MEDIATED *MINBAR*: MUSLIM MEDIA AND IDENTITY IN UGANDA

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Abstract

Motivated by the scarcity of literature on the relationship between Muslims and media in East Africa, and Uganda in particular, this thesis examines the transformative role of new media in shaping the Islamic identity in Uganda. Since the liberalization of media in 1992, Ugandan Muslims have increasingly adopted new media, integrating it into their daily lives and religious practices. The study argues that new media has become a crucial platform for negotiating Islamic identity, serving as space where power, representation, and religious expression are contested and redefined.

Drawing on interviews with media practitioners, scholars, and media consumers, the study has explored the motivations, strategies, and attitudes, that guide Muslims in their engaged with new media. Historically, Ugandan Muslims relied on the mosque *Minbar* and religious festivals as primary avenues for communication, particularly to express social and economic grievances. With limited access to the national broadcaster, these traditional platforms were essential for intra-faith debate and theological discourse.

However, the advent of new media has significantly altered this landscape. New media now functions as a powerful tool for addressing issues of misrepresentation and marginalisation, providing a discursive space for diverse and often conflicting views within the Muslim community. The study highlights the rise of Salafism as a dominant voice in Ugandan media, using new theology to promote its theological perspective while rejecting opposing views. Additionally, radical groups like Allied Democratic Forces (ADF) have leveraged social media to reach a broader audience, bypassing traditional media gate keepers.

This thesis contributes to the academic study of religion and media by offering an in-depth analysis of how new media facilitate the articulation of Islamic identity in Uganda. It underscores the importance of new media as a site of power struggles among reformists, traditionalist, modernists, and radical factions within Islam, each striving to shape the narrative and influence the future of the faith in Uganda.

Acknowledgment

Throughout the years of research and writing for this dissertation, I have accumulated many debts of gratitude, and while space is limited, I would like to acknowledge just a few key contributors.

First and foremost, I extend my deepest thanks to my professors, Andrea Brigaglia (main supervisor) and Abdulkader Tayob (co-supervisor). Your unwavering support, guidance, patience, and encouragement have been the foundation of this project. The strength of this study is due to both of you, and any shortcomings remain my own responsibility.

I also wish to express my sincere gratitude to the members of the Department for the Study of Religions (DSR), especially Professors Porcu, Ukah, Shaykh, Blond, and Al-Hourani, for your continuous intellectual and moral support. Your encouragement and care have been invaluable. My thanks also go to the dedicated support staff, particularly Tasneem Wise, for your tireless administrative assistance. I truly appreciate everything you've done.

My heartfelt appreciation goes to all my interviewees in Uganda, whose insights and experiences were vital to this project. Thank you for your time and for patiently answering my many questions. While I strive to honour your voices, I take full responsibility for how they are represented in this dissertation.

Finally, to my beloved wife, Sharifa, and our children, Latifa and Hizam—thank you for walking this journey with me. Your love, patience, and unwavering support made this process not only possible but bearable. Without you, this journey would have been far more challenging.

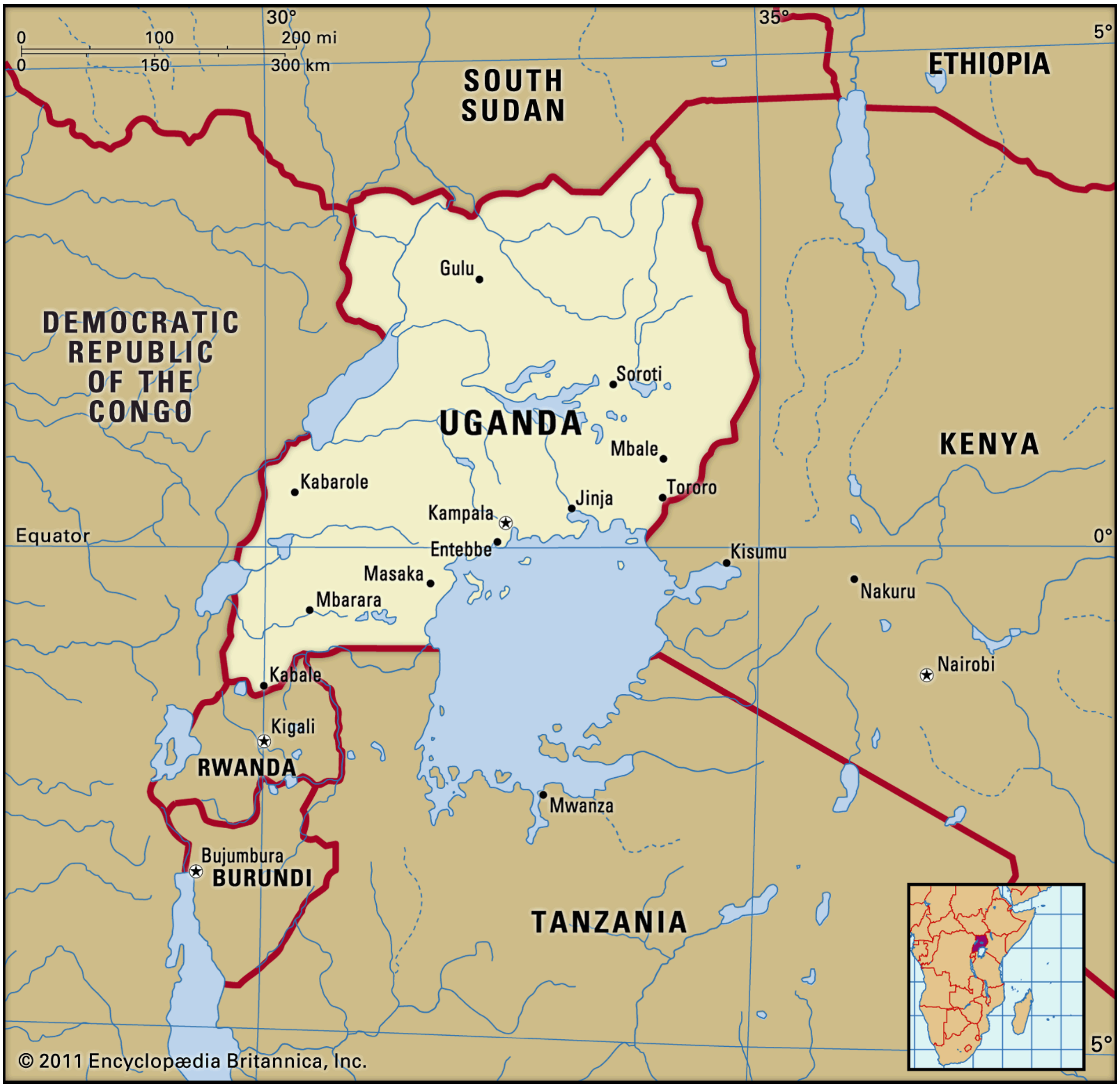
Dedication

I lovingly dedicate this work to my parents.

To my father, Haji Abdul Musoke Lubwama, who passed away unexpectedly just months before this submission. Your unwavering support, encouragement, and our last conversation—"There is no gain without pain"—will forever stay with me. I miss you every day and carry your words in my heart.

To my mother, Mayimuna Nabagereka, who has always nurtured and guided us toward our dreams. Even in the face of immense loss, losing both your husband and your own parents in such a short time, you remained a pillar of strength and grace. Thank you, Mum, for your endless love, humility, and resilience.

The Map of Uganda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Kabale
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Bujumbura
Kisumu
Nakuru
Nairobi
Mwanza
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Fig1, showing the colonial and post-colonial map of Uganda, surrounded by her neighbouring countries. Source: Encyclopaedia Britanica, 2011. Accessed from https://www.britannica.com/place/Uganda on 9 August 2024.

CHAPTER ONE

INTRODUCTION

Introduction

The relationship between religion and new media in pluralistic communities is increasingly gaining momentum. Media theorists contend that social institutions are adapting positively to the influence of new media a phenomenon known today as the new media age. This trend is also evident among Muslims in contemporary Uganda, who have integrated new media into their daily lives. They use these platforms not only for internal debates and discussion but also to publicly express concerns about perceived marginalisation by those in power. This study examines how Muslims in Uganda utilise new media, focusing on their motivations, approaches, and attitudes, as well as how this usage influences their identity. This introductory chapter begins with the study's background, followed by the problem statement, general and specific research objectives and question, and the outline of the dissertation. The chapter concludes with a summary of chapters.

Background of the Study

Uganda is in East Africa and known as the "*Pearl of Africa*," [1] shares borders with Southern Sudan to the north, the Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC) to the west, Rwanda, and Burundi to the southwest, Tanzania to the south, and Kenya to the east. [2] Ugandans are "notoriously religious."[3] This notoriety is reflected by the kind of spirituality that binds every aspect of their lives. Religion is part of their everyday life. From farming to celebrations of marriage, social relationships, environmental conservation, leisure, hunting, fishing, dying, mourning, and media, among others. [4] In 2024, Uganda's population was estimated to be 45 million, with 82% identifying as Christians (39% Roman Catholics, 32% Anglican, 10% Pentecostal, and 1% Adventists) and 14% are Muslims.[5] Other religious groups make up 5%, while less than 1% are agnostics or and atheists, indicating that nearly 99% of Ugandans are affiliated with a religion that plays central role in their lives.

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[1] Winston Churchill famously made this slogan in his 1909 book "My African Journey." For more see, Winston Spencer Churchill, *My African Journey* (Toronto: William Briggs, 1909).

[2] For more on the geographical location of contemporary Uganda, see worldAtlas.com, retrieved on August 28, 2021, https://www.worldatlas.com/maps/uganda

[3] I'm borrowing the famous quotation from the late Kenyan theologian John S. Mbiti. For more on the religious notoriety of African people see, John S. Mbiti, *African Religions and Philosophy*, (London: Heinemann Educational Books, 1969), 1.

[4] See Jimmy S. Ssentongo, "Religion and Democracy in Uganda: A Historical Perspective," *Keynote presentation delivered to Mark the International Day of Democracy*, 20th Sept. 2022, Kampala.

[5] Uganda National Population and Housing Report 2014 accessed January 1, 2021, https://www.ubos.org/wp-content/uploads/publications/03_20182014_Census_Final_Reportdoc.pdf.

Muslims in Uganda constitute not only the largest minority religious group, but are also the fastest-growing community according to the Pew Research Centre.[6] Like elsewhere in Africa and beyond, they identify themselves primarily as Sunni, with smaller Shia minority,[7] although most prefer to simply call themselves "Muslims".[8] While many Sunni Muslims in Uganda, do not directly label themselves as Sufis, Sufi practices have been prevalent since their introduction by Arab traders from East African cost in the mid-1800s.[9] Sufi influence persisted until early 1970s [10] when Salafism began to take hold, driven by Gulf funding and Ugandan students returning from studies in the Gulf.[11] Today, Salafism has gained significant traction, with adherents establishing mosques, schools, and media outlets. Known locally as the Tablighi (*Abatabliki*), Salafis now represent a distinct classification within Uganda's Sunni-Muslim landscape.[12]

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[6] See Pew Research Centre, "The Future of World Religions: Population Growth Projection, 2010-2050." June 2015, accessed on Nov 11, 2022, from https://brilliantmaps.com/fastest-religion/

[7] See Pew Research Centre, "Mapping the Global Muslim Population", October 7, 2009. Accessed on August 30, 2021, via https://www.pewforum.org/2009/10/07/mapping-the-global-muslim-population/; See 2020 Report on International Religious Freedom, conducted by US Department of State, Office of International Religious Freedom; via https://www.state.gov/reports/2020-report-on-international-religious-freedom/uganda/ last updated on May 12, 2021.

[8] "How Muslims See Themselves and Islam's Role," Pew Research Centre 2005, accessed August 20, 2021, from https://www.pewresearch.org/global/2005/07/14/iii-how-muslims-see-themselves-and-islams-role/

[9] See Noel King, Abdul Kasozi, and Arye Oded, *Islam and the Confluence of Religions in Uganda,* (Florida: American Academy of Religion, 1973); Abdu B. K. Kasozi, *The Spread of Islam in Uganda,* (Nairobi: Oxford University Press, in association with the Islamic Africa Centre (Khartoum), 1986); Arye Oded, *Islam in Uganda: Islamization Through a Centralized State in Pre-Colonial Africa, (*New York, Toronto: John Willey & Sons, 1974), 37.

[10] Interview with Salman Faris, December 2017. See also his book: Salman Faris, "*Obutabliigi Mu Uganda*" (Tablighi in Uganda) (Kampala: Iqra Publication Centre, 2018). NB: Some scholars prefer to understand Salafism as a current (*Tayyar*) rather than a defined movement (*harakat*) or organization (*tandhwim*). However, Salafi refers to themselves as "a sect" in their self-referential description of Salafism as "a saved sect" which derives from one of the names of *Ahl-Sunna* or (Sunni-Muslims).

[11] Sallie Simba Kayunga, "Islamic Fundamentalism in Uganda: The Tablighi Youth Movement," (CBR Working Paper, 1994).

[12] It is important to note that nowhere in present literature or interviews grant the name Salafiyya to these early Ugandan Salafis of the time. This name became common in the late 1980s. My use of the term is more of the activities that are like contemporary Salafis who have used the term. To be specific these early 'Salafis' never had any identity besides Islam. However, they are known to be anti-Mawlid, and anti-Sufism. Later they became known as Tablighi (Abatabuliki) starting in the early 1980s. In 1989, the group split into two factions, the Uganda Tablighi Community and the Association of Salafi Mission *'at al-Da'wa al-Ssalafiya*). From this date, the name Salafi (or *abasalafu*) started to spread in the country as we shall see in this chapter. In my interview with Sheikh Salman Faris, one of the early members of the Salafi community since the late 1970s, who is still living at the time of this publication, opposes anyone who

Salafism, derived from the Arabic word "Salaf" which refers to the early generations of pious ancestors (al-Salaf al-Salih)[13] following Prophet Muhammad, emphasises emulating these ancestors in addressing contemporary religious, social, economic, and political issues.[14] Salafis believe that these early generations embody the purest form of Islam,[15] and this conviction often leads to a refusal to compromise with non-Salafis Muslims.[16] This is adherence to "discursive traditions"[17] as Talal Asad describes, fuels internal debates and conflicts over how to interpret and apply Salafi teachings to modern context.[18] Even though the Salafi creed unit all of them, they are deeply divided over the interpretation and implementation of their beliefs.[19]

Before the advent of new media technology, Ugandan Muslims relied on mosque *minbar*s (pulpits) and religious festivals as primary platforms for communication. The *minbar*, used by Imams during Friday prayers served as a space for debating and addressing various spiritual, theological, social, economic, and political issues. These discourses sometimes led to violent clashes, particularly in Salafi mosques with large youth followings. For instance, internal disputes within the Salafi community in the early 1990s led to the emergence of three factions, each led by Sheikh Yunusu Kamoga, Sheikh Sulaiman Kakeeto, and Sheikh Jamilu Mukulu. These divisions resulted in physical confrontations with Kamoga and Mukulu eventually being forced to relocate their followers.[20] Kamoga later reclaimed Nakasero

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calls them Salafis. He still maintains the Tablighi. He refers to his opponents (other Salafis) as undisciplined ruffians (Luganda: *Abayaye abatalina mpisa*). Interview with Salman Faris, December 2017. See also his book: Salman Faris, "*Obutabliigi Mu Uganda*" (Tablighi in Uganda) (Kampala: Iqra Publication Centre, 2018).

[13] Bernard Haykel. "On the Nature of Salafi Thought and Action," in *Global Salafism: Islam's New Religious Movement* edited by Roel Meijer (London: Hurst, 2009), 33.

[14] Roel Meijer, "Introduction," in *Global Salafism: Islam's New Religious Movement* ed. Roel Meijer (London: Hurst, 2009), 4.

[15] Henri Lauziere, *The Making of Salafism: Islamic Reform in the Twentieth Century*, (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2018), 7.

[16] See Joes Wagemakers, "The Citadel of Salafism," in *Handbook of Islamic Sects and Movements*, ed. Muhammad Afzal Upal and Carole M. Cusack (Brill, 2021).

