qualitative in nature. Each focus group contained 3-5 participants and the discussions lasted between 1-2 hours with the groups carefully selected through consultations with the Kuruwitu BMU executive committee. A total of 42 community members participated in the focus groups. The FGD were purposely divided so as to collect views from different social groupings that relate to the main components of the research focus; religion, culture and fisheries co management. The groups were divided as follows:

- Muslims
- Christians
- Traditionalists
- Executive BMU committee
- Executive committee Kuruwitu Conservation and Welfare Association (KCWA)



- Fishermen registered in the Kuruwitu BMU
- Fishermen not in the BMU
- Elderly fishermen
- Younger fishermen
- Fish mongers

The key informants were carefully targeted as it was impeccable to engage with people that are knowledgeable about the fisheries management in the 6 landing sites. In building case studies, snowball sampling technique was applied where the next case interviewed was identified from the previous case. Two cases were documented. In all the discussions, the focus was mainly on two broad themes; one, if the Giriama cultural repertoires and religion still played a role in fisheries management and two, if these affected the communities engagement in fisheries co management, seeking to precisely establish if there are any conflicts or smooth integration and co existence in the co management arrangement. Community maps and historical time lines were applied as aids in the discussions to elicit information from the respondents.

## **1.8 Sources and methods of data collection**

Ethnography was used to conduct the case studies. Ethnographic interviewing is a qualitative research technique especially in cultural anthropology and requires a lengthy onsite participant field studies. Due to time constraints however, I devised an on- site non- participant observational study. As mentioned here above, I applied unstructured in-depth interviews with key informant and conducted FGDs. All interviews and discussions with the locals were done in Swahili for better communication. FGD's and in depth interviews were conducted with some selected key informants from the groups; the area chief, BMU chairman and the chairman of the fishermen's association. The area chief refers to an administrative officer in the office of the president heading a location. A location is the third biggest administrative level from the bottom (village). All these were conducted in Shariani village at the KCWA offices.

In addition to this, semi structured interviews were conducted with representatives from the MoFD who included the District Fisheries Officer (DFO) Kilifi, Chief Fisheries Officer (Provincial office), Fisheries Socio economic officer, 2 representatives of 2 local NGO's working with the community of Kuruwitu. These officers were carefully selected on the basis of their long involvement engaging with the community in question in fisheries co management.

Other than mainly using semi structured interviews in eliciting information, personal observation also was highly employed. In addition to

this, I also recollected experiences from my past engagement with the community since I had had a year of close interaction with this community as a project officer in a local NGO that supported the KWCA with the community marine conservation area. Relevant scholarly literature materials were also extensively consulted. Sources of literature include peer reviewed journal articles, published books and other grey materials such as technical reports and periodicals. Most scholarly work consulted was the works of Dr.David Obura, Dr.Tim Mc Clanahan, and Mr.Andrew Wamukota among others who have extensively researched on marine fisheries in Kenya. The internet also formed part of the literature search.

## **1.9 Limitations to the study**

Co-management in fisheries management is a relatively new subject in Kenya, let alone considering the role cultural repertoires and religion could play in influencing community participation in co management. Some scholars have attempted to explore traditional knowledge systems in fisheries management at the Kenya Coast but mainstreaming it is still an emerging subject. As a result, available literature did not contain much on cultural and religious influence on fisheries co management. To address this short fall, I relied much on the primary data collected to fill this gap.

Another challenge faced in this study was my position as an action searcher as I had worked with the same community in the capacity of a project officer on a community project. In this regard, I had prior experience with the community I went out to study and the risk of being subjective was high. To overcome this I had to be reflexive in order to maintain objectivity. Although I had observed some of the cultural and religious practices as well as attended some of the ceremonies while working, I made an effort to create a space for the community members to share their story with me and increase my understanding on the subject. They however could not entirely treat me as an outsider and this could have had a bias in the information they gave or they may have left out some vital information assuming that I should know since I was not all green to the subject.

The Kuruwitu community is a mixed community in terms of religious affiliations with the larger proportion of them affiliated to Christianity then followed by Islam and then traditionalists making it a highly heterogeneous community in terms of religion. This did not make it any easier as most influence to traditional fisheries management came from Islam as depicted from the information gathered. This unanticipated heterogeneity I feel could not adequately give a concise outcome for the research like it would have were it done in a predominantly mono religious community such as in Lamu in the far North or Wasini Island in the far South where Islam is predominant.

Studying cultural and religious aspects of a community calls for an ethnographic approach and this requires a sufficient period of time to live and go through life with the community in subject. Due to time limitations, I could not apply ethnography fully in my study and as such I would term my technique as simulated ethnography. Were it that I carried out ethnographic research, more concise information would have been generated. Closely linked to this challenge also is the unclear separation of cultural and religious beliefs and practices as I found myself as a researcher not sure how to separate the two as the respondents claimed some practices were cultural while others thought the same practices stemmed from religion, and in this case, the religion in question is Islam. However, being a Muslim, I could use my knowledge on Islam to discern the disputed issues, whether they were Islamic or not.

## **1.10 Organization of the paper**

This research paper is organized into five main chapters. Chapter one seeks to provide an overview of fisheries management in Kenya and its evolution to the current regime of co management. Issues of cultural and religious beliefs shall be consciously sought and brought out. It also covers the research objective, research questions and methodology. Chapter two encompasses the scholarship and theory around fisheries co management, cultural repertoires and religious beliefs. Chapter three focuses on history of fisheries co management in Kenya while chapters four and five provide an analysis of the research findings for the sub questions as well as the conclusion.