[17] Talal Asad, *The Idea of An Anthropology of Islam* (Washington D.C.: Centre for Contemporary Arab Studies, Georgetown University, 1986), 14.

[18] See Brynjar Lia, 'Destructive Doctrinarians': Abu Mus'ab al-Suri's Critique of the Salafis in the Jihadi Current." In *Global Salafism: Islam New Religious Movement* ed. Roel Meijer (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2010).

[19] Andrea Brigaglia, "The Volatility of Salafi Political Theology, the War on Terror, and the Genesis of Boko Haram," *Diritto e Question Publiche* 15, no. 2 2015).

[20] See Sallie Simba Kayunga, "Islamic Fundamentalism in Uganda: The Tablighi Youth Movement." Also, Mukulu in some of his audio recordings points to how Kamoga's group killed a member of his group (Audio recording titled: *Enkayana Kumuzikiti Gw'e Nakasero* [Contestation at Nakasero Mosque] by Jamilu Mukulu available in author's files).

Mosque while Mukulu formed the Allied Democratic Forces (ADF), a rebel group that has since evolved into global jihadist organisation known as the Islamic State-Central African Province (ISCAP).[21] Similarly, non-Salafi groups used the *minbar* as platform for communication and addressing internal conflicts such as the well documented Kibuli/Old Kampala leadership disputes.[22] Access to national electronic media such as Radio Uganda and Uganda Television was so restrictive and controlled to avoid airing controversies that could threaten national unity, social cohesion, and peaceful co-existence.

Religion and The Liberalisation of Media in Uganda

It is, however, within this context that new media came into existence with easy access to its products, thanks to the liberalisation of the air-waves project that witnessed a melodramatic upsurge of electronic media in the country since the early 1990s. Today, one of the characteristics of religious groups in the country is the use of new media (radio, television, internet particularly social media).[23] Before the liberalisation of the economy, the Ugandan government-owned and tightly controlled the electronic media, requiring strict adherence to values that promoted unity and social cohesion. However, liberalisation allowed the establishment of privately owned media outlets, creating space for non-governmental entities, including religious groups to operate freely. Uganda now hosts more 200 private radio and television stations with many owned by religious organisations.[24]

Muslim radio and television stations that broadcast Islam are among those on the list of religiously operated media in the country. For clarity Muslim-owned media

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[21] See Abdulhakim Nsobya and Andrea Brigaglia, "A Political History of Uganda's ADF and an ADF Nashid in Luganda," *Journal for Islamic Studies* 38, no. 2 (2020). Also, Abdulhakim Nsobya, "ADF and the Making of IS-CAP: Analysis of an Internal Document in Luganda (forthcoming).

[22] George Kanyeihamba, *Reflections on the Muslim Leadership Question in Uganda*, Kampala: Fountain, 1997.

[23] This is reflected in the variety of licensed religious radio and television media that exceeds 100 stations. Additionally, there is the increasing use of social media networks by religious groups and Muslims especially the Salafi community are not left behind. They own and operate quite a lot of Facebook pages, YouTube channels, Twitter and websites operated by diverse Salafi groups globally and in Uganda.

[24] The Uganda Communication Commission (UCC) lists 202 authorized radio stations. However, the announcement dated 31st December 2020, shows a possibility of more 'unauthorized' FM stations in the country. See more at https://www.ucc.co.ug/. See the list of authorized Radio stations; https://www.ucc.co.ug/wp-content/uploads/2021/01/FINAL-LIST-OF-AUTHORISED-RADIO-BROADCASTERS-AS-OF-31st-DECEMBER-2020.pdf

Muslims entered the media landscape in 2000, when the Voice of Africa (VOA), the country's first Muslim radio station, began broadcasting with the support from Libyan leader late Col. Muammar Gaddafi. The station's programs were primarily aimed to serve the interests of Ugandan Muslims. Since then, additional Muslim FM radio and television stations have been established to address issues related to Muslims and Islamic belief in Uganda. These Muslim owned media outlets are gaining prominence in the new public sphere, shaped by the political and economic liberalization of the country. Ugandan Muslims increasingly use these platforms to express their joy, frustrations and concerns. Currently, there are seven popular Islamic radio stations and three television stations, with three based in Kampala, the capital, and the others broadcasting regions with significant Muslim populations in the West Nile and the Eastern parts of the country. These stations blend mainstream news with topical coverage of Islamic issues and the teaching of the Quran.

In addition to mainstream media, social media platforms like Facebook, Tiktok, and YouTube are widely used by religious organisations. These platforms supplement traditional media (Radio, TV, Print) and offer an alternative space for religious groups with limited access to such media as the ADF/ISCAP. The diversity of Islamic groups in Uganda is reflected in these media outlets. The significant role of the new media in religious life is evident not only in daily content but also in the passionate participation of audiences interactive programs. Social media is especially popular among Salafi youths who use it to sustain their understanding of Islam, as it is traditionally taught in mosques. Unlike traditional media , social media allows the dissemination of religious messages beyond physical and geographical boundaries, free from authoritative censorship, and fosters community building.[25] Considering the growing number of smart telephones in the country, improved mobile networks, and broader internet coverage across villages, social media has become an integral part of daily life.[26] A significant number of people are using the internet and web-based media to communicate and access information.

Most Salafi groups in Uganda, if not all, actively use at least one social media platform, including YouTube channels, Facebook pages, Twitter accounts, WhatsApp groups, and websites. This is evident from the active participation of users within Uganda and abroad as seen in comments and reviews.[27] In 2020, about 7.3% of Ugandans[28] used social media with YouTube and Facebook are ranked second and third most visited sites in the country, respectively (after Google).[29] According to DataReportal.com, YouTube and Facebook posts have the potential to reach over 11.6% of Uganda's 26.7 million population aged 13 and above.[30] This number is noteworthy, given the economic challenges faced by an average Ugandan and political restrictions (including daily operating tax) imposed on all social media users between 2018 and 2021.[31] Such widespread use of new media technologies warrants serious attention. Hackett, Madore, and Millet-Mounty emphasis that the use of new media technologies for religious purposes is rapidly growing in Africa, making research in the field crucial to explore themes such as religious consumerism and new forms of religious expression. [32]

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[25] Muhamed Haron, Religion and Media: Reflections on their Positions and Relationship in Southern Africa, *Global Media Journal of African Edition* 4, no. 1 (2011), 32.

[26] Uganda Ministry of ICT, 2014 Report.

In this media age, new technologies present both challenges and opportunities, particularly in pluralist countries like Uganda. While religious groups can use these platforms for spiritual, social, and economic development, they can also become spaces for conflict and intolerance as groups assert their identities at the expense of others. In such contexts, empirical research becomes necessary. Therefore, it is important to seek the latest information, knowledge, and gaps in the use of new media technology to communicate religion. This is especially true for the Ugandan Muslim community, where academic research on the intersection of religion and new media remains scarce. Since Abasi Kiyimba's chapter on mass media and Islam in Uganda, published in 1990, there is no significant academic study, on the interplay between Islam and new media technology in contemporary Uganda.

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[27] Ibid, 9.

[28] By February 2021, Uganda's total population was 46.43 million people. See https://datareportal.com/reports/digital-2021-uganda, last updated on February 12, 2021.

[29] See the full 2021 report on internet use in Uganda by DataReportal.com, via https://datareportal.com/reports/digital-2021-uganda. Last updated on February 12, 2021.

[30] Ibid.

[31] The government of Uganda imposed a social media tax in 2016 in a bid to curb what President Museveni called "time-wasting". The tax had to be directly paid by all social media who would wish to access sites such as Facebook, Twitter, and WhatsApp. See Patience Akumu, 2018., "Uganda introduces Social Media Tax despite Criticism.", *Aljazeera*, July 1, 2018. It was accessed on August 20, 2021, via https://www.aljazeera.com/economy/2018/7/1/uganda-introduces-social-media-tax-despite-criticism.
In June 2021, after elections and swearing in of the incumbent, the tax was recalled but instead, the heavy tax was put on all internet users. See for more: David Vosh Ajuna, "Uganda substitutes OTT with 12% tax on data, airtime." *The Daily Monitor*, June 11. Accessed on September 6, 2021, from https://www.monitor.co.ug/uganda/news/national/govt-substitutes-ott-with-12-tax-on-data-airtime--3432728. More details on how governments in Africa are restricting the use of social media see Karombo, Tawanda. 2020. "More African Governments are Quietly Tightening Rules and Laws on Social Media", *Quartz Africa*, Oct 12.

[32] Rosalind Hackett, F. Madore and P. Millet-Mounty, "Interview with Rosalind I. J. Hackett on Religion and Digital Media Trends in Africa," *Emulations – Revue de Sciences Sociales* 24, (2018), 126.

Problem Statement

The motivation for study stems from the significant gap in the academic literature concerning the relationship between Islam and media in East Africa, particularly in Uganda. While much of the existing work on religion and media focus on Christianity in Western contexts,[33] with some studies addressing the media landscape in Africa, these have largely concentrated on West and Southern Africa.[34] Moreover, the limited work on East Africa[35] predominantly examines Tanzanian, a country with a substantial Muslim population. This lack of scholarly attention highlights the need on focussed research on Ugandan Muslims and their engagement with the media.

Furthermore, the current landscape in Uganda shows that Muslims are increasingly owning and operating new media technologies. These platforms, however, are not just space for theological and political discussions but also channels through which Muslims express feelings of marginalisation by the government. In this environment, identity politics, often rooted in religious affiliation, has become prominent. The historical legacy of European colonialism, which favoured Christianity, has left enduring grievances that postcolonial policies have failed to resolve, particularly regarding development, political leadership, and equitable access to resources.[36] In the absence of access to mass media, Ugandan Muslims have traditionally used mosque *minbar* (pulpits) during Friday sermons and other religious festivals as platforms to voice discontent.

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[33] Stewart Hoover, *Religion in the Media Age* (New York: Routledge, 2006); Stewart Hoover S. & Lynn S. Clark, *Practicing Religion in the Age of the Media* (Columbia University Press 2002); Stewart Hoover and K. Lundby, *Rethinking Media, Religion and Culture* (New Delhi: Sage Publication, 1997

[34]See; Walter C. Ihejirika, "Research on Religion, Media, and Culture in Africa: Current Trends and Debates," *Africa Communication Research* 2, no. 2 (2009); Andrea Brigaglia, "The Radio Kaduna Tafsir (1978-1992) and the Construction of the Public Image of Muslim Scholars in the Nigerian Media," *Journal for Islamic Studies* 27, (2007); Muhammed Haron, "Religion and Media: Reflection on their Position and Relationship in South Africa," *Global Media Journal: African Edition* 4, no. 1 (2010); Asonzeh Ukah, "Building God City: The Political Economy of Prayer Camps in Nigeria. *The International Journal of Urban and Regional Studies* 40, no. 3 (2016); Kwabena Asamaoh-Gyadu, "Of Faith and Visual Alertness: The Message of Mediatized Religion in an African Pentecostal Context. *Journal of Material Religion* 1, no. 2 (2005).

[35] Thomas J. Ndaluka, *Religious Discourse, Social Cohesion and Conflict: Muslim-Christian Relations in Tanzania*. (Berlin: Lit Verlag, 2012); and Francis X. Ng'atigiwa, "The Media in Society: Religious Radio Stations, Socio-Religious Discourse and National Cohesion in Tanzania," (PhD thesis, University of Bayreuth, 2013).

[36] Roman Loimeier "Perceptions of Marginalization: Muslims in Contemporary Tanzania," in *Islam and Muslim Politics in Africa*, ed. Benjamin Soares & Rene Otayek (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2007).

In this context, the ownership and operation of new media by Muslims in Uganda have emerged as modern tools of mass communication and social mobilisation.[37] These new platforms have essentially replaced the traditional *minbar*, extending the reach of religious discourse beyond the physical confines of the mosque. Today, these media outlets cover sizeable portions of the country, with some offering online live streaming, making their influence timelier and more widespread. Despite this, the role of Muslim-owned and operated media in Ugandan remains underexplored. Given the rising tensions and religious discord in the region, often amplified by new media technology, it is crucial to study these religious media outlets closely. Depending on how they are positioned, new media can either exacerbate divisions within communities or provide a platform for construction dialogue and problem-solving from within.[38] Francois Constantin's work ties the stability of Muslim identity in East Africa to effective use of modern communication techniques, suggesting that the lack of such mastery has hindered mobilization.[39] Therefore, it is imperative to empirically document the activities of religious media in contemporary Uganda and investigate their impact on relate to religious identity, addressing the existing research vacuum in the field.

Research Objectives

The primary goal of this study is to explore how Muslim-owned media are utilised within a Muslim-minority context in Uganda and to understand their role in shaping the religious identity of Uganda Muslims.

Specific Objectives

1. To examine the relationship between new media and religion at global and regional levels, identifying gaps in the existing literature, particularly in the East African context.

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[37] See for more, Kenneth Newton, "Mass Media Effects: Mobilization or Media Malaise? *British Journal of Political Science* 29, no. 4 (1999).

[38] See for example Mitchell, Jolyon "*Promoting Peace, Inciting Violence: The Role of Religion and Media*. (London: Routledge, 2011). Here Mitchell draws on examples from Rwanda, Iran, and South Africa to explain how media can be utilized either way.

[39] Francoise Constantin, Francoise, "Leadership, Muslim Identities in East African Politics" in *Muslim Identities and Social Change in Sub-Sahara Africa*, ed. Louis Brenner (Bloomington and Indianapolis: Indiana University Press, 1993), 55.

2. To critically engage with key theories from media studies and academic studies of religion relevant to understanding the intersection of Islam and media.
3. To investigate how Muslim-owned media are used in Uganda's Muslim-minority context and their influence on the formation and expression of Muslim identity.
4. To provide a historical overview of the relationship between Ugandan Muslims and media, with a focus on the evolution from traditional to new media.
5. To analyse how Ugandan Muslims engage with and utilise content from Muslim-owned and operated new media, considering the broader implication for community identity and cohesion.

Research Questions

The primary question for this study is: *What are the Muslim-owned media in Uganda, and how do their activities relate to the construction of Muslim identity?*

Specific Questions

1. Who owns and controls the Muslim-operated media technologies in Uganda?
2. What are the objectives and activities of Muslim owned and operated media in Uganda?
3. How do Ugandan Muslims engage with and utilise content from these media platforms owned and operated by Muslim?

Significance of the Study

The study is crucial as it addresses the significant gap in empirical research on the interplay of Islam and new media technology in contemporary Uganda. Despite the establishment of various Muslim owned media outlets - both electronic and digital – there remains a dearth of empirical research on how these platforms influence the identity of Ugandan Muslims. This study contributes to the religion-media discourse by focusing on an underexplored region, as most scholarship has centred on Europe, North America and parts of Africa outside East Africa.

In Uganda, while the Muslim community acknowledges the relevance of new media, there is lack of a cohesive strategy guiding its use. The relevance of this is heightened by the increased reliance on mass media platforms during the COVID-19 pandemic which replaced traditional mosque *minbar* as key communication channels. However, the effects of this shift on the Muslim community remain understudied. By examining the activities, content, and operations of Muslim media outlets, this research can identify critical gaps that could enhance media practices and community's engagement with these platforms.

Furthermore, the shift in communication technology has facilitated the adoption of new media technology such as internet use. Social media including Facebook and YouTube in addition to traditional radio, television, and print have become integral to daily life in Ugandan, opening spaces for previously marginalised groups to communicate broadly. This Salafi Muslim community, often excluded from traditional media, has effectively harnessed social media, and even the Allied Democratic Forces (ADF), a rebel movement now utilises these platforms to reach wider audiences. While this study does not focus on terrorism, it is essential to analyse how these marginalised groups use social media to influence public opinion and perceptions which in turn gravitate to identity construction.[40]

Moreover, this research goes beyond the scholarly norm that focus on either radio or television or both, by incorporating an analysis of social media networks. These platforms play a crucial role in framing information and shaping public perceptions, making them indispensable for understanding contemporary religious identity in Uganda. By including new media in its scope, this study addresses the urgent need on the intersection of religion and media in Africa, offering a comprehensive perspective on the evolving media landscape in Uganda.

Scope of the Study

This study focuses on the relationship between Muslims and new media in contemporary East Africa with particular emphasis on how Muslim owned media shape the religious identity of Muslims in urban areas of central Uganda. It examines the new media outlets established and owned by Ugandan Muslims, along with their consumers. The term "new media" in this study encompasses radio, television, electronic print media, and internet-based communication networks including websites, and social media, among others. Whereas Muslim media is a reference to media outlets owned and operated by Muslims. As of 2022, Ugandan Muslims independently operated three television networks and seven radio stations including Salam

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[40] In fact, a survey shows that social media is far away the most popular news platform among people aged 18-34 years with 47% of respondents saying that they used SMN for news daily. See https://www.statista.com/statistics/717651/most-popular-news-platforms/#:~:text=Social%20media%20was%20by%20far,news%20on%20a%20daily%20basis.

TV, Global (Bilal) TV, IUIU TV,[41] Voice of Africa (VOA) FM radio, Pearl of Africa FM radio, Radio Bilal FM, IUIU FM, Ummah FM, and Masaba FM. However, the study focuses specifically on three stations – VOA, Bilal FM, and Pearl FM – due to their longevity, consistent activity, and prominence in the country.

In terms of social media networks, there is significance presence of channels operated by the Ugandan Muslim community, the Salafi community being particularly active. This is likely due to their limited access to traditional media and the ease of access to the internet and digital technologies. Notable examples include the “Manya Obusilamu” YouTube Channel, operated by the ADF/ISCAP, and the “Thurayya Islam Media” Facebook page which primarily serves mainstream Salafis.

The selection of these media outlets is significant and critical to the study’s objectives, as they are substantial audiences and are highly respected by their audiences. For radio, the study surveyed audiences in Kampala and nearby districts, while for social media, it analysed comments and reviews from users within the Salafi community. This approach ensures a comprehensive understanding of how these media platforms influence the religious identity of Ugandan Muslims.

Study Outline

This dissertation is organized into eight chapters, beginning with the general introduction and concluding remarks**.** *Chapter One*, the introduction lays the groundwork for the research by presenting the background, problem statement, objectives, research questions, and significance of the study. It also outlines the structure of the thesis. *Chapter Two* examines the history of Islam and New Muslim media in the country, setting the stage for the discussion that follow.

Chapter Three provides a comprehensive review of the literature, focusing on the intersection of religion and media, particularly in the context of identity construction. It surveys global, Africa, and East African perspectives, highlighting the gaps in theoretical and empirical studies on Muslim media in Uganda. Despite the significant rise in Muslim-owned media outlets and their growing audience, there is notable lack of research in this area.

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[41] Even though the two broadcasting stations are owned operated by Islamic University in Uganda (IUIU), they are both referred to as IUIU FM and IUIU TV – i.e. this is their “Call Sign” name according to the Uganda mass communication regulatory body, Uganda Communication Commission (UCC). See for more details: https://www.ucc.co.ug/wp-content/uploads/2023/11/OPERATIONAL-AND-NEW-RADIOS-OCTOBER-2023.pdf

Chapters Four and Five delve into the theoretical framework and methodology, respectively. Chapter Four discusses the relevant theories that underpin the study, while Chapter Five outlines the methods used for data collection and analysis, ensuring the research is grounded in a rigorous academic approach.

Chapters Six provides the contextual background necessary for understanding the development of New Muslim media in Uganda. The chapter traces the evolution of religious media in Uganda, from its inception to the present, and explores the motivations behind the adoption of new media technologies by Muslims.

Chapter Seven offers an in-depth analysis of selected Muslim media outlets, including the institutions behind them and the religious contestations that shape their content and operations. This chapter is crucial for understanding the diverse landscape of Muslim media in Uganda.

Chapters Eight and Nine present the ethnographic account that provide a detailed look at the experiences of listeners and the content of sermons broadcasted by diverse Muslim media outlets. These chapters are essential for understanding the real-world impact of Muslim media on the religious identity of Ugandan Muslims.

Chapter Ten, the conclusion, concludes the dissertation with a summary of findings and general remarks as well as central argument and recommendations for further research. The organisation of the study is designed to systematically address the research questions and objectives, ensuring a through exploration of the interplay between Islam and new media in Uganda.

CHAPTER TWO

ISLAM AND MUSLIMS IN UGANDA

Introduction

This chapter explores the experiences of Muslims in Uganda and their ongoing quest for Islamic identity, situating these within the broader historical context of Islam in the country. The narrative traces the origins and developments of Islam in Uganda, recognising that understanding this history is crucial for comprehending the environment in which contemporary Muslim media discourses and the pursuit of Islamic identity have evolved.

I argue that the interplay between Muslim owned media and the quest for Islamic identity in Uganda is deeply intertwined with the nation's tumultuous political history, marked by religious and ethnic divisions. This history reveals that a recuring pattern: whenever a religious or ethnic group perceives itself as marginalised, a form of resistance against the dominant forces often arises, perpetuating a cycle of conflict and reaction.

The chapter begins with a brief overview of the introduction of Islam in Uganda, followed by an examination of the arrival of Christian missionaries in late pre-colonial period, the colonial policies regarding religion, and the fluctuating status of Islam in the postcolonial era. In this historical reconstruction, I highlight the enduring themes of violence and religion, which have influenced Uganda since before it became a modern state. These events continue to shape the identities and experiences of contemporary Muslims in Uganda, as they reinterpret this history considering present circumstances, while simultaneously using the past as a lens to understand the present.[42]

Muslims in Pre-Colonial Uganda

Islam was introduced in various parts of pre-colonial Uganda by different merchant classes. In the northern part of the country, primarily inhabited by Nilotic peoples, Islam was brought in largely from Sudan.[43] In the southern regions, where the Bantu-speaking Baganda reside,[44] Islam was introduced from the East African coast in the early 1840s.[45] A key distinction between the development of Islam in the precolonial Kingdom of Buganda and other areas of what is now Uganda is the presence or absence of centralized state. While Buganda had a well-established state structure, much of the rest of Uganda was composed of stateless societies that relied on communal modes of subsistence production. In these stateless communities, the spread of Islam occurred mainly through personal interactions and rarely led to political conflict. Conversely, in Buganda, the spread of Islam was deeply intertwined with the dynamics of the royal court and state politics.[46]

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[42] Dorothea E. Schulz, "Carving out a space for political citizenship? Muslim politics of remembrance in Uganda," in *Ways of Knowing Muslim Cultures and Societies*, ed. Bettina Gräf, Birgit Krawietz and Schirin Amir-Moazami (Leiden: Brill, 2018).

The first notable convert to Islam in Buganda was kabaka (king) Mutesa I, who, after embracing the new religion, encouraged his subjects to follow his suit. Ham Mukasa, a young page for Kabaka Mutesa's court, recounts that after Mutesa converted, he declared to his chiefs, "There is only one God; called the Great, God the omnipotent, *Hakibalu*......I want you all to study this religion."[47] He further assured them further that this God was greater than *balubale*, the spirits they traditionally worshiped. The chiefs, recognising Mutesa's wisdom, agreed to adopt Islam, with the understanding that Mutesa would teach them about the new faith.[48]

To demonstrate his commitment to Islam, Mutesa ordered the construction of a large mosque in the capital, where he led prayers as both Imam and head of Muslims in the kingdom. He also appointed Several of the Swahili Muslims in his court to various chieftainships.[49] The mosque became a central place of worship, and Mutesa commanded his subjects to supply essential provisions, such as meat, banana and other foodstuffs.[50] By 1867, Mutesa was officially observing Ramadan[51] and continued to do so diligently, even compensating for any missed days of fasting, such as during the Busagala war of 1868. By the late 1860s, Islam had become the official state religion of the Buganda, with a growing number of converts.[52] Enthusiastic about his new faith, Mutesa sent a mission to Omukama Kabalega (r. 1870 - 1899), the King of the neighbouring Bunyoro Kingdom, inviting him to embrace Islam.[53] However, Kabalega declined the offer.[54]

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[43] Abdu K. Kasozi, *The Spread of Islam in Uganda* (Nairobi: Oxford University Press, in association with the Islamic Africa Centre - Khartoum 1986), 23; Abdu K. Kasozi, "The Uganda Muslim Supreme Council: An Experiment in Muslim Administrative Centralization and Institutionalization, 1972- 1982," *Journal Institute of Muslim Minority Affairs* 6, no. 1 (1985).

[44] *Buganda* is currently one of the areas of Uganda. It is located in the centre of the country. The people of *Buganda* are called *Baganda*, see John H. Roscoe, *The Baganda: An Account of their Native Customs and Beliefs* (London: Cambridge University Press, 1966).

[45] Arye Oded, *Islam in Uganda: Islamisation Through a Centralized State in Pre-Colonial Africa* (New York, Toronto: John Willey & Sons, 1974), 37.

[46] For a brief but excellent overview, see Chapter 11 (pp. 153-168) of David Robinson, *Muslim Societies in African History* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2012).

[47] Ham Mukasa, John A. Rowe, and Andrew Kabazza, *Simudda Nyuma: Ebiro Bya Mutesa* (Do not Go Back: The Reign of Mutesa) (London: S.P.C.K, 1938), 14.

[48] Ibid., 14.

[49] Jacob van M. Lutsenburg, "The Restructuring of the State of Education in Buganda Before Colonial Overrule," in *Columbia Essays in International Affairs: the Deans's Papers*, ed. Andrew W. Cordier (New York: Columbia University Press, 1969), 213.

The Muslim Massacre

By 1844, the Buganda Kingdom had developed a quasi-feudal social structure under the leadership of the kabaka-s.[55] The *kabaka* was supported by a class of clan elders known as bataka who exercised significant control over the allocation of land and religious practices within the Kingdom. To strengthen his control over the bataka, Mutesa I turned Islam into a state religion, which weakened traditional religious practices in favour of the new faith. Mutesa also begun learning Arabic and Kiswahili, and in 1867, he decreed those Islamic practices such as observance if the Islamic calendar, greeting in Arabic, and the consumption of *halal* meat be adopted throughout the kingdom. Mosques were constructed across the country, and Swahili Muslims at the court were appointed to positions of power.[56]

While Islam was initially imposed from above by royal decree, by the 1870s some Muslims particularly the youths, began to use certain aspects of the faith to challenge the kabaka's authority.[57] They criticised the hereditary nature of the kabaka's rule and the fact that kingship and leadership of the kingdom's mosque were united in the same person.[58] Furthermore,

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[50] Arye Oded, *Islam in Uganda: Islamisation Through a Centralized State in Pre-Colonial Africa*, 69.

[51] Ramadan is the 9th month of the Islamic lunar calendar. Muslims are required to fast for 29 or 30 days from dawn to sunset.

[52] Ibid., 70.

[53] Omukama is the title given to the King of Bunyoro Kingdom, western Uganda. See for more details: Jamie Stokes, *The Encyclopedia of the Peoples of Africa, and the Middle East* (New York: Infobase, 2009), 506-509.

[54] See Ibid., 16.

[55] David Robinson, *Muslim Societies in African History*, 154.

[56] Jacob van Lutsenburg Maas, "The restructuring of the state of education in Buganda before colonial overrule," 213.

[57] George W. Kanyeyihamba, *Reflections on the Muslim Leadership Question in Uganda,* (Kampala: Fountain Publishers, 1998), 9.

[58] See, besides the historical sources mentioned in previous footnotes, Timothy Insoll, "Mosque architecture in Buganda, Uganda," *Muqarnas*, 14, (1997), 181.

Mutesa's refusal to be circumcised in keeping the Baganda custom, and his insistence on wearing leopard and lion skins (considered impure from an Islamic legal viewpoint) during prayers, further fuelled opposition.[59] Thus, while Islam had been introduced mainly to reinforce the King's authority, it also became a tool for resistance.

Opposition to Kabaka Mutesa I also emerged from the bataka and the bakopi (commoners) who had not embraced Islam and felt that the king was forcefully imposing a foreign religion on them. Faced with this growing crisis, Mutesa reacted harshly. To appease opposition from the traditionalists and supress Muslim dissident, he ordered the massacre of two hundred Muslim youths who had been critical of his leadership. The massacre took place in Namugongo under the orders of Mutesa's chief executioner, Mukajanga.[60] To further neutralize Muslim opposition, Mutesa invited Christian missionaries to Uganda through the mediation of European explorer Sir Henry Morton Stanley in April 1875.[61]

The presence of Christian missionaries was to serve two purposes for Mutesa. First, by creating competing for followers between Muslims and Christians, the missionaries diverted Muslim attention away from the politics of the kingdom. To maintain this competition, Mutesa never officially renounced Islam but instead chose not to publicly support any of the three competing religions - Islam, Christianity, and traditional Baganda Religion.[62] Secondly, Mutesa sought to align his kingdom with Britain and France against the emerging threat of the Mahdist state in Sudan. However, the presence of missionaries ultimately heightened tensions between the Muslim youths and the kabaka.[63]

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[59] Books of Hadith report that the prophet Muhammad forbade the use of tiger and lion skins. See Sunan Abu Dauda, hadith no. 4239 (authenticated by Sheikh Nasur din al-Albany in his book, Sahih Abu Dauda, Hadith No. 3566). In the Buganda case see: Van Lutsenburg Maas, "The Restructuring of the State of Education in Buganda Before Colonial Overrule." 214. Baganda are arguably the only Bantu nation in East Africa who do not mutilate their bodies. They neither extract their teeth nor pierce their earlobes, nor practice circumcision rites. See also Oded, *Islam in Uganda: Islamisation Through a Centralized State in Pre-Colonial Africa,* 77.

[60] Ahmad Katumba and B. F. Welbourn, "Muslim Martyrs of Buganda," *Uganda Journal*, 28, 2 (1964), 154. The article provides a detailed analysis of the incident. See also Robinson, *Muslim Societies,* p.160. The exact date of the event is disputed. For David Robinson, it occurred in 1876. Ugandan Muslim sources, however, date the massacre to the arrival of Sir Henry Morton Stanley (1875) and attribute it to the latter's influence on Kabaka Mutesa. Early Christian missionary sources claim that the massacre predated the arrival of Stanley in 1875. For a balanced analysis, see Oded, *Islam in Uganda,* 142-162.

[61] Oded, *Islam in Uganda,* 146; Robinson, *Muslim Societies,* 160.

[62] There were some attempts to convert Mutesa to Christianity. As recorded in Stanley's journal, the latter, after a long conversation with the king, found him open to the possibility of embracing Christianity, and immediately sent a letter to the Queen requesting for missionaries. By June 1877, missionaries started arriving in Uganda. See Henry M. Stanley, *Through the Dark Continent,* (London: George Newness, 1899), 164. However, Arye Oded argues that Mutesa eventually continued to lean towards Islam. Oded writes: "On June 30, 1880, the Kabaka got up very early in the morning in an unusually jovial mood and ordered all his chiefs to be summoned immediately. When they were all seated, he informed them that he was happy because of a dream he had the previous night. He saw the moon surrounded by ten other moons. The central moon suddenly grew bigger and bigger and when it attained an enormous size all the others made obeisance to it. At that time Mutesa was seated on his throne in the assembly hall. Then two

The Quest for a Muslim State

In 1884, Mutesa I died and was succeeded by his son, Mwanga II. Unlike his father, Mwanga took a confrontational stance against all foreign religions and attempted to revive traditional Baganda religion a stance that echoed his counterpart the Omukama Kabalega of Bunyoro.[64] Richard Reid has deal with Mwanga and Kabalega in details which is beyond the scope of this study.[65] Nonetheless, between 1885 and 1887, he persecuted followers of foreign religions, focusing especially on the Christians, who were massacred in large numbers during the second Namugongo massacre.[66] In response, a coalition of Muslims, Catholics, and Protestants, attacked Mwanga's palace, leading to his first exile and the enthronement of his brother Kiwewa.[67] However, the inter-religious alliance quickly disintegrated over disputes regarding the distribution of political power, leading to another war.

During this conflict, the Muslims, supported by firearms supplied by Arab and Swahili traders, demonstrated their strength. A vivid account of this period, from the perspective of a Muslim participant named Mzee Osman Wamala, is provided in a study by Abdu Kasozi.