## Chapter 2

### Literature Review and Theoretical Framework

In order to answer the main research question, this study aims at employing the invaluable Actor Oriented Approach (AOA) advanced by Long (2004) explained in his book 'Development sociology: Actor Perspectives'. Important for this study is the way Long's (2004) approach seeks to connect an understanding of social actors in their everyday 'life worlds' with wider structures and processes pushing for a more flexible view of people's constant rewordings of cultural repertoires and improvisory reactions to changing circumstances. He argues that a better understanding of contests over social values (including those between externally imposed and locally generated symbols and meanings) is essential to the study of economic change and the practice of development policy. I say this is important in my study as I focus on social values, their interplay with external knowledge in a development intervention. Precisely, I use the approach to explain how religion and cultural repertoires (social values) play out in fisheries co management in Kenya, treating co management as a development strategy that is informed by scientific research (external knowledge)

Long (2004) emphasizes on the centrality of human agency and the self organizing processes and the mutual determination of 'internal' and 'external' factors and relationships. He argues out that a battle field of knowledge exists where actors' understanding, interests and values meet. This discourse seeks to explain how products of social action are constructed socially and culturally, by acknowledging the existence of 'multiple social realities' (Long 2004:15). As a result, the concept of 'social interface' which occurs where different life worlds intersect emerges. Its analysis aims at unpacking the types and sources of social discontinuity and linkages that provides a more adequate analysis of policy transformation while appreciating the differing responses by the different actors to planned interventions or development. A social interface is '...a critical point of intersection or linkage between different social systems, fields or levels of social order where structural discontinuities, based upon differences of normative value and social interest, are most likely to be found'. Long, (1989):2 ultimately, this concept mediates in production and transformation of difference in world views, Long, (1989) and (2001).

In this study, considering fisheries co management as part of development (which of course it is), the AOA will be provide a basis for investigating how the varied views and standpoints in as far as fisheries management is concerned intersect. This will precisely be used to investigate how the community's' religious beliefs and cultural repertoires influence how they embrace the co management idea. Co management in this case offers the meeting point of two life worlds; the traditional and the modern-day knowledge in fisheries management.

Traditionally, collective action to natural resource management existed, deeply embedded in society's cultural and religious values and norms. Societies, according to (Borrini 2000) formed relatively closed systems which facilitated natural resource management through reciprocity and solidarity. These systems accommodated for differences in power and roles, decision making and allowing for dialogue between parties with vested interest in a particular resource. This is what entails the concept of co-management which has formed hegemony today in natural resource management. All these were founded on the firm foundation of indigenous knowledge and skills built through many years of experience. This was however disrupted by the historic emergence of colonial powers and nation states and their assumption of authority over all resources and the subsequent monetization of economic exchange which weakened the once existing local systems of reciprocity and solidarity on which co management had stood.

Natural resource management has been and still is a highly contested topic, drawing critics from all angles and depending on the prism one chooses to use when looking at it. The dynamic nature of natural resource management paradigms compounded by the scarce and finite nature of most natural resources makes it even more complicated. In the wake of the numerous conferences such as the UNCED that aimed at seeking solutions to the aggravating natural resource exploitation problems, the concept of sustainable development was born. Over time, implementation of the concept has drawn a strong consensus that it should be based on local-level solutions derived from community initiatives according to Ghai and Vivian in their work in the Grassroots Environmental Action, (Ghai et al. 1992). Thus, co-management between state (conservation) authorities and local Community Based Natural Resource Management (CBNRM) structures has been a common environment-with-development strategy in recent decades as the quest for achieving environmental conservation and attaining economic development gains momentum.

In addition to this, the control and management of common property resources by centralized governmental structures led to alienation of many local communities, despite their well developed land tenure systems, indigenous ecological knowledge and resource use (Leach et al.1999:226-228). A classical example is the establishment of parks and protected areas which was occasioned by displacement of local communities and a subsequent loss of access to key resources (Brockinton 2002). However, this is changing. The inclusion of all stakeholders and particularly local resource users is advocated for by all major alternative environmental management paradigms. The idea of community participation in natural resource management is also integral to many international frames of reference, including Agenda 21 and the FAO's Code of Conduct for Responsible Fisheries of 1995 and Ecosystem Approach to Fisheries of 2003 frameworks' (Evans 2009:791).

In natural resources the concept management can be defined as ‘right to regulate internal use patterns and transform the resource by making improvement’ (Ostrom and Schlager 1996: 131) and can be performed by single actors or jointly by groups of individuals or as a result of cooperation among different groups. At the heart of natural resource management and for the purpose of this study, focusing on marine fisheries resource is the concept of co management earlier on introduced in the preceding chapter. Co management is a concept that has been brought forward in management of common pool resources such as forestry and fisheries which entails a power sharing arrangement between the state and resource users. Also known as collaborative management, it has been defined as ‘the sharing of power and responsibility between the government and local resource users’ (Berkes et al. 1991: 12). Elsewhere, Singleton (1998: 7) defines it as ‘the term given to governance systems that combine state control with local, decentralized decision making and accountability and which, ideally, combine the strengths and mitigate the weaknesses of each’. These notably emphasize on the state and local resource users as being the main stakeholders. Slightly veering from these definitions is that adopted by the World Conservation Congress Resolution 1.42 which includes government agencies, local communities and resource users, nongovernmental organizations and other stakeholders in resource management (IUCN, 1996)

Based on the unpublished module, Orientation of roles of Beach Management Units (2010:12) co-management (in fisheries management) is defined as ‘a partnership that harnesses the knowledge and capacities of those who have a shared interest in the sustainability of a fishery towards promoting a common end’. It further states that it can involve all the principal fisheries stakeholders but identifies it as the relationship between resource users and government while acknowledging that the private sector (processors, net makers, ice manufacturers etc.) and civil society all have a stake and role to play. This concept shall be the basis for exploring the nature of fisheries management in Kenya, with a more holistic outlook that questions if the social capital of the stakeholders, particularly that of the fishing community has been considered in this partnership. Katz (2000) says that social capital, defined by its function is the value of certain aspects of social structures founded on such links like shared history, cultures, religion etc. She adds on that social capital can be manifested in the form of respect for group culture and norms, collective knowledge and self governing institutions. It thus forms bedrock for people to abide and uphold norms in natural resource management. Limiting myself for this study, religion and cultural repertoires are the key social aspects that my study is embedded in.