> I was circumcised after the death of Mutesa at a time when people were joining Muslims secretly and individually. They used to meet in the banana groves. Natette, where Kabaka had first placed the Muslim visitors [Arabs and Swahilis] on their arrival, was still a centre of Muslim influence. The Baganda chose and copied

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angles unexpectedly appeared to him and with a look of anger which made him tremble asked him why he had stopped reciting '*Allah Akbar*.' They ordered him to say these words if he wished to retain his kingdom and prosper. Mutesa immediately began to recite '*Allah Akbar*' and then he woke and realized that all this was a dream." Oded, *Islam in Uganda*, 285.

[63] Katumba and Welbourn, "Muslim Martyrs," 163.

[64] Richard Reid, *A History of Modern* Uganda, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2017, p. 100; Noel King, Abdul Kasozi, and Arye Oded, *Islam and the Confluence of Religions in Uganda,* 1973.

[65] For more details see: Richard Reid, *A History of Modern* Uganda, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2017.

[66] These are the famous Uganda martyrs who were honoured by Pope John Paul II during his 1969 visit to Uganda. Their martyrdom is commemorated annually in Uganda on the 3rd day of March. See J. F. Faupel, *African Holocaust: The Story of the Uganda Martyrs* (London: Geoffrey Chapman, 1962).

[67] Michael Twaddle, "The Muslim Revolution in Buganda," *African Affairs* 71, no. 282 (1972), 62; Robert P. Ashe, *Two Kings of Uganda* (London: Sampson Low, Marston, Searle & Rivington, 1899).

> the religion of the Arabs, it was at their asking, for the Arabs were traders, not preachers. Many Baganda, on becoming Muslim, became traders and they started preaching. The Kabaka [Mwanga II] decided to maroon the Christians and Muslims on an island in Lake Nalubale. We suspected a trap and revolted. [……] The men of the three religions were working together. They met to divide up the offices, the Katikiro[68] was a Catholic, the Mukwenda,[69] a protestant and the Pokino,[70] the Mujasi[71] and the Kawuta,[72] Muslims. Then some Catholics refused this settlement, and the Muslims joined those without religion[73] to fight against the Bafalansa [Catholics] and the Bangereza [Protestants], who were chased away. The Kabaka (Kiwewa) summoned us, and our leaders went. Kapalaga was mutilated as to his genitals and then shot with a gun. Some of our leading men were killed. We heard firing and took it that our leaders had been killed so we assaulted the royal enclosure, drove away Kiwewa, and being now in control, looked for someone to make Kabaka. Kiwewa was not circumcised, time had been short and really, he was against the Muslims. In the morning, we made Kalema Kabaka, and we drove away to the Bafaransa and the Bangereza. We remained in full and open control for two years. The Christians gathered strength and attacked us. Though we won a few battles, we had to fall back. While we were being driven along, Kiwewa who was a prisoner, was killed and ten princes and fifty princesses got burnt in a fire while they were prisoners. After the defeat, Arabs locked themselves up following the example of Mackay and Mapera,[74] and these Europeans were in the end allowed free passage to their friends by the Muslims. But our enemies massacred the Arabs, they were burnt at their rest house at Nateete, though they were guests in the country.[75]

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[68] Prime (chief) minister

[69] Minister in charge of Singo County.

[70] The minister in charge of Buddu county.

[71] Defense minister

[72] Minister for Royal Kitchen

[73] The Luganda word used for religion is *dini*. It is originally from Swahili and Arabic, and it is used in reference to Islam and Christianity. The followers of African Traditional Religion are referred to as people without *Dini*.

[74] This is the Luganda name of the catholic French White Father, Fr. Simeon Lourdel *mon Pere*

[75] King, Kasozi, and Oded, *Islam and the Confluence*, 12.

Wamala's account vividly captures the intensity of the conflict during those turbulent times. It is remarkable how closely this oral history aligns with the accounts of Sheikh Sekimwanyi, Nyanzi, and Bin Mayanja.[76] The surviving Muslims regrouped in Kijungute under Nuh Mbogo, Kalema's paternal uncle. Their leader, Rashid Kalema, the Muslim *kabaka* had succumbed to smallpox during the struggle.[77]

Muslims and Christians in Colonial Uganda

The initial conflicts between Muslim and Christians in Uganda had profound political consequences. Struggling to maintain control over various factions vying for power, the British Imperial East African Company eventually paved the way for direct British rule, leading Uganda's declaration as a protectorate. With the Protestant Church receiving military support from Britain, under the command of Captain Frederick Lugard, Muslim resistance was defeated, altering the balance of power significantly against the Muslims, as well as, to a less extent, Catholics.[78]

In May 1893, Captain Lugard, along with two Protestant Buganda military leaders, Apollo Kagwa and Semei Kakungulu, launched a surprise attack on the Muslims, forcing them to into a truce.[79] Under the terms of the agreement, the Muslims were promised peace in Buganda in exchange for abandoning their armed struggle. Buganda was divided into ten provinces (amasaza), with Muslims receiving control over three, while Catholics and Protestants were allocated, three and four provinces, respectively. As part of an informal agreement, the leader of the Muslim army and *de facto* head of the Muslim community, Prince Nuhu Mbogo (1835-

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[76] Ibid.

[77] Robinson, *Muslim Societies*, 164

[78] See P. L. McDermott, *British East Africa: A History of the Formation of the Imperial British East African Company* (London: Chapman and Hall, 1893), 162.

[79] Lugard had successfully persuaded Muslims to surrender their weapons and return to peace, but many Christian stakeholders were not happy with the compromise. Missionary A. M. Mackay, for example, sent a letter to the British government, warning them about an impending threat from the Muslims: "The Arabs in Karema's train [meaning the defeated and exiled Buganda Muslims], have intimated their intentions to invite the aid of the Mahdi's troops in Upper Sudan to enable them to take the position of both [B]Unyoro and [B]Uganda. I scarcely think that the fanatical dervishes who have seized Emin Pasha's province will be any more tolerant towards Muscat Arabs than they have been to Egyptians. At any time unless the Imperial British East African Company are prompt in securing some definite understanding with [B]Uganda and is in a position materially to aid the present government there, that country with all its valuable dependences may soon fall again into the hands of either the Arabs or the Mahdis" (cited in McDermott, *British East Africa*, p. 123).

1921), was granted a special status in the Buganda Kingdom. Although he never held any formal position, his economic and social privileges were second only to those of the King.

Despite these seemingly favourable terms for a defeated force, the Muslims were soon betrayed. However, immediately after they settled in their promised lands, the former king of Buganda Mwanga ignited a religious war at Natete, where the Muslims were massacred and stripped of nearly everything, they had been guaranteed under the peace accord.[80]

This second Muslim massacre had a significant impact on the emerging colonial state in Uganda. Until 1897, the colonial power had largely depended on Nubian mercenaries, who were mostly Muslims, recruited from Sudan. However, as these mercenaries begun to integrate into Buganda's Muslim communities, it became increasingly difficult to deploy them in a religious conflict against their fellow Muslims. In 1897, the Nubian soldiers waged a mutiny against the British authorities, likely aiming to form an alliance with the marginalised Buganda Muslims to seize power from the Protestants in the name of Islam. They approached Prince Nuhu Mbogo with a plan to overthrow the colonial government, after which Mbogo was to assume the role of Kabaka. Alarmed by the potential alliance, between discontented Muslims and Nubian mercenaries, the colonial government disarmed the Nubia garrison in Buganda and exiled their leader. Subsequent mutinies in other parts of the protectorate were also supressed, with the support of newly arrived Indian troops from the East African coast together with contingents of Protestant) Baganda fighters.[81] This incident marked the final attempt by the Muslims to militarily challenge the religious status quo in colonial Uganda.

Muslims and the 1900 Agreement

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[80] On 29 May 1893, the British government signed a provisional treaty with the most reluctant Mwanga, who was loath to accept the deal but powerless to prevent the inevitable. One year later, the British declared their protectorate over Buganda. The discontented Mwanga plotted a rebellion which was quelled by the colonial government with help from Baganda Christian allies. A good number of Muslims joined this anti-British rebellion due to rumours that Kabaka Mwanga had converted to Islam. The defeat, which forced Mwanga into exile, was a precursor to the massacre and to the Muslim loss of the three counties they had achieved in the peace accord. For more on this incident, see Viera Pawliková-Vilhanová, *History of Anti-Colonial Resistance and Protest in the Kingdoms of Buganda and Bunyoro, 1862-1899*, Prague: Oriental Institute of the Czechoslovak Academy of Sciences, 1988, pp. 257-291; Viera Pawliková-Vilhanová, "White Fathers, Islam and Kiswahili in the Nineteenth-Century Uganda," *Asian and African Studies* 13, no. 2 (2004).

[81] Hassen B. Holger, "Pre-Colonial Immigrants and Colonial Servants: The Nubians in Uganda Revisited," *African Affairs* 90, no. 361 (1990), 565.

Another pivotal event in the marginalisation of Muslims in Uganda was the in 1900 Anglo-Buganda Agreement, which formalised the relationship between the colonial government and the Buganda kingdom.[82] For Muslims, the most significant aspect of this agreement were the policies governing land allocation and distribution of chiefdoms. Under the agreement, Buganda land was divided into two categories: Mailo and Kabaka (Crown) land. The latter was designated for public development, while the former was distributed among the slected Buganda elites as a reward for their role in consolidating colonial rule. Villagers who had traditionally owned the lands that were designated as Mailo were reduced to tenants, subject to busulu ne envujjo (rental charges and tribute) imposed by the new landowner.

As loyalty to the colonial state during the period 1894-1900 was the primary criterion for the distribution of Mailo land, most of it went to Anglicans, with a smaller portion allocated to Catholics. In many cases, Mailo land was earmarked for the construction and expansion of churches and missions, further diminishing the political and economic standing of Muslim in Uganda.[83]

The distribution of chieftainships under the 1900 agreement also marginalized Muslims, who were allocated only two of the eighteen counties.[84] In a system of indirect rule, where the county chief acted as lawmaker, police officer, tax collector and judge, most peasants identified themselves with the religion of their chief to avoid his exploitation,[85]leading many to convert from Islam to Protestantism, while conversion in the opposite was severely discouraged. Sir Harry Johnston, the British Special Commissioner in Uganda from 1899-1901, even wrote to a Residential Commissioner (RC) in Busoga (Eastern Uganda), affirming the colonial administration's position to Muslims:

> It is not in the interest of the British government that Mohammedanism should receive any more adherents than we can help in Uganda as Muslims are

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[82] Louise M. Pirouet, *Historical Dictionary of Uganda*, (Lanham: Scarecrow, 1995), 96-97.

[83] See Michael Twaddle, "The Bakungu chiefs of Buganda under British colonial rule, 1900-1930," *The Journal of African History* 10, no. 2 (1969), 313.

[84] Ryan Gibb, The Politics of Land Reform in Uganda (PhD thesis, Lawrence: University of Kansas, 2013), 43-56.

[85] Sallie S. Kayunga, "Islamic Fundamentalism in Uganda: The Tablighi Youth Movement," in *Uganda: Studies in Living Conditions, Popular Movements and Constitutionalism* Mahmood Mamdani and Joe Oloka-Onyango (Vienna, and Kampala: JEP and Centre for Basic Research, 1994).

> proverbially difficult to manage and are always in their heart opposed to the administration of Christian power.[86]

Colonial educational policies further marginalized the Muslim community. Joseph Kasule examines the subjection of education in details. He argues that colonial policies, particularly indirect rule, influenced the religious and political landscape of Uganda. The British colonial state favoured Christian missions and ignored Muslims. This created disparities between Muslims and other religious communities. These policies resulted in the marginalisation of Muslims, who often excluded from political and economic privileges afforded to Christians. This marginalisation persisted into post-colonial era, fuelling Muslim grievances and shaping their quest for socio-political inclusion.[87]

It should be noted here that, Swahili-Arabs from the coast were the first to introduce literacy in colonial Uganda, using Arabic and Kiswahili using Arabic alphabets to provide Qur'anic instruction to the kings and royal court, the advent of British colonialism saw the formal recognition of western education.[88] The colonial administration operated two parallel educational systems: state schools, which catered exclusively to minority racial groups like Asians and Europeans, and missionary schools, which were responsible for the education of the native Ugandan.[89] Without established missionary support and access to *Mailo* land, Muslim leaders could not compete with their Christian counterparts in setting up schools, leading to many Muslim children educated in missionary schools to gradually convert to Christianity.[90]

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[86] King, Kasozi, and Oded, "*Islam and the Confluence,*"15.

[87] Joseph Kasule, *Islam in Uganda: The Muslim Minority, Nationalism & Political Power*, Rochester: Boydell & Brewer, 2022.

[88] Arabic was the first language of instruction in pre-colonial Uganda and Islam had become the official religion in the country (1850s to 1880s). Even the letter from the Buganda king to the Queen of England requesting for missionaries was written in Arabic. However, after a decade of progress, instruction in Islam and Arabic was eclipsed by the new-book religion and a new literacy. In 1876 the Kabaka purged his Muslim pages for acquiring an allegiance to a higher authority than the king and the following year European teachers from the CMS reached Buganda and provided an alternative belief system and literacy at this moment Arabic became for all practical purposes a liturgical language like Latin in Roman Catholic masses. See Rowe, A. J. "Myth, Memoir, and Moral Admonition: Luganda Historical Writing 1893-1969," *Uganda Journal* 33, no. 1 (1969), 19-20.

[89] Ann Beck, "Colonial Policy and Education in British East Africa, 1900-1950," *Journal of British Studies* 5, no. 2 (1966), 116.

[90] Ibid., 116. In Uganda, especially in Muslim circles, the commonly cited examples are those of Yusuf Lule, former president of independent Uganda, and of Prince Badiru Kakungulu, who was prevented by his father Prince Nuhu Mbogo from attending any "secular" school until he was assured by the colonial government that his son would not be converted. To ensure that promise, the young prince Kankungulu

Moreover, even the basic education offered to Muslim children often contained subliminal messages aimed at denigrating Islam,[91]discouraging some Muslim parents from educating their children and preventing Muslims from joining the bureaucratic bourgeoisie that emerged from colonial education.[92] Indeed, concerns were raised in the Legislative Council (*Legco*) in 1941 when during the 21st session one member Mr. Margarch passionately argued government to set up a non-denomination school to cater to Muslim pupils. Surprisingly, when the government decided to establish one, it was erected somewhere in Masindi (in Bunyoro kingdom), far from the majority Muslims population in Buganda. That same year, Muslims received only 3.8% of the portion grant, a sum insufficient to meet their needs.[93]

As a result of their lack of access to formal education, Muslims were excluded from influential positions in the country, which were dominated by Protestants and Catholics.[94] By the time Joseph Schacht visited Uganda in 1953, 1963 and 1964, he observed:

> It was expressed to me, the Muslims had been reduced to the role of hewers of wood and drawers of water….in present Uganda, the Muslims as a group do not play any considerable part in public life…they are the least educated group, they are out of white-collar jobs.[95]

This marginalisation persisted after independence, with successive post-colonial governments doing little or nothing to address the situation. The loss of Muslim influence within the ruling class, coupled with a lack of Western education, led to a further decline in their social and economic status. Most Muslims resorted to working as butchers, taxi and bus drivers, and shopkeepers. As scholars such as Samuel Karugire and Mahmood Mamdani have noted, even

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was sent to King's College, Buddo, accompanied by an Islamic religious instructor who would tutor him in Islamic sciences. See Abbas Kiyimba, "The problem of Muslim education in Uganda: Some reflections," *Journal of Institute of Muslim Minority Affairs* 7, no. 1 (1986), 248. See also Dorothea E. Schulz, "What makes a good minority Muslim? Educational policy and the paradoxes of Muslim schooling in Uganda," *Contemporary Islam* 7, no. 1 (2013).

[91] For example, there was an English language textbook for children with the character of Mr. Mulindwa, and another character Abdul the shopkeeper who was always portrayed as the crafty thief selling ash as sugar. It is possible that these kids went into secondary school indelibly instilled with those prejudices against Muslims. See Sallie S. Kayunga, "Islamic Fundamentalism in Uganda: The Tablighi Youth Movement," 320.

[92] Mahmood Mamdani, *Politics and Class Formation in Uganda,* New York: Monthly Review Press, 1976.

[93] Kiyimba, "The problem of Muslim education in Uganda: Some reflections," *Journal of Institute of Muslim Minority Affairs* 7, no. 1 (1986).

[94] Ibid.

[95] Joseph Schacht, "Notes on Islam in East Africa," *Studia Islamica* 23, (1965), 96.

after Uganda gained independence in 1962, Muslims remained largely excluded from political participation, education, and the distribution of national resources.[96] The act of recognising and institutionalising religion, as argued Mamdani as a category of rule, the colonial state created an environment where ethnicity and religious identity become a form of political control a legacy that continued into the post-colonial period detrimental implications to minorities religious communities like Muslims.[97]

Idi Amin and the Rejuvenation of Muslim Identity

The colonial and post-colonial policies described above fostered a deep-seated resentment among Ugandan Muslims, which persisted into the postcolonial time.[98] By 1962, most Muslims in Uganda were impoverished, relying largely on subsistence farming or minor roles in the transport sector.[99] The coup d'état in January 1971, which brought General Idi Amin, a Muslim, to power, was thus seen by many Muslims in Uganda as an opportunity to reclaim their former status.

Nevertheless, under Amin's rule, the relationship between the state and Muslim community underwent a dramatic transformation. Amin, recognising his weak internal political base, sought to use the Muslims community as a social support. As a result, Islam was elevated to a level of a quasi-state religion, with Friday declared a public holiday to accommodate Muslim worship. Amin implemented policies aimed at expanding Islam, including the allocation of state resources on a religious basis, and Muslims were given preference in civil service, regardless of their qualifications and experience. In the national army, commanders in the barracks were mostly Muslims.[100] Islam in most cases was one of the criteria for promotion either in the security or in the civil service. By 1972, Amin started to reverse the religious power balance of the country,[101] initiating a campaign to revive its Islamic identity. In disregard of the international outcry, he expelled over 500 Israelis and 60,000 Asians in what he called "the war of economic liberation".[102] The business empire left behind by the expelled Asian was handed over to Amin's tribesmen and co-religionists, many of whom were small rural traders with little experience in import and export trade. As the country was grappling with international sanctions, this new affluent class mostly Muslims became the backbone for Amin's political support.

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[96] Samwiri R. Karugire, *A Political History of Uganda*, Nairobi: Heinemann Educational Books, 1980.; Mahmood Mamdani, *Politics and Class Formation in Uganda*.

[97] Mahmood Mamdani, *Citizens and Subjects: Contemporary Africa and the Legacy of Late Colonialism*, Chichester: Princeton University Press, 1996.

[98] Ali A. Mazrui, "Religious strangers in Uganda: From Emin Pasha to Amin Dada," *African Affairs* 76, no. 302 (1977); Abdi Chande, "Muslim-State relations in East Africa under conditions of military and civilian or one-party dictatorship," *Historia Actual Online* 17, (2008); Isabella Soi, "Muslims in Buganda: From the royal court to Kampala," in *Cities and Minorities in Africa,* ed. Isabella Soi and Filippo Petrucci (Aprilia: Aracne, 2011); Badiru Kateregga, Badiru, "The causes of Muslim wrangles in Uganda – and the possible remedies," *Campus Journal*, 14 August 2012, accessed 31 May 2019, http://campusjournal.ug/index.php/special-report/analysis/537-the-cause-of-muslim-wrangles-in-uganda-and-the-possible-remedies.

[99] Such imbalance in the educational and economic sector is claimed to be one of the reasons for the establishment of the Islamic University in Uganda (IUIU) in 1988. See Ismail S. Gyagenda and Wardah M. Rajab-Gyagenda, "Islamic University in Uganda (IUIU): The pioneers," in Muhammaed Haron and Mbaye Lo *Muslim Institutions of Higher Education in Postcolonial Africa,* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2016).

It is important to note, however, that the challenges and problems facing Muslims were not solely due to political and economic exclusion by the colonial and post-colonial governments. Since the death of their titular leader Prince Nuhu Mbogo, in 1921, the Ugandan Muslim community had been plagued by internal political and theological disputes. Politically, some Sheikhs resisted the leadership of Mbogo's son, Prince Badru Kakungulu, arguing that a Muslim leader must possess adequate knowledge of Islam. This led to the emergence of two factions within the Muslim community. Theologically, disputes arose over issues such as whether it was permissible to conduct *Zuhr* prayers after *Jumma* prayers and whether it was appropriate to celebrate *Mawlid*. These disputes occasionally turned violent, prompting intervention by both colonial and post-colonial authorities. In one instance, in 1946, the colonial government appealed to Mecca for long-lasting intervention after mediation by Zanzibar and Mombasa scholars failed. Thus, it was until Amin's intervention, himself a Muslim that a sense of compromise was reached. He went on to establish the Uganda Muslim Supreme Council (UMSC) as a unifying body for Muslims in Uganda, grating it authority over all Muslim groups under his leadership.[103] Amin allocated 12 acres of land in the centre of Kampala for this purpose. When officially handing over the land, he Amin proudly stated,

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[100] James F. Hanlon, "Amin: His Seizure and Rule in Uganda," (MA Thesis, University of Massachusetts Amherst, 1974), III.

[101] Oded, *Islam in Uganda,* 313; Yusuf Kasumba, "Attempts at a Rejuvenation of Muslim Identity in Uganda. The Era of Amin (1971-1979)," in *Religion and the Challenges of the Contemporary World,* eds. Ovidiu Nedu, Cosmin Ciocan, and George Enache (Dunbius supplement, 2015).

[102] Vali Jamal, "Asians in Uganda, 1880 – 1972: Inequality and Expulsion," *The Economic History Review*, 29, no. 4, (1976), 602.

[103] Kateregga, "The Causes of Muslim wrangles"; Oded, *Islam in Uganda,* 315.

> The top, and undeveloped area, of Old Kampala Hill, which I have personally inspected, covers an area of 12 acres……This will enable the supreme council to build its Headquarters there, housing the Secretariat of the council, and the offices…… I would also like to have on this land a Mosque and a Jaamiu-Esalaamia......which I hope in time will have branches in other parts of Uganda. The standard of this institution is equivalent to that of a university. This institution will be open to persons from other parts of the world, especially Africa, Asia and Latin America...... I have played my part in trying to put religious affairs in order. I have done it for the church of Uganda, and I have done it for the cause of Islam in this country. ……I say to all Muslims in this country; it is all yours. Do not let slip the wonderful opportunities…[104]

Amin also promoted the education of Muslims in both Islamic and secular fields, laying the foundation for the establishment of the Islamic University in Uganda (IUIU), along with various Muslim teachers' training colleges and schools.[105] He saw this as a way to address the educational imbalance between Muslims and Christians. Furthermoew, several scholarships were secured for Muslims to go study abroad. Domestically, while the Minister of Education was a Christian from Amin's Kakwa tribe, many key and important positions in the Ministry of Education, including the Chief Education Officer and most of the District Education Officers were held by Muslims. These efforts led to significant increase in conversion to Islam, and being a Muslim in Uganda became a privilege.[106]

In 1974, despite Muslims constituting less than six per cent of the population according to 1959 census,[107] Uganda became a full member of the Organisation of the Islamic Conference (OIC).[108] This membership brought substantial financial assistance to build mosques and schools, and conversions to Islam were actively encouraged and highly praised by the President.[109] In 1972, King Faisal of Saudi Arabia visited Uganda, strengthening the ties between the two countries, and paving the way for Ugandan students to pursue a religious studies at the Islamic University in Medina,[110] which Salafi curriculum. However, while Amin's religious policy of Amin was pan-Islamic rather than Salafi-oriented – evidenced by the annual *mawlid* festivals organized by the Ugandan Sufis and patronized by special envoys from the army - the return of the Medina graduates inadvertently introduced a new element of intra-Islamic tension between the old Sufi leadership and a new generation of Salafi-trained scholars.

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[104] The speech was shared with the author by the UMSC spokesperson during fieldwork.

[105] Some of these colleges (Kibuli, Kabukunge Teachers Training College) are still in existence. One of the surviving technical institutes is Kabasanda Technical Institute, which is located in Butambala, Mpigi district, a predominantly Muslim County. See Ahmed Sengendo, "Islamic University in Uganda: Its role in the Socioeconomic Development of East Africa's Muslim communities," in Muhammaed Haron and Mbaye Lo (eds.), *Muslim Institutions of Higher Education in Postcolonial Africa,* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2016).

[106] Kayunga, "Islamic Fundamentalism in Uganda: The Tabligh Youth Movement."

[107] Houssein Kettan, "Muslim Population in Africa," *International Journal of Environmental Science and Development*, 1, no. 2 (2009), 139.

[108] Namazzi, Elizabeth, "Uganda: How a country Became a Member of the OIC." *The New Vision*, June 21, 2008.

Furthermore, besides Islam, Amin's regime abolished all other Christian denominations except for the Anglican, and Roman Catholic churches. However, even though the two groups remained officially active, their leadership did not survive government intervention on suspicion of conspiracies against Amin by Christian enemies. For example, in 1977, the Archbishop of the Anglican Church, Janani Luwum, was murdered after being accused of organising clandestine operations with rebels to overthrow Amin's regime. Moreover, the headquarters of the church came under constant military operations in the search for a military force. Catholic clergy also came under constant harassment as in the case of Catholics who had gathered to welcome the return of Uganda Cardinal from Rome were butchered by Amin's military henchmen.[111] While it is undeniable that the church found itself dragged into becoming foci of opposition until eventually became feared by those in power,[112] the regime's actions went far beyond the bound justice.

Amin's actions defy being attributed to any specific ideological motive, such as Islamism, nationalism, or anti-imperialism. Instead, they appear to be driven by political pragmatism rather than any coherent ideology.[113] For example, it has been proved beyond reasonable doubt that there was no connection between Islam, Muslims, and Amin in his ascension to power. Rather personal interests and problems that Amin had with his boss Milton Obote.[114] Moreover, Amin had also spent years fighting pro-independence groups such as the Mau Mau in Kenya. He had often boasted of his exploits in those wars retelling how he had killed poorly armed rebels. This critic puts his anti-imperialist statements in balance. Indeed, Amin's actions point to accrues from the political environment of the time and circumstances in which the military regime found itself entangled.[115]

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[109] The front page of the *Voice of Uganda*, on 11 December 1972, noted that "four hundred fifty-five people were converted to Islam during one *mawlid* which was held at the Simba Battalion Camp at Mbarara."

[110] Abdi Chande, "Radicalism and reform in East Africa," in *The History of Islam in Africa*, ed. Nehemia Levtzion and Randall Pouwels (Athens: Ohio University Press, 2000), 355.

[111] Kayunga, "Islamic Fundamentalism in Uganda: The Tabligh Youth Movement," 335.

[112] On this point, it should be important to recognize the fact that the divisions within the church before Amin contributed immensely to this saga. A section within the church had welcomed his military coup and some of the top clergies knew about the plan and kept it a secret until it was unveiled. Thus, in his study on religion in Uganda under Amin, Pirouet correctly argues that the state of religion under Ain was quite complex, and it is misleading to conclude that it was Muslims persecuting Christians or that Churches naturally found themselves in defence of the evil regime. See for more: M. Louise Pirouet, "Religion in Uganda Under Amin." *Journal of Religion in Africa* 11, no. 1 (1980), 13.

Nonetheless, it is incontestable that Muslims benefited significantly during Amin's Amin's nine-year reign, characterised by political opportunism.[116] On April 11, 1979, Amin was ousted by Tanzanian troops aided by Ugandan exiles, and a new government was established.[117] His military rule ended, leaving behind widespread uncertainty regarding the future of his tribesmen and co-religionists. His interference in the affairs of Islam and his usage of the Islamic cloak to achieve political goals undermined whatever he had achieved for Muslims. By the end of his regime in 1979, almost all his vices were attributed to Muslims and the Nubian ethnic group. Whether they had benefited from the regime or not, all Muslims were generally regarded as accomplices of the fallen government.

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[113] Peter, F. B. Nayenga, "Review: Myth and Realities of Idi Amin Dada's Uganda," *African Study Review* 22, no. 2 (1975), 130.

[114] Omara-Otunnu (1987, 92-93) rightly observes that Amin had strong personal reasons for attempting to take overpower. His sense of security had been threatened by allegations of involvement in several shady activities. Among them was the murder of Brigadier Okoya and the trial of those implicated was to have taken place the following month. Secondly, he is said to have colluded with Israel in giving unauthorized support to Anya Nya fighters in Southern Sudan, by providing military and logistic aid which was crucial in sustaining the guerrilla war against the Sudan government in Khartoum. Also, it is asserted that he had misappropriated large sums of money which had been allocated to the military and just before his departure to Singapore President Obote had openly demanded that on his return he should be given a written explanation by Amin regarding the funds which had not yet been accounted for. Secretly the president had left orders for his close associate in government to put Amin under arrest which landed in Amin's heart. See for more; Amii Omara-Otunnu, *Politics and the Military in Uganda*, (London: Palgrave, 1987).

[115] Yusuf Kasumba, "Attempts at a Rejuvenation of Muslim Identity in Uganda. The Era of Amin (1971-1979)," in *Religion and the Challenges of the Contemporary World,* eds. Ovidiu Nedu, Cosmin Ciocan and George Enache (Dunbius supplement, 2015), 94.

[116] Ibid.

[117] Daniel G. Acheson-Brown, "The Tanzania invasion of Uganda: A just war?", *International Third World Studies Journal and Review* 12, (2001), 9.

In the aftermath, devastating repercussions were felt by those perceived as beneficiaries of Amin's rule, particularly Muslims.[118] Internally, Amin's coercion of Muslims unity through the formation of the UMSC quickly unravelled, and the Muslim community fell back into the factional wrangles that had plagued it before Amin's rise. Externally, the association between Amin and Islam fuelled a sense of Muslim phobia among non-Muslims. This atmosphere of suspicion and resentment led to further marginalisation of Muslims immediately after the fall of Amin's government, with Ugandan Muslims bearing the brunt of the backlash against their co-religionist's actions during his regime.[119]

The Bloody Revenge

> Tutemire omuti, kiri aharimwe kukongora amataaju" (We have felled the tree, and it is up to you people to cut off the branches

This ominous statement was made by Edward Rurangaranga, a member of the Uganda National Liberation Front (UNLF) loyal to Milton Obote and Yoweri Museveni, who with the assistance of the Tanzanian army, ousted Amin in 1979.[120] Rurangaranga delivered these words at a public rally at Kibingo Sub-County headquarters on 11 April 1979, the very day. Kampala fell to the UNLF- a rebel movement that had been fighting Amin's government since 1975, with support from the Tanzania People's Defence Forces (TPDF). At that time, Amin's forces, the Uganda Army, had lost control of most of territories and many of his fighters were either on the run or hiding. As the Assistant District Commissioner of Bushenyi District,

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[118] Kasumba, "Attempts at a Rejuvenation of Muslim Identity in Uganda. The Era of Amin (1971-1979), 94.

[119] Kasumba, "Attempts at a Rejuvenation of Muslim Identity in Uganda, pp. 94-95.