In order to understand the concept of religion and its importance to this study, I first start by considering development<sup>2</sup> in a much broader sense that goes beyond just a teleology; a positive unfolding of society and without opening an epistemic space to dissect the meaning of development here, the concept of development is definitely more than just creating a modern material shell for humans but rather encompasses creating a society filled with certain kinds of people, with particular types of skills, capabilities, desires, values, and motivations. Co management<sup>3</sup> could be considered as an inherent aspect of development as different stakeholders' concert their efforts in resource governance and management. On a slightly different outlook to development and bringing on board the various stakeholders, the concept of human development which according to the United Nations Development Programme(UNDP), is about creating an environment in which people can develop their full potential and lead productive, creative lives in accord with their needs and interests<sup>4</sup>. According to Haar et al (2006:353) development refers to people's resources beyond any purely material and technocratic aspect. Most policymakers today accept that sustainable development-which has in its core, inclusiveness of all stakeholders- can be achieved only if people build on their own resources and these assets should be considered to include not only intellectual and social resources, but also spiritual ones, if and when these are available. Situating religion within a broad concept of development, it is envisaged to offer a powerful motivation for many people to act in the ways they do and instils moral guidance and the will to improve their lives.

Drawing from this quote by Herr (2006) on ways in which people's religious understanding of the world may have a bearing on development it is evident that the interconnectedness of development and religion is real.

The traditional Hindu idea of humankind, for example, emphasizes harmony with the living environment. This easily translates into a view that economic growth should be integral to the well-being of the environment as a whole. Similarly, Muslims believe that the ultimate aim of life is to return humanity to its creator in its original state of purity. In African traditional

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<sup>2</sup> The concept of development is highly contested by various scholars including : Agrawal, Arun. 1996. "Poststructuralist Approaches to Development: Some Critical Reflections." *Peace and Change* 21:464-477. Escobar, Arturo. 1995. *Encountering Development: The Making and Unmaking of the Third World*. Princeton: Princeton University Press, Sen, Amartya. 1999. *Development as Freedom*. New York: Anchor Books.

<sup>3</sup> Co-management approach lies in the middle of the power sharing continuum between centralistic and community-based management is considered the right choice as the method to pool stakeholder's aspirations.

<sup>4</sup> [www.undp.org](http://www.undp.org)

religions, the pursuit of balance and harmony in relations with the spirit world is paramount. Charismatic Christians (of which there are large numbers in Africa and in developing countries more generally) believe that personal transformation – inner change – is the key to the transformation of society. All of these ideas help to shape people's views of development. They stem from intellectual traditions associated with particular religions that have been formed by local histories (Herr 2006:355)

However, we are not saying that the inclusion of religion (and culture) in matters of development is the magic bullet we have been seeking, but rather for effective development cooperation, people's own understanding of the world as a point of departure is a firm foundation (Herr 2006).

That said, Chidester (1987, 1996b) acknowledges that some working definition of religion is required for its study. But he also argues that because the term "religion has been a contested category, a single, incontestable definition of religion cannot simply be established by academic fiat" (Chidester 1996b: 254). Due to its contested nature, he goes ahead and simplifies it as, 'that dimension of human experience engaged with sacred norms' (Chidester 1987: 4). In the second half of the twentieth century, as environmental alarm grew and intensified, so did concern about the possible role of religion in nature. Much of this concern has involved a hope for a "greening" of religion; in other words, it envisioned religion promoting environmentally responsible behaviour. Religion, according to Seul (1999) defines relationships to self, to others both near and far, as well as to the non human world and it is right at the core of individual or group identity. For the purpose of this study, the concept of religion shall be viewed in light of the influence peoples' religious beliefs markedly have on how natural resources are perceived and utilized.

The other social aspect of investigation in this study is culture repertoires and according to Swidler (2001) a cultural repertoire is 'an oddly assorted tool kit containing implements of varying shapes that fit...more or less well, are not always easy to use, and only sometimes do the job' (Swidler 2001: 24). In addition to this, culture consists of a repertoire of behaviors that includes symbols of meaning and practices selectively used by group members to construct "strategies of action" (Swidler 2001:284). What this simply implies is the behaviors, beliefs, and actions that include symbols of meaning and cultural practices selectively used by group members.

Culture is defined as a set of knowledge acquired, modes of life, ways of thinking and the achievements which characterize a people and other than the arts and letters, it entails the modes of life, the fundamental rights of the individual, value systems, traditions and beliefs. Culture and cultural repertoires can strongly influence the management of natural resources. Many African communities have their natural resource conservation practices anchored on taboos, beliefs and other traditional practices and sometimes this is done quite unconsciously (Ngouffo et al. 2001:9-11). This is true to the Kenyan context



and thus the concept of culture ( repertoires) shall be explored in this study to establish if and how they influence fisheries co management in the area of study, largely occupied by the Giriama, one of the nine Mijikenda tribes.

## Chapter 3      Natural Resource Management and Co management

### 3.1 Birth of co management

Owing to pressure from the international community-the International Monetary Fund (IMF) and the World Bank (WB), (multiparty democracy and state withdrawal was propagated (in the late 1980's), and aimed at addressing the impact of patronage politics that was marred by corruption, the concept of good governance was launched and pressure to effect decentralization so as to reduce state power and resources gained momentum (Tordoff 1997:14-19, 299). This marks a point of departure in decentralization of power especially in the developing world in which the IMF and the WB have had a great influence in the policy arena and could be referred to the conception of co management (Pomeroy and Berkes, 1997 and Borrini-Feyerabend 1996) all posit that co management has a the notion of 'sharing responsibility' and imply that the ultimate aim for co management is attaining a more appropriate, more efficient, and more equitable resource management.

According to Pomeroy et al (2001) conditions that affect co management can be grouped into various categories. Of importance however to this research are:

1. Supra community level- These are conditions external to the community such as legislations, supportive government administrative structures or technological change. In this study, this will encompass the 'exogenous knowledge' in fisheries management that is informed by scientific research such as modern –day conservation paradigms, better and safer fishing technologies etc. The BMU guidelines spell out the jurisdiction and control, legitimize property rights and decision making arrangements as well as spell out the rights, roles and responsibilities of stakeholders. It is a crucial role for the government to establish conditions for co management, particularly in the creation of legitimacy and accountability for institutional arrangements and delineation of power (Pomeroy et al 2001:199). Resource management systems must be viewed in the context of the complex interactions of characteristics that have shaped past and present situations and that have a capacity for influencing the future and these characteristics include the local community traditions, the social and political structures among others. External agents –may be drawn from NGO's, academic or research institutions, government agencies- are often needed to accelerate the co management process and they play a catalytic role in the development process and particularly help the communities in identifying problems, providing advice and guidance and carrying out capacity building among other supportive roles.

2. Community level- in this, conditions are found within the community and include both physical and the social environment. They range from size of the area to be managed to the number of people to undertake the management. It also encompasses levels of homogeneity in terms of kinship, ethnicity, religion, participation in decision making, leadership drawn from within the community among other conditions.
3. Individual /household level-The success of co management heavily relies on having individuals with a sense that the rules in place for co management are equitable and that there is sharing of both costs and benefits. This is hinged on an incentive structure which induces individuals to participate in management (Pomeroy et al 2001:200)

The government's role revolves around creation of an enabling policy environment, law enforcement and arbitration as well as technical and financial assistance. External agents' role involves building of local capacities, guidance and advocating for proper policies among others. Resource users are involved in the day to day management including monitoring enforcement. The planning and implementation of co management must fit within existing and traditional social and cultural institutions and structures of the community; guided by cultural and religious repertoires (Pomeroy et al 2001:199-206)

There is a growing recognition that user groups have to be more engaged in fisheries management if the management regime in place is to be effective and legitimate has necessitated their inclusion in management. A harmonious interaction among actors in fisheries management is the essence of fisheries co-management.

### **3.2 History of Fisheries in Kenya**

There exists many forms of fisheries management strategies and understanding and comparing the perceptions of the managers and resources users is expected to improve the chances of rationalizing and arriving at a consensus on appropriate management. This is particularly necessary in a co management arrangement. Historically, Coastal communities in Kenya governed resource use by rules that were largely informed by norms and traditional ecological knowledge with the norms anchored on cultural and religious beliefs According to Mc Clanahan et al. (2005), coastal fisheries and resource users are often organized around fish landing sites where fishers meet with marketers and where many of the economic transactions and decisions are made. Landing sites were led by a committee of elders also known as wazee wa bandari who advised on seasonality, ways of appeasing angered spirits, issuing of fishing restrictions and promoting social cohesion in the community among other roles. Through their long held traditional fisheries management measures, it was and still is widespread, as it will be seen later on during the discussions from the findings, that fishers would commonly attribute poor fish catch to disregard of traditions such as sacrifices (sadaka), prayers (dua/fatiha) and due to the use of modern fishing gears. Alongside this world view, the

fishers had and still have fishing restrictions which dictate when, where and how fishing should be done. Though these restrictions served the same purpose as modern-day sustainable fisheries measures such as rotational fishing, temporary or complete closure of parts of fishing areas among other marine fisheries management measures, the explanations for the two would be different, (Mc Clanahan et al. 2005). The modern-day sustainable fisheries measures employ ecological links thinking while the traditional strategies link the fertility of the sea not to the management and conservation measures to pleased spirits who bless them with huge catches in return.

### **3.3 The Birth of fisheries co management in Kenya: Beach Management Units (BMUs)**

In Kenya, decentralization of fisheries management was done so as to include other stakeholders/resource users in decision making. This however changed after independence and resource management was controlled by the central government with no inclusion of resource users (top -down state led approach). Decades of this approach however saw massive fisheries degradation taking place and this necessitated a shared management (co management). Kenya Department of Fisheries (now known as the Ministry of Fisheries Development) began developing legal frameworks to share management responsibility for fisheries in the 1990s. The BMU concept was originally invented and operationalized in from L.Victoria , and was set up for the joint management of the Lake Victoria which is shared amongst Kenya, Uganda and Tanzania. This would later be tailored for marine and coastal fisheries too. Through the Fisheries Act cap 378 and through the Fisheries regulations of 2006, a BMU is given exclusive rights to manage resources at a particular landing site (Cinner et al 2009). According Winter (2009), the incorporation of traditional fisheries management within a formal regime; BMU under co management is apparently thought to be a lasting solution to the problems of fisheries management. I however and without dismissing this position, agree with Wilson et al. (2003) that co management should be thought through and precisely on how to bridge the gap between local and scientific knowledge acknowledging that social and cultural conditions are conducive to transactions, co operations and communication.

## **Chapter 4      Research results and discussions:**

### **4.1    General overview of results**

The discussions and interviews held with the locals as well as the government and NGO officials working with the community on matters of fisheries co management exhibited contradicting yet interesting positions with regard to the actual implementation of co management in managing fisheries resources in Kenya. As stated in the previous chapters, co management is seen as a viable solution to issues of resource management, with which I concur, but this can only be achieved if a holistic approach that ensures that local and modern- day knowledges are bridged taking into regard that the social, cultural and religious conditions are conducive. This requires that the institutions put in place should recognize all these and as far as possible, integrate them in planning and implementation of the management measures. From the analysis of the data collected however it is evident that the communities' cultural and religious values have not been taken into account while rolling out fisheries co management in the Kenya coastal and marine fisheries. Looking at fisheries co management from a communities stand point, the respondents paint a picture of appreciation that the religion and culture has continuously played a great role in regulating fishing activities but still acknowledge that the degradation and stock depletion is attributed to population increase. They on many occasions during the discussions blamed the drop in fish stocks to pressure on the finite resource which was largely as a result of population increase thus exerting more pressure to the resource base than it could sustain. Closely tied to population increase is the increase of unsustainable fishing methods and constant disturbance of the sea as this is the community's main stay.

### **4.2    The place of religion and cultural repertoires in fisheries co-management Kenya**

As mentioned earlier in the limitations to this study, drawing a clear line between cultural and religious values in this study has been difficult since the community members do not agree on how to distinguish the two. This could be attributed to the reason that the Giriama people, as cited elsewhere in this paper, were not originally fishers but farmers and only took up fishing later due to their interaction with the Swahili and Bajun who were/are fishers. In fact the Bajun are regarded as the traditional fishermen *per excellence* on the Kenyan coast (Versleijen et al 2008).

However, it was clear that Giriama's customs on marine fisheries management often revolve around protecting religious sites and cultural symbols which are believed to protect food supplies(fish catch). Like other

*Mijikenda* communities, the *Giriama* had customs (cultural or religious) that were aimed at ensuring that fish catch was always high. These include:

Respect for sacred places (*Mziimu*) where spirits dwelt. In these places, fishing was discouraged but this gradually changed as rise in fishing populations has forced the community to fish everywhere.