[120] The statement was attributed to Edward Rurangaranga, while addressing a public rally held at Kibingo sub-county headquarters on 11 April 1979, the day on which Kampala was captured by the rebels. Rurangaranga was a member of the Uganda National Liberation Front (UNLF), and Assistant District Commissioner of Bushenyi. Speaking to Grace P. Karamura, Rurangaranga acknowledged the statement but added that "the tree was Amin, and the branches were Aminism - corruption, murder, stealing which I was calling on people to resist and fight. All these were vices, which had polluted Ankole society and were due to Amin's influence. My statement did not mean Muslims at all. It was misquoted" (Grace P. Karamura, The Interplay of Christianity, Ethnicity and Politics in Ankole, Uganda, 1953-1993, (PhD thesis, Leeds: University of Leeds, 1998), 162-164. See also Abbas Kiyimba's detailed (but "exaggerated", according to Karamura, see Karamura, *The Interplay,* p. 161) report based on interviews from victims and eyewitnesses: Abbas Kiyimba, "Is the 1979 Muslim blood-bath in Bushenyi history? A review of the Genocide that was called Liberation," p. 7. The 24-page document is available online at: http://ftpmirror.your.org/pub/wikimedia/images/wikipedia/commons/5/58/The_1979_Muslim_Genocide_in_South_Western_Uganda.pdf, accessed on 31 May 2019. See also Abbas Kiyimba, "Detailed account of the 1979 massacre of Muslims in Western Uganda," *Campus Journal*, 31 July 2012. Accessed on 31 May 2019, https://ugandamuslims.wordpress.com/2012/08/07/a-detailed-account-of-the-1979-massacre-of-muslims-in-western-uganda/. See also Schulz, "Carving out a space," pp. 376-277.

Rurangaranga openly expressed his support for mob justice against those perceived as remnants of Amin's era.

Following his inflammatory speech, a Christian mob armed with spears and machetes rounded up Muslims in western Uganda, binding their hands behind their backs. These Muslims were then assembled at River Rwizi and brutally killed, with an Imam's head being cut into three pieces before being thrown into the river. In one particularly horrific incident, Madiya Nakitende, a seven-month-pregnant mother, had her stomach sliced open by the enraged mob, who then removed the foetus and threw her remains into the river. Her mother, who survived by throwing herself into the river, later recounted this tragic event.[121] In total, 67 Muslims were killed in the sparsely populated Sheema District. Rurangaranga later denied that his statement was a call to violence, claiming,

> The tree was Amin, and the branches were Aminism-corruption, murder, stealing-which I was calling on people to resist and fight. My statement did not mean Muslims at all. It was misquoted.[122]

However, due to Amin's politicisation of religion, particularly Islam, non-Muslims equated all of Amin's actions with Islamic brutality. Thus, after his fall, violent reprisals were inevitable. Beyond the massacres that took place across the country, many enraged non-Muslims celebrated Amin's overthrow by slaughtering pigs in mosques and demolishing them to the ground, particularly in the Eastern region, where the percentage of Muslims was highest. In the Northern regions, particularly in the Lango and Acholi sub-regions, mosques that survived demolition were converted into sex lodges, nightclubs and cinema halls.[123]

Similar atrocities occurred in northwestern Uganda, in districts like Arua and Yumbe, where both Muslims and non-Muslims from Amin's ethnic group, the Kakwa/Nubia tribe, were targeted.[124] The most widely documented incident in this region is the Ombaci massacre, which recently became the focus of a truth and reconciliation program.[125] Soldiers raided various villages, killing indiscriminately, and then sought out those who had taken refuge at the St. Joseph Community College and the adjacent church. Over 2,000 people were massacred through random firing and torture.[126] Additionally, a large section of the Muslim merchant class lost their businesses, either through looting or to government officials. The tragic legacy of Amin's era continues to haunt Uganda, with each new regime re-appropriating properties owned by their predecessors or those confiscated from expelled Asian owners, distributing them to a narrow circle of supporters.[127] As a result of this political climate, many Muslims fled into exile in neighbouring countries such as Kenya, Zaire, and Southern Sudan, not to return until the late 1980s. Amin himself fled first to Libya and later to Saudi Arabia, where he lived in exile[128] until his death in 2003.[129]

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[121] See also, besides the sources cited in the preceding note, Halima Athumani, "Uganda launches probe into 1979 massacre of Muslims," *Anadolu Agency*, 17 January 2016.

[122] In Grace P. Karamura, The Interplay of Christianity, Ethnicity and Politics in Ankole, Uganda, 1953-1993 (PhD thesis, Leeds: University of Leeds, 1998), 162-164.

[123] Interview with Sheikh Musa Khalil, the Regional Khadi, Northern Uganda, December 15, 2019, Gulu-Uganda

[124] Chande, "Muslim-State relations," 105.

Amidst this political turmoil, some Muslims bravely remained in Uganda, living under constant fear. Concerned about the potential loss of faith among Muslims, particularly among the youth who had received Islamic training either within Uganda or abroad, a group of individuals saw the need to devise means to bring their fellow Muslims back into the spotlight and prevent them from being distracted by the prevailing political anarchy. This marked a turning point that laid the groundwork for Uganda's contemporary reformist community, which will be explored in the next section.

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[125] See: "It was only the guns speaking, with a pool of blood flowing: The Ombaci massacre June 24, 1981," JRP Field Note 20, *Gulu Justice and Reconciliation Project*, June 2014 (https://www.justiceandreconciliation.org/publications/field-notes/2014/ombaci/, accessed 31 May 2019).

[126] Owen Erima, "The untold story of Ombaci massacre - meet Veronica Eyotaru, a survivor," *Owen Word Press*, 19 June 2015, https://owenerimah.wordpress.com/2015/06/19/the-untold-story-of-the-famous-ombachi-masscre-in-uganda-meet-the-victims/, accessed 31 May 2019.

[127] Mahmood Mamdani, "Uganda in Transition: Two years of the NRA/NRM," *Third World Quarterly*, 10, no. 3 (1988), 1162.

[128] Amin was accorded state support by King Faisal, which was honoured by other subsequent kings until he died in 2013. See his first public interview since the downfall of his government; "Idi Amin says he is happy with Religion." *The Irish News*, Feb 15, 1999. Accessed on Jun 23, 2021, via https://www.irishtimes.com/news/idi-amin-says-he-is-happy-with-religion-1.152922.

[129] Richard Pearson, "Ugandan Dictator Idi Amin, Ousted in 1979, Dies." *The Washington Post*, Aug 17, 2003. Accessed on June 23, 2021 from https://www.washingtonpost.com/archive/local/2003/08/17/ugandan-dictator-idi-amin-ousted-in-1979-dies/59069087-408f-4bb6-b29b-58d189208fb9/

Redefining Islamic Identity: The Salafi Factor

> There is no liberation when Muslims are being killed. If the UNLF government is not ready to protect Muslims and their properties, I am ready to declare Jihad so that Muslims defend themselves.[130]

These were the bold words of Sheikh Kasim Mulumba, the first Chief Kadhi (*Mufti*) of Uganda after Amin's regime. Shortly after his inauguration, Sheikh Mulumba made this declaration, having returned from self-imposed exile in Nairobi, Kenya. The new government had called him back to organize the Ugandan Muslim community. Speaking during his first public appearance on Friday congregational prayers at Wandegeya Mosque, Sheikh Mulumba challenged the UNLF government, accusing them of failing to protect Muslims who were facing persecution from Christian mobs. He warned that if the situation did not change, he was prepared to organize Muslims for self-defence. This pronouncement came amid widespread fear among surviving Muslims, particularly in central Uganda, as similar incidents of persecution had occurred in villages nationwide.

Sheikh Mulumba, a graduate of Al-Azhar University, was the first to publicly challenge the silence of UNLF/M regarding the persecution of Muslims at that time. His statement was enthusiastically received by Muslims, who "spread it like bushfire fire,"[131] according to one attendee. It energized and encouraged Muslims to come out of hiding and showed unprecedented support for their new leader. During his countrywide tour of the war-ravaged villages, Sheikh Mulumba received a heroic welcome wherever he went. Muslims praised his courage, often addressing him with highly cherished cultural expressions in Uganda such as "*Lukomwa Nantawetwa*" meaning "a strong, deep-rooted mahogany tree whose trunk cannot easily bend".[132]

Mulumba's speech reflects the tense political environment that surrounded Muslims at the time. His threat of Jihad and the overwhelming support he received from Ugandan Muslims indicate the depth of the fears and aspirations of many who had remained silent. It is this environment that contemporary Jihadi-Salafists in Uganda look to for inspiration, justifying their Jihadi agenda based on these historical events.

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[130] Ashiraf Zziwa, "1979: Sheikh Kassimu Mulumba Makes His Maiden Statement." *UMBS*, June 3, 2021. Accessed on 20 Dec 2022, from https://ugandamuslims.wordpress.com/2021/06/03/1979sheikh-kassimu-mulumba-makes-his-maiden-statement/

[131] Ibid.

[132] Ibid.

As we will see, the Salafi movement has played a central role in awakening the desire for a distinct Muslim identity in Uganda. They have used media, especially social media networks, to further this mission. Salafis are known for establishing their own social and economic networks, often keeping themselves from non-Muslims and, at times, even non-Salafis. Therefore, it is important to understand a brief history of the Salafi movement's origin in Uganda.

The activities that laid the groundwork for Salafism in Uganda began in the early 1940s[133] when the titular leader of Muslims at the time, *Omulangila* (Prince) Badru Kakungulu, mobilized a small group of Islamic scholars with the aim of 'reviving' the spirit of Islam. *Omulangila* Kakungulu, the son and successor of *Omulangila* Nuhu Mbogo (d.1921), the first titular leader of Muslims in Uganda, used his influence to seek allies from various quarters. He solicited support from the Muslim Asia community in Uganda, particularly the Ismailis under their Imam, His Highness the Aga Khan. In 1945, Kakungulu founded the East African Muslim Welfare Society (EAMWS),[134] a social welfare organization aimed at pooling resources from Muslims across East Africa to support African Muslim projects.

With this support, Kakungulu vigorously solicited funds that assisted Muslim projects in Uganda. By 1955, the society had established over 48 schools, 30 mosques, one training college, three technical schools, and one boarding house, including the beautiful mosques in Kibuli, Masaka, Soroti, Jinja, and Mbale, as well as large schools in Kibuli, Kampala, and Jinja, among others.[135] By 1959, the number of schools and Mosques had risen to 75 and 63, respectively. Uganda, as a result, enjoyed the lion's share of Muslim infrastructure among the three colonial East African countries-Kenya, Tanzania, and Uganda.

Kakungulu further established the Uganda Muslim Education Association (UMEA) in 1947 to tap into funds from the colonial government of Uganda.[136] The colonial administration had previously funded all Christian missionary schools but refused to support Muslim education, arguing that available funds were only for ‘organized groups,’ not individual institutions.[137] UMEA was founded to fill this vacuum within the Muslim community, offering a much-needed organizational structure to cater to their educational needs.

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[133] Kayunga, "Islamic Fundamentalism in Uganda: The Tablighi Youth Movement," 337.

[134] On the history of EAMWS see, Juma Khamis Juma and Arshad Islam, *The East African Muslim Welfare Society 1945-1968* (Gombak: IIUM Press, 2017).

[135] Faris, *Obutabliigi Mu Uganda*, 27.

[136] Interview with Sheikh Salman Faris, Kampala, December 2020.

By 1918, Ugandan Muslims could boast only of traditional Qur’anic schools where the curriculum was limited to Islamic law and the teaching of Arabic. By 1939, only one primary school of recognized standard existed.[138] However, through the vigorous work of UMEA and the leadership of its Secretary-General, Ramadan Gava, under the patronage of Prince Kakungulu, the association was able to create an effective education system for Muslims by building a network of schools throughout Uganda. UMEA utilized funds from the EAMWS and lobbied for government grants to achieve this purpose.

Reinforcing Islamic Identity

With the introduction of a new type of education system, that embraced values different from those taught in traditional *madrasahs*, Muslim youths in Uganda found themselves exposed to ‘Westernization,’ including Christian values and behaviours. Prince Kakungulu and other forward-looking elders had hoped to raise a generation of Muslim youths who could maintain their Islamic identity while being aware of and participating in the secular world. However, Muslim youths who successfully preserved their Islamic identity often faced discrimination when seeking employment appropriate to their qualifications.[139] This situation deeply troubled elders like Prince Kakungulu.

In response, Kakungulu gathered and encouraged Muslim youths who were conscious of their beliefs to establish organizations aimed at fostering connections among themselves and shielding them from anti-Islamic social activities and influences prevalent in the existing socio-economic environment.[140] These organizations were designed to demonstrate that it was possible to possess a secular education, engage in modern life, and still retain one’s African and Muslim identity.

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[137] Ibid.

[138] Badru Musis and Muhammad M. Kiggundu, “Educational Marginalization of Muslims in Uganda: Historical Perspective, Legal Implications and Challenges,” *Interdisciplinary Journal of Education* 1, no.1 (2019).

[139] Abdu K. Kasozi, *The Life of Prince Badru Kakungulu Wasajja and the Development of Forward-Looking Muslim Community in Uganda, 1907-1991* (Kampala: Progressive Publishing House, 1996).

[140] Ibid.

Two notable organizations emerged from this effort: the Young Men Muslim Association (YMMA) and the Muslim Students Association of Uganda (MSAU). The YMMA was originally founded in 1937 by Prince Badru Kakungulu, Kassimu Male, Musa Musoke, Ramadan Gava, and others. However, when UMEA (Uganda Muslim Education Association) became active, the operations of the YMMA were suspended to allow its officials to concentrate on UMEA activities, as both organizations were run by the same members. As Kiggundu and Lukwago confirm, Ramadan Gava was a full-time UMEA employee whose work left little time for YMMA.[141] Consequently, when UMEA ceased operations in 1963, the vacuum was filled by the reactivation of YMMA, which aimed to mobilize Muslim youths and instil Islamic values and ethos, countering the dominant Western educational system. The YMMA specifically targeted Muslim youths already in the workforce.

Similarly, the MSAU was established to target younger Muslim youths still in school. The MSAU organized annual conferences, caravans to distant places, and other activities typical of Muslim Students Associations (MSAs) worldwide.[142] By the time Salafism began to take hold in Uganda, the foundation had already been laid by these two associations, which had reinforced the importance of Islamic identity and reform. Subsequently, other Muslim associations flourished at national, regional, and district levels. These included the Uganda Muslim Youth Assembly (UMYA), the Inter-Muslim Students Association of Kampala (IMSAK), and the Makerere Muslim Students Association (MUMSA), among others, which continued mentoring Muslim youths on ideas of social change and religious reform to perfect their Islamic identity according to the 'true' teachings of Islam.

At the same time, Prince Kakungulu began organizing annual Ramadan seminars targeting Muslim elites who had missed out on Islamic education. These Seminars, held at Prince Kakungulu's ancestral mosque on Kibuli Hill in Kampala, were designed to help these elites navigate working-class life while being mindful of 'true' Islamic teachings. Sheikh Shuaib Semakula (1875-1973), who served as the Chief *Mubaligh* (head of proselytization) in the EAMWS Uganda branch, oversaw these seminars.[143]A graduate of Habib Saleh B. Alawi Jamal Al-Layl (1853-1936) of Riyadh Mosque College in Lamu, Kenya. Sheikh Shuaib was an iconic figure in the history of Ba-Alawi Sufism in East Africa.[144] He was highly respected by the majority of Muslims in Uganda, and his efforts produced a significant number of locally trained scholars in the country. His annual seminars proved particularly fruitful for working-class Muslim youths, especially when their peers joined the preaching lineup with more advanced knowledge acquired from the Arab world.

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[141] Sulaiman I. Kiggundu and Isa K. K. Lukwago, "The Status of Muslim Community in Uganda," *Institute of Muslim Minority Affairs* 1, no. 2 (1982).
[142] Ibid, 125.
[143] Interview with Sheikh Salman Faris, Kampala, December 2020.

Rejecting Local Customs

Prince Badru's efforts to promote education opened doors for some youths to study abroad for further Islamic studies. Since Muslims were not allowed to seek education outside the British East African colonies, some youths were sneaked out to destinations like Cairo, Pakistan, and Hadhramaut in Yemen. By the early 1960s, after Uganda gained independence in 1962, these youths began returning to Uganda. They were welcomed with great esteem by Muslim youths of the working class and elderly scholars who recognised their advanced Islamic scholarship. Upon their return, these scholars were invited to teach and preach at the annual Ramadan seminars and historical mosques, providing them with an open platform to reach a wide audience, including the elite group.