*Sadaka* ceremony that was offered to appease the spirits and pray for bountiful catches and fertility of the sea

*Ada/ubani* which was a payment given to the *wazee wa bandari* by foreign fishers to get permission to fish in their fishing grounds. Permission would only be granted if the foreign fishers agreed to follow the fishing rules set by the fishermen at the landing site.

Traditions restricting the type of gears for fishing, where to fish and the fish size that could be caught.

Drawing from the information gathered through interviews and discussions, *Giriama* elders had the obligation to conduct fisheries customary ceremony (*tambiko/sadaka*)<sup>5</sup> which entailed preparation of unsalted rice and the days catch was not sold, but was all cooked and eaten at the beach and this was not served in plates but inside ‘*tumbi*’ (small boats). Leftover food was thrown back into the sea. This was a community affair done yearly to pray for increase in fish stocks and particularly for sardines (*simu*) to come to their lagoon and was also done to appease the spirits of the sea. However other smaller offerings were and still are made as problems arise. It also promoted social cohesion within the community as people ate together as family. Shrines (*miziimu*) is where the elders did the sacrifice and prayed for increase in fish. According to the respondents, the *miziimu*’s were sacred and they believed spirits dwelt there though fishing in these areas was allowed so long as nothing was disturbed.

Before launching any vessel, another ceremony known by different names such as *kuchinja chombo/kafara/fatiha* was usually conducted by the elders to cleanse the vessel of any ill fate and also pray for its great catch once it started fishing. The slaughtered cow would then be feasted on by the villagers.

Though some of the respondents claim that such traditions are not observed today, and that they are retrogressive, contradictory responses were recorded. Mzee Karabu, an elder, a fisherman and member of KCWA stated that there was a *sadaka* ceremony conducted last year (2010) but no increased fish catches were recorded. He says:

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<sup>5</sup> see McClanahan et al. 1997, Glaesel 1997, 2000 for descriptions of the *sadaka* among the Digo

*'Our elders, seeing that things are becoming bad at the sea, they resorted to going back to what we used to do, offering sacrifice to pray for abundance of fish. They slaughtered at the mlango (entrance) to the fishing grounds but nothing happened. No sardines came'. (Mzee Karabu-26/7/2011)*

Others, especially the older, traditionalists and Muslims and some sections of the younger fishermen claim that the sacrifices have no effect anymore since people's faiths have completely dwindled and so the spirits are not pleased with them and thus will not grant their prayers.

*'Our Iman (faith) has immensely dropped and no matter how much sadaka we offer, the spirits are hard to please now and so our prayers are not (positively) answered' (Chengo 26/7/2011)*

On the other hand, some sections of the community oppose the offering of sacrifices because apparently every time the ritual is performed, someone drowns at the sea. They even went ahead and added that in all cases, the person who drowns would always be a Giriama (non –Muslim) and were afraid that the Muslims who were then the leaders in fishing activities offered the Giriama's for sacrifice.

*'They (muslim fishers) would perform sadaka, a huge ceremony of feasting would be held, all of us (community) would be invited, prayers would be conducted and in the end the elder would say....take whom you please (mchukue umtakaye)' (Chengo, 28/7/2011)*

Yet another line of thought from Katana Ngala, a member of KCWA and a BMU member, is that the reason why the sardines did not appear even after sacrifices were offered has nothing to do with rituals but the way fishing has been conducted. He claims:

*'We have constantly fished and disturbed the ocean, the sardines come to feed on certain fishes which we have overexploited so there is no food for them and thus they cannot come' (Katana Ngala, 29/07/2011).*

His explanation is highly inclined towards the concept ecological links and recognition that unsustainable fishing methods are detrimental to the fisheries resource. Such thoughts were manifested by sections of the community groups interviewed and it mainly ran across the younger and exposed fishermen who had undergone some level of training on marine fisheries conservation (modern –day fisheries management ways).

From my own experience working in a local NGO that supported the KCWA, I witnessed one of these *fatiba* ceremonies in 2010 before a new boat was launched. The boat had been purchased for the community through donor funds as a livelihoods intervention strategy. It was to be used for deep sea

fishing since a part of their lagoon fishing grounds had been closed off as a conservation area for ecotourism. For the community to own it, this ceremony had to be conducted. A goat was slaughtered and a feast made to initiate the boat before starting operations. This may have no significance at all to a scientist since fish stocks increase or decrease have nothing to do with spirits, but sections of the community believes in this ritual and respects it. If the development interventionists chose to disregard this would probably mean that the community would not approve of the project and this could lead to project failure. This is a clear indication that the community still values their cultural and religious practices and probably incorporating them in modern-day fisheries management strategies that guide the fisheries co management would probably be necessary. May a case of hybrid institutions of traditional and modern-day fisheries management strategies would be more ideal.

### **4.3 Religion and cultural practices of the Mijikenda - Giriama:**

Like a modern industrialized world, modern-day fisheries management ways steers clear of religious teachings as well as cultural ones and makes a clear separation between the science of conservation and these two social issues (Hamdy 2000).

Traditionally, fisheries management was informed by cultural beliefs. However with the intrusion of religion and in particular by Islam, the cultures sort of became *Islamized* as stated over and over by the respondents. Christianity according to the respondents has had negligible influence in fisheries management and still is does not. The discussions held with the fishermen from the Christian faith totally opposed the cultural or religious) practice of offering *sadaka* claiming that it had its roots in Islam and it contravenes their Christian teachings. They however support modern- day fisheries management measures. These discussions lead me to the question that lingers on; does religion(and culture) have a place in natural resource governance and in this case in fisheries co management?

Without disputing Hamdy's (2000) argument on the centrality of religion and the evident lack of attention accorded to it in matters of environment and resource management, where he claims: 'The spiritual and religious dimensions are obviously quite important in the lives of the majority of humans throughout the ages, including today. Works abound on theology, philosophy of religion, religious ethics, and the like. However, only a small number of authors have addressed the question of religion and the environment' (Hamdy 2000:2)

This statement vividly reflects the state of affairs in fisheries management at the Kenyan Coast. Mc Clanahan et al. (1997) argue that in the South coast of Kenya, the traditional belief systems have gradually been replaced by Islam



and this is compounded by and local a large influx of immigrants in recent decades. While this could be true, results of my study indicated that Islam was very influential and in some cases had replaced or hybridized the traditions relating to fishing in the North Coast. Islam seemingly has had a huge influence and role in the way of life of the inhabitants of the study area.

However, *Sadaka* for instance which has always been said to be an Islamic ritual has been highly condemned by the Muslim fishers as a form of *bid'ah* (innovation that displeases Allah). This has also been the case between the older and younger fishers with the younger fishers dismissing it as retrogressive and outdated with no effect now. One of the respondents stated that:

*Praying to Allah to provide rizq (daily bread) is perfectly allowed in Islam and it is done by madrassa (Islamic classes) going children led by their Ustadh (Islamic teacher) and food prepared and Quran recitation and prayers is done. But kafara (sacrifice) is unislamic when offered to appease or pray to spirits' (Dzengo Chai)*

The fishermen claim that *sadaka* always brought *simu* but they contradict themselves by saying that they do not believe that it is effective-at least not anymore. However the *sadaka* ritual as well *fatiha* are still practiced to date the same way it was done in the past though it is disregarded by some sections of the community especially the Christians and the younger generations of fishermen.

Another common notion that stems from Islamic teachings and that came up over and over during the study is the belief that God will always provide for His creation, as illustrated by this quote by one old Muslim fisherman:

*At times we worry a lot while it is clearly said in the holy book that everyone's daily bread is guaranteed. God is the all providing and He will always provide for us and so the outcry on fisheries depletion is a lack of faith in God's word. And anyway He does His will (Fatuma Yusuf)*

*Sadaka* was used as a way of conserving marine resources as it regulated fishing by prohibiting fishing in certain periods and/or in certain areas. For the *sadaka* to have an impact on marine resources, the ceremony and rules had to be attended and performed by the majority of the fishers if not the entire community. From the discussions however, it is clear that this ritual has lost meaning among most of the younger fishers probably due to modern day fisheries management knowledge is also not appreciated anymore by the non Muslim fishers as it is believed to have an Islamic founding. It apparently still retains an emotional and ritual value for older Muslim fishers (McClanahan et al. 1997)

Undoubtedly, environmental issues (and in this case fisheries management) are embedded on moral and ethical consciousness of a culture and as such human-environment interactions exist within dynamic cultural, spatial and temporal contexts and thus management efforts ought to incorporate elements of local cultures and religion. This way it is more readily

accepted and finds place as a way of life rather than a scientific prescription in the community venture.

Information gathered from the MoFD and NGO's working with the community on fisheries co management acknowledge that it is true that the community generally respects their cultural and religious practices and beliefs and still practice most of them. According to an DFO from the MoFD, some of the cultural beliefs however are stumbling stumps in the path of co management such as those that prohibited women from to going to the sea. The locals had mentioned that it was an abomination for women to go to the sea, though they gave different reasons for this. Some claimed it was purely for security reasons, others claimed that women were viewed as a bad omen and would cast bad luck to fishermen in case the first person they met was a woman when going out fishing. Others added that a woman on her menses would bring bad luck and probably no fish would be caught. Other claims were that it was simply because the fishermen were not decently covered as they wore tattered clothes for work and thus they could accidentally meet women who culturally or religiously were as not permitted to see their nakedness. Whatever the case though, and though women go out to the sea and even do fishing now, they lack a voice in fisheries management. The BMU regulation deliberately stipulates that the position of a treasurer in the BMU executive office must be a woman. It also requires everyone engaging in any form of activity that touches on the sea to be a BMU member. This includes fish mongers and traders who for some reason happen to be mainly women. Despite this legal backing, women's views are seldom accorded seriousness and as well as for the men who do not engage in actual fishing activities.

All respondents under this category seemed to acknowledge that no deliberate effort was done to incorporate the positive cultural and religious aspects of the Giriama community in the co management framework and all the law and external agents do is ignore and wish away these practices yet they are still rife in most this area and within other coastal fishing communities.

#### **4.4 Selected Case Studies:**

##### **Case study 1: Chief Kahindi**

Born and bred in the area, he has been the area chief for Junju Location since 2008. As an administration officer, he has been in one way or another , involved in all the development projects in the area. He recounts that the culture of the *Mijikenda* in Kuruwitu area is still strong and the any success or failure at individual or even community projects is largely attributed to cultural beliefs .For instance, he says, when someone's business prospers, people (precisely ,jealous people) attribute this to use of magical charms and portions. The same applies to a failure in a project too; they claim that an 'evil eye' must have looked at that project. They even have words and statements popularly understood to mean the use of charms such as '*si bure pana mkono wa mtu*' (there is definitely someone's hand in that) or *kutia dege, busda* (evil eye). These beliefs are also eminent in fisheries management as the people

though not openly still believe in their cultural and religious symbols. In this area, Christianity has little influence on fisheries management, probably because the first fishermen were Muslims and while the Giriama were and still largely are farmers. As a result, there was a huge Islamic influence in the way fisheries management was done and still is. Chief Kahindi claims that some fisheries issues and practices such as slaughtering an animal before a vessel starts working are cultural but have Islamic founding. Though he has never fished, he reckons that the traditional fisheries management strategies ensured that the resource was used sustainably. He attributes this to utter respect of religious and cultural teachings, since the enforcement of rules then was not as stringent as it is under the current BMU system. He adds that under the BMU system, which is a formal structure to implement fisheries co management, the fisheries management strategies are largely informed by scientific research as the MoFD still influences a lot of what the BMU implements. This is also happens with all the development organizations whose scope touches on fisheries management and obviously will want to implement strategies informed by research. He claims that the modern-day fisheries management measures are aiming at more dialogue, to involve better social integration in order improve the prospects for compliance but are not taking into any consideration what measures and structures existed before, and if they do consider them, they just do it to appear like they are making an effort to integrate all stakeholders while in reality, it still is technocratic. Many traditional and community fisheries management measures that worked in the past should at least be incorporated in the modern- day measures. This he reckons would increase sense of ownership of the resource and management and would increase compliance as people have the rules close to their hearts since it follows what they are accustomed to.