Initially, they avoided contradictory preaching, but some members eventually began openly challenging the status quo. The respect they commanded did not prevent them from questioning the teachings of their elderly scholars. Among these outspoken scholars were Sheikh Abdu Obeidi Kamulegeya, Sheikh Abdulkadir Mbogo, and Sheikh Twaibu Mutyaba (Tablighi). Their strong opposition to what they perceived as heretical innovations led them to defy establised norms. For instance, they would say, "*ekanzu egenze mulumbe bwogisalilamu eswala tetuuka*" literary meaning that "prayers (Salah) performed in clothes won during traditional funeral ceremonies are invalid."[145] Although they eventually retracted and embraced Sufism, their early criticisms served as a wake-up call to youths who were disillusioned with the old traditions that seemed more like tribal customs of the Buganda. Other notable youths at the time included Sheikhs Idris Lutaya,[146] Muhammad Kizito Ziwa, Abdulwahaab Semakula, Juma Kaiwa, Badru Wassajja, Zubairi Bakaari, Haji Haruna Kibuye, and Sulayiman Ssesanga. Though they remained marginal, they challenged customs such as religious gatherings on the third, seventh, or fortieth day after a person's death, and funeral customs practised in Buganda, such as *Okwabya Enyimbe* and other practices deemed un-Islamic. Their campaign was interrupted by Amin's coup of 1971, but it was revived with renewed vigour and determination after his fall.

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[144] For more about Sheikh Habib Saleh, Riyadh Mosque College, and Ba'alawwiya Sufism in East Africa, see: Anne K. Banga, "*Sufism and Scholars of the Sea: Family Networks in East Africa, 1860-1925*," (London: Routledge, 2004), 100.

[145] Interview with Sheikh Salman Faris, Kampala, December 2020.

[146] Ibid., also see Salman Faris, "Obutabuliki Mu Uganda."

Regaining Strength: Post-Amin Salafis

The creation of the Uganda Muslim Supreme Council (UMSC) in 1972 aimed to unify all Muslim groups in the country. Sectarian tendencies that had plagued the Muslim community in Uganda since the death of Prince Mbogo in 1921 were suppressed, forcing all contending groups to join the UMSC. This enforced inclusion also impacted Salafi activities. In addition to the Ahmadiyya Muslim community, whose public activities were abolished by the regime, the Salafi's open opposition to the dominant Sufi brand of Islam was not spared. As a result, some prominent Salafis joined rebel groups that fought against Idi Amin's military government. Among those who joined the anti-Amin rebel group were Sheikh Zubairi Bakari, Haji Haruna Kibuye, and Abasi Kibazo, with coordination offices in Kampala city along Luwumu Street.[147]

After Amin's regime fell and fear gripped Muslims for their safety, Prince Badru Kakungulu remained active, recognized by the new political regime. He took to the field, urging Muslims to stay united and hold onto their faith. Seizing the opportunity for a united front, Salafi youths infiltrated the ranks of elder 'traditional' Muslims. During a meeting of *ulama* convened by Prince Badru Kakungulu, the Salafis successfully positioned one of their own scholars. At the end of the meeting, Sheikh Kasimu Mulumba a Salafi-inclined scholar and a graduate of Al-Azhar University, emerged as the elected leader of the interim administration for the Uganda Muslim Supreme Council (UMSC). This event marked the return of Salafism to the forefront of Ugandan Muslim politics, with Kasimu becoming a highly regarded leader-at least until his controversial statement that targeted the elders who had placed their trust in him.[148]

The Saudi Factor

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[147] Interview Salman Faris, Kampala, December 2020. See also Museveni's memoir, Yoweri K. Museveni, *Sowing the Mustard Seed: The Struggle for Freedom in Uganda* (Nairobi: Moran Publishers, 2016), 51-60.

[148] Interview Salman Faris

Another significant chapter in the history of Salafism in Uganda is marked by the return of students who had studied at Islamic universities in Saudi Arabia. This development can be traced back to the relationship between Idi Amin's regime and King Faisal, which facilitated the travel of many Ugandan youths to Saudi Arabia for advanced studies in Islamic theology. Amid the political instability of the post-Amin era, some of these youths began to return to Uganda, bringing with them a newfound zeal and a strong desire to share their knowledge and Salafi identity, both with fellow Muslims and those in positions of power.[149]

While many of these Saudi-trained Ugandans had embraced Salafi Islam, the early 1980s also saw the arrival of small groups of preachers from the *Jamāʻat al-Tablīgh*, a movement originating from the Deobandi school of India and Pakistan. Although rooted in Sufi tradition, the Tabligh movement promotes a puritanical approach to Islamic piety, focusing on correcting the practices of grassroots Muslims to align them with 'authentic' Sunni teachings.[150] Despite the profound theological and jurisprudential differences between the Salafi and Deobandi schools, many of the Salafi returnees in Uganda initially participated in the Tablighi movement. However, these two groups eventually went their separate ways.[151]

Complicating the ideological landscape further, was the fact that the first generation of such hybrid, Salafi/Tablighi activism, partly overlapped also with an intellectual revival that was promoted by the young, educated Muslims who were active in the various Muslim Students Associations (MSAs), especially the Young Muslim Men Association (YMMA) Makerere University Muslim Students Association (MUMSA); the Muslim Students Association of Uganda (MSAU); and the Uganda Muslim Youth Assembly (UMYA). During the late 1980s and early 1990s, intellectuals, like Imaam Kasozi, Abbas Kiyimba, and Husein Kyanjo, propagated among Ugandan Muslims a new awareness of current political events in the Muslim world. While these intellectuals were not necessarily Salafi or Salafi-inclined, the public of their speeches in the mosques largely overlapped with the audience of the Salafi returnees from Medina.[152]

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[149] Chande, "Radicalism and reform in East Africa,"357.

[150] On Tablighi, see Zacharias Pieri, "Tablighi Jama 'at," in *Handbook of Islamic Sects and Movements* ed. Muhammad Afzal Upal and Carole M. Cusack (Brill, 2021. http://www.jstor.org/stable/10.1163/j.ctv1v7zbv8)

[151] Kasule, *Islam in Uganda*, 153.

[152] Interview with Salman Faris. This is also confirmed by my interview with Imam Kasozi, Kampala, on January 12, 2021.

Gradually, however, the Salafis intensified the theological and sectarian side of their activism, which included preaching against what they considered to be *bid'a* (heretical innovation). This prompted some of the elder Muslim leadership (known locally as the *bazeyi*) to deny them access to the main mosques. As a consequence, the Salafis began conducting their activities in open places, as well as in a few selected mosques that were under their direct control.[153] By the late 1980s, turning their eviction from mosques into an asset for grassroots proselytization, the Salafi movement had gained the support of many young Muslims in the central and eastern parts of Uganda: “Whenever the *bazeyi* chase us from their mosques, we look for another space to teach our people; we call it an open university, and we travel to every part of the country preaching the Sunna of the Prophet.”[154]

The group was also actively involved in inter-religious debates. This section was led by Sheikhs; Mutazimdwa, Abasi Kirevu, and Swaleh Mubiru among others. In 1984, a Church catechist known as Steven Kyagulanyi converted to Islam.[155] Assuming the new name of Jamilu Mukulu, he began learning Islam with the local Salafi scholars and later applied for a scholarship in Saudi Arabia, where he took a two-year Arabic language course Although his academic credentials were limited, Mukulu's charisma, intelligence, and fiery rhetoric quickly garnered him a substantial following, especially among the youth.[156]

Under the government of President Yoweri Museveni, who had taken power in 1986 ousting the previous, Tanzania-aligned government, the Salafi mission in Uganda achieved greater visibility, mainly thanks to its involvement in the Muslim leadership wrangles that occurred within the UMSC. The fall of Amin had led to the collapse of the UMSC leadership, which was widely associated with the previous regime; at the same time, the beginning of the Salafi preaching had eroded the very idea of Muslim unity in the country that was pivotal to the UMSC project. Tribal identity issues, too, contributed to the crisis, with Baganda and non-Baganda members vying for leadership within the UMSC. In the late 1980s, when a conflict erupted between Shaykh Rajab Kakooza (Buganda) and Shaykh Saad Luwemba (Busoga), the Salafis supported the former, as they considered him a better-trained Islamic scholar. Kakooza had studied in Pakistan, Saudi Arabia and Egypt (al-Azhar), while Luwemba, besides having lesser formal qualifications, was accused of being a crypto-Shiite because of his links to Iran.[157] Most of the Ugandan Salafis, at the time, were also Baganda, so their preference for supporting a man from the same tribe cannot completely be ruled out.

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[153] Salman Faris, interview.

[154] Kasule, *Islam in Uganda*, 154. Faris and Kakeeto, both confirm this story.

[155] Jamilu Mukulu’s speech to ADF members in DRC forests. It is available on the YouTube channel, Manya Obusilamu for public consumption. Specifically watch, “Ensibuko Y’obusilamu mu Uganda” (History of Islam in Uganda by Jamilu Mukulu.” https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=BtDc9UZ2V6s by accessed on Jan 2019. I have also collaborated most of the information with personal interviews with former members of ADF including Abu Rahma and Abu Abdurahman.

[156] Ibid.

The two scholars went into numerous court battles, each claiming to be the legitimate leader of the Ugandan Muslim community. Eventually, the magistrate court confirmed Luwemba and ordered Kakooza to quit the UMSC headquarters. This event was the catalyst for the transformation of the first generation of reformist Salafis in Uganda, led by those who had studied abroad, into a proto-jihadi movement.[158]

On Wednesday 22 March 1991, over 400 Salafi youths attacked the UMSC mosque that housed its headquarters and took over the building.[159] The attackers claimed, as a justification, the need to rescue Muslim independence from government interference and to purify the National Mosque from the leadership of "corrupt Muslims." All active and former members of the movement interviewed in Uganda and Tanzania have confirmed that the first plan for jihad preparation was agreed upon in 1989 in Bombo (21 km from Kampala along the Kampala-Gulu Road), during a secret meeting attended by the top Salafi leaders from all over the country in 1989.[160] Those who attended reportedly included: Shaykh Yunus Kamoga, Jamilu Mukulu, Muhammad Kiggundu, Abdulkarim Sentamu, and others. The group reportedly elected Yunus Kamoga as *amīr* (leader), and Jamilu Mukulu as his deputy and spokesperson. However, they also chose the latter as *amīr* of the "jihad wing, known to them as the Salafi Jihadi Council (Sajico). Jamilu's position as the leader of Sajico according to the meeting, automatically made him the overall *Amir* to which Kamoga himself would be obliged to obey in matters of war."[161]

During preparations for the attack, Kamoga and Mukulu addressed the Salafi youths in a lecture that lasted two hours.[162] In his address, Mukulu reminded the youths about the mismanagement of Muslim properties spearheaded by the leaders of UMSC, appealing to his followers to sacrifice their lives for the sake of Islam. Mukulu also added that the government was planning to grant the headquarters to "non-Muslim Shiites," and that the Iranians were "behind Shaykh Luwemba, a Shia agent."[125] These statements, according to internal sources, further mobilized the youth, which had been trained to perceive Shiism as a "greater enemy to Islam than anything else."[163]

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[157] Abdulhakim Nsobya and Andrea Brigaglia, "A Political History of Uganda's ADF, and an ADF Nashid in Luganda," *Journal for Islamic Studies*, 38, no. 2 (2020).
[158] ibid
[159] ibid
[160] ibid
[161] ibid
[162] Ibid

On their march to the UMSC, the youths mixed chants of *Allāhu akbar* (God is great) with slogans such as "we cannot accept such ruling! How can Luwemba, *omukubi webitabo* (a "fortune-teller") and a Shiite, who believes in the *Mawlid* and *okwabya enyimbe* (traditional funeral ceremonies) be our leader?"[164] The youth proceeded to occupy the UMSC mosque and headquarters, kicking out the acting *mufti*, Kakooza, whom they would have preferred over Luwemba as an overall leader of the UMSC, but whom they considered, too, to be ultimately illegitimate as a non-Salafi. The government sent a delegation pleading with the youths to vacate the premises unconditionally, but the occupants resisted, occupying the building for three consecutive days. Gradually, however, Kamoga, Sentamu, Kiggundu and other Salafi leaders accepted the government's request on the condition that all youths would be left free and that no one would be arrested.[165]

Jamilu Mukulu, on the contrary, rejected the proposal; he rushed to the youths and addressed them about the "plot" planned by his fellow Salafi leaders, stressing how this betrayal was going to render their former sacrifices vain, and cautioning them not to take heed of any proposal by the leadership to surrender. "This is either victory or martyrdom," he lamented.[166] To affirm his stand, Sheikh Jamilu Mukulu branded Sheikhs; Muhamad Yunus Kamoga, Abdulkarim Sentamu and Muhammad Kigundu as non-Muslims due to their action of "siding with the government to prevent youths from continuing with the struggle, automatically made them non-Muslims."[167] When Sheikh Sentamu was assassinated by unknown assailants, Jamilu Mukulu released a 1hr lecture confirming that Sheikh Sentamu died a non-Muslim whose fate was hellfire. The recording of this lecture is in the files of the author.[168]

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[163] Jamilu Mukulu, "Abdul Karim Sentamu Yafa Mu Kafili Omunanfunsi by Jamil Mukulu." (Abdul Karim Sentamu was hypocrite and disbeliever), *Manya Obusilamu*, Feb 14, 2019. Last accessed on 3 June 2022. This was Jamil Mukulu's recording uploaded on YouTube. My conversation with former members of ADF is believed to have been delivered in the jungles of DRC around 2012.
[164] Abdulhakim Nsobya and Andrea Brigaglia, "A Political History of Uganda's ADF, and an ADF Nashid in Luganda," 220.
[165] Ibid.
[166] ibid

Eventually, seeing that the group insisted on refusing to vacate the property, the government sent riot police to forcefully remove the occupants. At the end of the confrontation, four policemen, one attacker, and four canine dogs were killed. More importantly, over 300 of the Salafi occupants were arrested, including some of the leaders like Jamilu Mukulu, Muzafar Mulinde, and Yahaya Mwanje.[169] Other leaders, like Kamoga, Sentamu and Kiggundu, who had previously accepted to compromise and had already vacated the premises, were spared arrest. The government, however, immediately started a campaign of arrests of suspected Salafi sympathizers, and Kamoga, Sentamu and Kiggundu, along with many others, decided to flee the country and take refuge in Kenya.[170]

While in prison, Mukulu met a businessman called Joseph Lusse, who had been arrested on treason charges. The latter reportedly advised Jamilu to turn his group into an armed force.171 According to internal sources, however, Mukulu's plan for jihad had already been conceived when he had been entrusted with the "jihadi wing" of the Salafi movement at the Bombo meeting, and rudimentary training to selected youths had started at a property in Namagoma that belonged to Shaykh Muhammad Kiggundu: during the day, the youths would pretend to be engaged in a brick-making project, while at night, they would undergo basic military training.

In prison, Mukulu also entertained links with some Salafi-oriented Muslims who had previously served in the army (National Resistance Army, later to be named Uganda People's Defence Force), and who had also been arrested in the wide crackdown that followed the

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[167] Jamilu Mukulu, "Abdul Karim Sentamu Yafa Mu Kafili Omunanfunsi by Jamil Mukulu." (Abdul Karim Sentamu was hypocrite and disbeliever), *Manya Obusilamu*, Feb 14, 2019. https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=H7uRwZrqdi0&t=336s, Last accessed on 3 June 2022. This was Jamil Mukulu's recording was uploaded on YouTube. My conversation with former members of ADF is believed to have been delivered in the jungles of DRC around 2012 after the assassination of Sheikh Abdul Karim Sentamu in Kampala.

[168] The entire lecture can be accessed via this link: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=H7uRwZrqdi0&t=336s last accessed 3 June 2022.

[169] Interview Abdu Abdurrahman, Dar es Salam, Dec 2019.