### **Case Study 2: Mzee Karabu:**

Mzee Karabu has been fishing for approximately 47 years now and he is originally from Ganze still in Kilifi District. He began fishing in Malindi and Mambrui in the North coast of Kenya as young man. Then the closed areas were marine parks of Malindi, Watamu and Bamburi in the North coast .Mzee Karabu explains that from the beginning, Mijikendas were not allowed to fish, it was an occupation entirely dominated by Muslim Swahili and Bajun in the area. The main fishing gears employed then were small canoes (*vidau*) and baited hooks and lines (*mshipi*). He adds that then the fish catches were always huge and there was no need for sophisticated gears or deep sea fishing but things have changed now and catches are extremely low. In the past, children were not allowed to go fishing, but now, they even drop out of primary school (below 16 years) to start fishing. The small canoes were made from mango trees that had grown all over the farms .He acknowledges that the current issues; constant fishing due to the rise in population and an overwhelmingly increase in number of vessels has led to overexploitation of fish recourses as well as disturbing the sea and scaring away fish. He claims that the old fishing gears were non destructive and definitely the way fishing was done then was more sustainable. Mzee Karabu attended an exchange visit in Zanzibar in 2001

before the establishment of the Kuruwitu Community Conservation Area to learn on alternative livelihoods and sustainable management of a marine conservation area. Despite this exposure, Mzee Karabu, an old Muslim Giriama still believes that traditional fisheries management is more sustainable. These management measures mainly revolved around restrictions on the type of gear and fishing times. Outsiders were not allowed to fish in other communities territories and would only do once they are vetted by the *Wazee wa Bandari* for clearance and they had to adhere to the fishing rules set in those landing sites as new entrants add to the harvesting pressure and typically lack understanding of the rules set at the landing site.

The modern-day management regime, he says, is good but bottlenecks exist such as the young leadership taking over management does not consult the older people's advice on fisheries management. This has led to disregard of community norms that upheld the management of the resource and a general disregard for cultural and religious practices that promoted community cohesion. Mzee Karabu's recommendation is that for the success of fisheries co management to be real, then we have to learn from the traditional ways of fishing and managing fisheries as they were less destructive. He also says appeasement cannot work now as people's faith has dwindled

## Chapter 5      Discussions and Implications:

The daunting question that comes from this study is whether or not tapping into local communities' knowledge system on fisheries management is a vital prerequisite for a successful co management. A lot of emphasis has been laid on the importance inclusion of the local ecological, social, cultural and economic circumstances as a pre requisite to co management. Critics of the top down state led resource management argue that these centralized governments are often not sensitive to local peculiarities. Efforts to deal with this contested issue, the inclusion of local resource users in planning and management has always been envisaged as a way to bridge this gap. Co management frameworks are in place and operationalized along the Kenyan Coastline through the BMU's<sup>6</sup>. However, evidently from the responses, the MoFD still controls management of the resource and the formulation of regulations and management strategies has not integrated the local community's strategies in co management. This sort of contradicts the essence of co management but this is beyond the scope of this study. Of focus here are cultural repertoires and religious beliefs in fisheries co management and their influence in breaking or making the fisheries management regime.

Some respondents, precisely the young and those that had undergone some training on conservation showed a rough idea of knowledge of ecological links between conservation efforts such as coral reefs being important habitats for some fishes and that their destruction would mean destruction of fish habitats and the end results would be a drop in fish stocks. Others recognized the link between some smaller fish species which are a source of food for other fishes and acknowledge that over fishing of the smaller fishes has a definite adverse effect on the fishes that prey on them. With this kind of enlightenment, they did not entirely believe that the cultural and religious beliefs and rituals had any effect on fish stocks. On the contrary, all the groups had a clear understanding that the sea is dry because of the way fishing is currently carried out and highly linked it to population rise which has exerted unprecedented pressure on the limited resource. They however still have respect for these rituals for the simple reason that they have been passed down through generations and they always worked for them. Aside from the other principles of a successful co management as fronted by proponents of co management, tapping into local community's knowledge, integrating with scientific fisheries management measures and fully incorporating their cultural and religious aspects would mean completely bringing the community on board in fisheries co management and this would hugely raise the chances of a

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<sup>6</sup> Each BMU has jurisdiction over a landing site and the Fisheries Department(now known as MoFD) designates a co management area where the two share management responsibilities (Olouch et al., 2006)

successful management regime. Without total support from the community, who directly interact with these resources, this would mean that natural resource management strategies put in place may not achieve the envisioned results.

Evident in this study however is that the community in the area of study employs a mix of fisheries management knowledge based on practical observations acquired while doing fishing, knowledge gained through training as a number of the locals through NGO's working in the area had received some basic fisheries management trainings as well as knowledge founded on cultural and religious beliefs. Undoubtedly, changes in literacy levels and influx of modern-day fisheries management as well as dynamic and shifting belief systems are bound to have had a strong impact fisheries management and particularly on co management. The community understanding on fisheries management strategies may change as witnessed from the interviews and discussions but as repeated in this paper, the community still upholds their cultural and religious practices.

### **5.1 Cultural repertoires and Religion- Fisheries co management nexus: From an actor oriented approach angle**

While trying to understand the role of cultural repertoires and religious beliefs in fisheries management through Long's (2004) actor oriented approach where he emphasizes the need to understand the different actors, in this case the actors in their 'life worlds' are mainly split into the local community and the external agents who include the MoFD and local NGO's . They both possess different lines of thought and understandings regarding fisheries management, with the local community having developed management strategies through years of cumulative experience with the fisheries resource and cultural as well as religious practices offering intrinsic motivation to sustainably manage their resource. As depicted however from the information gathered, it is not all smooth sailing as there exists a battle field of these knowledge's and the point of intersection known as the interface as earlier on explained forms the pivotal point for the success or failure of a project. This point I believe highly influences the community's engagement in co management. As a result, a harmonious and successful state of fisheries co management will depend on how the actors engage with the different bodies of knowledge.

In this case of the Kuruwitu community, co management has been embraced mainly because the fisheries policy and law stipulates that fishing communities organize themselves in BMU's and enter into partnership with the government to manage fisheries resources. It has opened avenues for the community with a legal backing from the BMU Regulations of 2006 to create fisheries management plans and formulate by laws to govern their fisheries management strategies. A huge milestone that the community has had due to the inception of co management regime is the legal space to designate a

community conservation area which is a protected area just like a MPA. With such a legal framework to support community initiatives, this creates a strong backbone for the community to tap into both local fisheries management measures as well as support from legislation if need arises.

## **5.2 Summary and Conclusion: Where do we go from here?**

### **Institutionalizing cultural and religious practices?**

This research focused on the role that cultural repertoires and religion may have on fisheries co management focusing on a case of a highly heterogeneous community. A case of Kuruwitu community in the North Coast of Kenya was targeted mainly because 1) it is the pioneer community in establishing a community managed conservation area in Kenya and 2) fishing is the community's' mainstay. The main objective of the research was to establish if and how peoples' cultures and religion influence their engagement in fisheries co management. One main research question was raised: How do peoples' cultural repertoires and religious beliefs mediate their participation in fisheries co management? In order to answer this question, two sub questions that sought to establish what these cultural and religious aspects were in the Giriama community around fisheries management as well as if there was co-existence of modern –day fisheries management ways and traditional fisheries management. Ultimately, I sought to find out if cultural repertoires and religious beliefs affect co management efforts. To achieve this, both primary data and secondary data was collected. Field research was conducted with information collected from the local community, government officials in the MoFD and NGO's working with the community on issues of fisheries management. Additionally, review of secondary resources which includes journals, articles, and case studies was part of the methodology. I employed qualitative data collection techniques, borrowing highly from ethnographic research to gather the information.

From the research findings, it is clear that culture and religion has played a massive role in fisheries management for the Mijikenda community and precisely for the Giriama community that inhabits Kuruwitu area. The community had management measures based on accumulated years of fishing. They also upheld cultural and religious practices like *sadaka*. Information gathered from literature materials reviewed show that for quite a long time cultural and religious issues have been ignored or sidelined in most development issues. I deliberately include resource management in the bigger development umbrella since resource management and conservation cannot be separated from the development course. However with holistic approaches to development evolving and being adopted every day, slowly institutions mandated to govern resource management may have to a cultural and religious turn. This means that it may be necessary to recognize the influence the inclusion of these two community social aspects may have on any form of development or development interventions. May be a case of hybrid institutions is needed which allows that incorporation of all relevant world views?

Since the BMU regulation mandates the community to come up with management plans for their landing sites, then probably context specific cultural or religious practices that contribute to benign fisheries management would find a place in the BMU plans. This way, the community would own the process even better and would most probably be a positive move towards a successful fisheries co management venture. This I argue out would be a 'smooth' way of making the local community to better engage and commit to fisheries co management. As segments of the community still adhere to cultural and religious practices, the ones who thought it had nothing to do with increase or decrease of fish were tolerant about the practice. They did not care to take part in it but nevertheless they did not oppose it. Since the BMU's with support from the MoFD draw the management plans and by laws, then it would be easy for such community specific management ways to be incorporated in the strategies. Humans have a tendency to devise ways to evade rules especially that come from outside and thus internally evolving them while incorporating what is close in the hearts of the community may be a strong foundation to fisheries co management.

As mentioned earlier, not much emphasis in the implementation of co management has been accorded to the success that integration of traditional knowledge, customary strategies and co management could have on fisheries resource management. Precisely, co management needs a particular cultural foundation, with cooperative and communal values. Cultural and religious beliefs serve as an implicit source of intrinsic motivation for control for individuals or communities in relation to each other and the nature (natural resources). Certainly then, there exists a huge potential for more effective management if traditional regulations within their local socio cultural framework are incorporated into formal management which co management fosters. As co management highly requires commitment especially from the local communities who are a key stake holder in natural resource conservation, this I feel in the case of Kenya would create more room for the success of fisheries co management. If anything, like all forms of traditional management ways, fisheries management for the community was and is still centred on knowledge, practice and belief and thus divorcing it from its social and spiritual foundation is almost impossible. This thus implies that embracing it and incorporating it in the formal management regime would be more fruitful than a total disregard of such yet the community still practices it.

Having established that the community studied in this research still values the cultural and religious practices relating to fisheries management, then the question would be how to validate these practices and then integrate them into the formal management regime (co-management).

Central to this study is the role cultural repertoires and religious beliefs have on fisheries co management in Kenya and acknowledges the existence of a supportive institutional and legal framework where traditional knowledge and



practice can be anchored to foster sustainable fisheries management (Pomeroy et al. 2001) and (McFadden et al., 2005). Bottom-up community based approaches to fisheries management have to be supported by government and inclusion of local communities in the planning and implementation within the top-down approaches (Nurhidayah, 2010).

There is definitely no universal ‘correct way’ of carrying out natural resource management generally. The conditions formulated to support ‘doing it the right way’ can only be context specific and totally dynamic since new ideas emerge in the field of natural resource management. This is true when it comes to fisheries management.

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# Appendices

## Checklist for the FGD and key informant interviews

Below are questions that were posed by the investigators to the different Focus Groups and key informant interviews in Kuruwitu in the months of July-August 2011. Depending on the responses, other questions were asked spontaneously so as to probe further in issues. Interviews and discussions were largely conducted in Swahili with exceptions of the officers from the MoFD and NGOs.

1. What fisheries management measures and institutions existed within the community before the formation of the BMU's?
2. We understand that the Mijikenda as a whole had a rich culture relating to fishing activities. Could you please shed some light on this?
3. Are *mizimu* used for fishing? How often and are there any restrictions on gear used in these areas?
4. What is different since the inception of the BMU?
5. Are there clashes in the management ways employed before and those employed now?
6. Does religion have any influence in fisheries management?
7. What religious and cultural practices touch on fisheries management?
8. Does the community still practice them?
9. Now that the law requires that BMU's should have management plans, are traditional measures taken into account?
10. Are there any conflicts in the implementation of the BMU concept?
11. Would integration of the cultural/religious practises have any effect on community engagement in fisheries co – management?