[170] ibid

171 Interview with Abu Bashir Kampala, Jan 2020.

UMSC mosque incident. Mukulu identified some of them, such as Kigozi Swaib, also known as *Kasangaki,* and convinced them to support the would-be jihadists with their military skills. It was during the prison years, thus, that the objective of Mukulu's group came to be definitively redefined from the eradication of the *bidʿa* (heretical innovation) of fellow Muslims, to the armed struggle against the government. "Comrades," Mukulu is reported as having said in his preaches, "you know that we cannot oust *ahl al-bidʿa* (the "innovators," i.e. Sufi scholars) for they enjoy government support; this means that if we want to succeed in our struggle, we should rather start with the government."[172]

Meanwhile, most of the Salafis who had survived the campaign of arrest remained indoors in hiding, while others followed leaders like Amīr Kamoga and the respected hadith scholar Abdulkarim Sentamu into exile. The Salafi community was left with a vacuum of leadership, and their former mosque was occupied by the much despised *bazeyi* (elders, often with Sufi inclination). During the UMSC attack, the Salafi preacher Shaykh Sulaiman Kakeeto was in Riyadh, Saudi Arabia, for studies.[173] On his return in 1992, some of the Salafis asked him to act as their new Amīr. Kakeeto narrates:

> When I finished my studies in Saudi Arabia and returned to Uganda, I found so many problems there. More than 400 Tablighs [read, Salafis] were in jail […], the Nakasero mosque was occupied by the elders, and the few who were not arrested had relocated to the Katwe-Kinyoro mosque in Kisenyi. This is where they held

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[172] Ibid.

[173] Shaykh Sulaiman Kakeeto is the current leader of the Uganda Tabliq Community (UTC), the group that was formed in 1992 by the youths who had survived UMSC arrests in 1991, joined by other Salafi returnees who had not been in the country during the attacks. However, in 1995, UTC also experienced a split, due to leadership wrangles within Salafi scholars in the country. Some members of the group, such as Shaykh Abdulkarim Sentamu and Shaykh Abdulhakim Sekimpi among others, asked Kakeeto to resign and make way for a new leadership. When the latter refused, they decided to break away from him and form another group called the *Jamaʿat al-Daʿwa al-Salafiyya* (The Association of Salafi Mission), with Sekimpi as the acting Amīr (*Amīr al-Umma*). In 2008, Yunus Kamoga returned from exile and joined Sekimpi's team, being immediately reinstated as the Amīr of the group. In 2011, Kamoga and his team forcefully occupied the Nakasero mosque which housed the UTC headquarters, chasing Shaykh Kakeeto away. To prevent violence between the two factions, the government intervened and requested the two parties to choose a neutral imam. Kakeeto, however, was not allowed to occupy his office, but only to pray freely in the mosque. His offices are now located a few meters away from the mosque, in a tent near the Uganda Muslim Sports ground. See Joseph Kiggundu and Al-Mahdi Ssenakbirwa, "Kakeeto thrown out as Muslims foil Nakasero mosque demolition," *The New Vision*, 13 January 2011, **http://mobile.monitor.co.ug/News/2466686-1088982-format-xhtml-ljm54cz/index.html**, accessed 29 August 2017. On Kamoga's return to Uganda, see Reuben Olita and Madinah Tebajjukira, "Kenya deports Uganda Muslim cleric," *The New Vision*, 1 December 2008, **http://www.newvision.co.ug/new_vision/news/1175918/kenya-deports-ugandan-muslim-cleric**, accessed 29 August 2020.

> their prayers, while others remained indoors for fear of being arrested because the situation was so fragile. […] Shaykh (Sulaiman) Ssesanga suggested that we mobilize people to move back to the Nakasero mosque. From there, we would also mobilize resources to help those in prison and their families. The main challenge back then was that there was no leader: so, they approached me and asked me to become their leader. I turned down the offer because the group they wanted me to lead was made of aggressive people; I told them I was naturally mild and could not match the pace of their aggressiveness. They continued pushing me; Shaykh Muhammad [Yunus] Kamoga and Shaykh Abdulkarim Sentamu, who had moved to exile in Kenya, wrote to me to persuade me to become the Amīr. After receiving these pleas from several people, I eventually accepted. The uphill task ahead of me was first and foremost to solicit assistance for those who were in prison and for their families, and to get a lawyer to take charge of the case of the arrested. With the help of the Muslim community, we got a lawyer who took charge of the case, and thereafter, they started releasing the prisoners one by one. The prisoners would walk from the Luzira Maximum Prison to the Nakasero Mosque, and from there we would organize aid to their homes.[174]

Under Kakeeto's leadership, Salafism in Uganda changed its face and, while moderating its tones, it was able to re-acquire some visibility after the earlier crackdown. In a bid to achieve autonomy from the UMSC, the Salafis also registered their organization as the Uganda Tabliq Community (UTC). They re-established their control of the Nakasero mosque as their headquarters, and legally acquired private ownership of other mosques. Furthermore, Kakeeto with his team agreed on a strategy to reduce the tension with the UMSC leadership. He narrates:

> I opted for a liberal approach. I went to the UMSC and met its *Mufti*, Saad Luwemba, requesting to work with him. Luwemba thought I was looking for a new way of overthrowing the UMSC again […]. We spoke for a very long time, and he finally agreed to work with us. I requested him to allow the deputy Imam of the

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[174] Shaykh Sulaiman Kakeeto, interview 20 February 2017, Kampala.

> UMSC to come from our side. He accepted, and we sent Shaykh Abdu Mubiru to occupy this position, while the rest remained active at Nakasero as our base.[175]

After successfully reconciling with the UMSC, Kakeeto, and his team turned to the Museveni government. Trying to achieve an end to the previous tension, they requested to be recognised as a parallel Muslim youth organization with autonomous leadership, similar to the UMSC. This recognition required the government to grant the Amīr of the group a vehicle and a VIP passport. Kakeeto recounts:

> I was the Amīr of the country, but I was riding on a bicycle whenever I needed to attend any function. The board members of Nakasero resolved to meet the President and requested him to give our Amīr a vehicle, a VIP passport, a bus to transport our Imams, and other things [...]. The President welcomed our move to work with the government; he gave us a vehicle, a double cabin [...] and a VIP passport. Our relationship with the President and the government improved drastically.[176]

When the news of the reconciliation program reached the Salafis who were still in jail, Mukulu snubbed the move. To him, such an alliance with a non-Muslim president and reconciliation with the Luwemba group, could not be accepted. As recounted by one informant, Mukulu "had another plan for us."[177] It should be noted here that, besides their rejection of *bid'a* and the facility of *takfīr* (declaring another Muslim as an unbeliever), which they share with other Salafis, the emphasis on the concept of *al-walā' wa-l-barā'* ("loyalty and disavowal") is one of the characteristics of jihadi-Salafi thought.[178] The concept means demonstrating an uncompromising loyalty to Islam as a religio-political system, and a similarly uncompromising disavowal towards anything other than it. Based on this principle, accepting a pragmatic collaboration with a non-Muslim president, and with a non-Salafi Muslim leadership, were considered not only as strategic mistakes but also as "nullifiers of the faith" (*nawāqiḍ al-īmān*).[179] Kakeeto, consequently, was declared as an outright *kāfir* (unbeliever) by Mukulu.

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[175] Kakeeto, interview.

[176] Kakeeto, interview.

[177] Kakeeto, interview.

[178] Shiraz Maher, *Salafi-Jihadism: The History of an Idea*, London: Hurst and Company, 2016, p. 13.

[179] From the title of a short pamphlet by Muḥammad b. 'Abd al-Wahhāb, the eponym of the "Wahhābī" school. From the theological point of view, Mukulu always conceived of himself as a faithful follower of

Mukulu was ultimately released in 1994, along with his followers. Immediately, they defied Kakeeto's leadership which had charted a new path for the Salafi movement by denouncing violence and helping to establish the Salafi movement as an autonomous religious group with its mosques.[180] Denouncing Kakeeto's moderate policies, in August 1994 Mukulu formed his movement, which he called *The Salafi Foundation,* and which initially drew followers from those who had spent time in prison.[181]

Relations between Mukulu's *Salafi Foundation* and Kakeeto's *Tabliq Community* were, by now, openly harsh. Kakeeto recounts:

> When the last group came out of the prison, they started abusing us, saying we were unbelievers (*kuffār*). The group was led by Shaykh Jamilu Mukulu. Whenever they would come to Nakasero mosque to pray, they would stand aside and wait until we finished our *ṣalāt* (ritual prayer), and then they would pray separately, saying they were not allowed to pray with unbelievers. We reached a point where we had to ask them to leave our mosque if we were not Muslims so that they could pray in a place where there were Muslims. They refused. Shaykh Abdulkarim (Sentamu) was the leader of Imams, so we sat with him and resolved to flog them whenever they came back. When they came back during *ishā'* (night-time) prayer, our boys were ready with lashes, and when they were in the middle of prayer, they flogged them, forcing them to run away, never to come back. When these people left Nakasero, they set up their base at Mengo, from where they continued to launch verbal attacks against us.[182]

Mengo, a Kampala suburb, became the new centre for Mukulu's activities and recruitment plan.[183] It was at Mengo that a national executive committee of the Salafi Foundation was elected, with Jamilu Mukulu as the overall Amīr and head of the "Jihad Council."

Ibn 'Abd al-Wahhāb's school of thought. He would teach his books and orally translate them into Luganda for his audience. Mukulu's sermon titled *Ebikafuwaza Ekumi* ("The Ten Nullifiers of Faith') was in wide circulation during the 1990s, when hawkers of religious audio cassettes used to publicly broadcast it along Kampala suburbs. A copy of the audio file is preserved in the author's archive.

[180] Abu Abdurrahman, interview. See also Chande, "Radicalism and reform," p. 356.

[181] Kakeeto, interview.

[182] Kakeeto, interview.

[183] Kakeeto, interview.

Sharif Mukyotara, the treasurer, owned some shops in Kampala city. He reserved one of the rooms for the group's admin work. The group went ahead and started a business dealing in the importation of cars and spare parts. Mukulu, however, reportedly also ordered some youths to start armed robberies aimed at boosting their income.[184] The militants targeted small and large-scale businesses and shop owners. According to internal sources, highway robbery was also encouraged, and several people lost their lives during such operations. "We killed many innocent lives in this initial stage," regretted one of the interviewees as tears dropped from his eyes, "it was *jahali* (ignorance)."[185] Mukulu's men also targeted armed policemen and security guards to collect guns that were going to be used in a future jihad against the government.

The Buseruka Camp

Mukulu and his group identified Buseruka, an area in Hoima District, western Uganda, with a thick and impenetrable forest, as a suitable ground for military training. Hoima town is approximately 225km from Kampala, while Buseruka is 40km further away from Hoima. The security, however, was following their movements through infiltrated informants, and on 25 February 1995, as recounted by Brig. Godfrey K. Taban (commander of the second division of the Ugandan Peoples' Defence Force), the military attacked the camp. The repression was very heavy: the camp was destroyed, and 100 people were killed, while only twelve militants were captured. Taban narrates:

> There was a young man who was grazing cattle in the area and had seen people training. In the area, there was a cave in the lower plains of Hoima. The people training had asked the man to supply them with milk. The boy became our contact and guided our people to the exact location. He was taken to Masindi (a nearby district) where Kashaka was the commander. And when the Mzee (President Museveni) rang me to prepare a force of two companies (about 300 soldiers), we readied a well-prepared force for operation under the late Emanuel Ruuija. The

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[184] Abu Bashir, interview; Abu Abdurrahman, interview.

[185] Abu Abdurrahman, interview. While most interviewed former members of the group expressed regret for part of their past activities while engaged in jihadi activities, Abu Bashir seems to have remained a proud activist. When asked about his feelings on some of the incidents that led to civilian casualties, he either denied and blamed the government, or said "It was war, period, let's move on to another question" (Abu Bashir, interview).

> herds-boy was the guide and was picked from Hoima. The forces found Mukulu's men on parade. Going down from the uphill to the valley was not easy, because the rebels could see you from their camp below. When our forces attacked, many rebels were put out of action, some were captured and Mukulu escaped with some men via Lake Albert into DRC.[186] The forces also captured some ammunition including guns, but also Qur'an and pamphlets in Arabic with ADF doctrine.[187]

Contrary to Brig. Taban's narration, however, appears that during the attack, Mukulu was in Kampala on a recruiting tour.[188] It was from there that, when the news of the attack reached him, he fled to Kenya. In Kenya, thereafter, Mukulu was joined by a few dozen members from Kampala and other towns, while those who had survived the crackdown on the Buseruka camp, escaped into Zaire via Lake Albert.[189]

From Sajico to ADF to ISCAP

efore the Buseruka incident, Mukulu's group was known to its militants as SaJiCo (Salafi Jihad Council), an integral part of the broader Salafi Foundation. In the forests of Zaire, the runaway Salafis easily connected with other dissidents of Ugandan origin, including the National Army for the Liberation of Uganda (NALU), which had already organized camps in the region with the consent and support of Zaire's president, Mobutu Sese Seko (d. 1997). NALU, formed in 1986, was an alliance of political opposition movements and marginalized populations from western Uganda, united by their shared opposition to Museveni's government.[190] They largely operated across the Zaire border, in Beni and Lubero territories, where its members shared ethnic ties and longstanding political and economic links with the Congolese Nande community.[191] NALU had carried out some guerrilla attacks in Ugandan territory between 1990 and 1992 but had remained a largely ineffective force before their alliance with Mukulu.

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[186] At the time, the Democratic Republic of Congo was still known as Zaire.

[187] The full interview is published in "Account of the UPDF General who ordered the first Attack on ADF," *The Daily Monitor*, 7 August 2015.

[188] Abu Bashir, interview; Abu Rahma, interview. Both were in Kampala during the incident. Abu Bashir, whose main assignment was to deliver recruits and financial support to Buseruka camp, received the news first and reportedly informed Mukulu about it. Abu Rahma, a close friend of Abu Bashir's who owned a personal vehicle, was called, and put in charge of driving Mukulu out of Kampala to Kenya. On his return, however, Abu Rahma was arrested. After his release, Abu Rahma fled the country and joined Mukulu in Kenya. Later, they both joined the remaining group in the DRC.

[189] The exact number of the survivors is not clear. Abu Bashir (interview) mentions the number 40, while Abu Abdurrahman (interview) expresses doubt about that figure. He says they were caught unaware and without warning, and that only a few members in the camp, not above 10, escaped death. Another former member, Abu Najah, who was one of 12 who were taken as prisoners of war, believes that the number of those who fled to the DRC did not exceed 10 (Abu Najah, informal conversion with the author, 2017). According to Abu Najah, their survival was only since on that day, they had left the camp to gather food in the forest. According to him, no one was able to escape from the Buseruka camp, and the 12 who were taken as prisoners were the only ones to survive.

[190] Gerard Prunier, "Rebel movements and proxy warfare: Uganda, Sudan and Congo (1986-1999)" *African Affairs* 103, no. 412 (2004).

The new alliance between NALU and Mukulu's men was formed in Bunia, eastern Zaire, in June 1995,[192] and the newly formed group was branded ADF (Allied Democratic Forces). Mukulu's forces sought to overthrow Museveni but had no vested interest in NALU's vision of a democratic Uganda. Mukulu's forces sought to overthrow Museveni but had no vested interest in NALU's vision of a democratic Uganda. One fighter noted: "We ally to non-Muslims if the top leadership remains in our control… This gives us room to impose the rule of Islam within the camps and enhance conversion."[193] This pragmatic alliance allowed the jihadi-Salafis to quickly dominate the ADF, and by the mid-2000s, most former NALU leaders had either left the movement or converted to Islam.[194]

Is it possible to speculate that the Ugandan government quietly allowed Mukulu's establishment of the ADF, anticipating that the new alliance would ultimately undermine NALU, which was less militant but could mobilize a potentially wider platform of followers against the government? While no direct evidence suggests that, most of my informants confirm that the Ugandan intelligence had, from the beginning, some infiltrated agents inside Mukulu's group who acted as their informants. The government was, thus, following the trajectory of the movement, and while it had no interest in allowing ADF bases to grow or to carry out attacks in the country, it is not impossible that in the initial stages, it considered their existence as such relatively useful to undermine the unity of the many opposition groups, all of which had bases in Zaire/DRC.

The move to the Rwenzori borderlands was a decisive moment for the ADF. As Lindsay Scorgie rightly argues in *Conflict at the Edge of the African State: The ADF Rebel Group in Congo-Uganda Borderland*, this relocation transformed the ADF from a Ugandan religious movement into a transnational jihadist group,[195] eventually aligning with the Islamic State. Initially, the ADF's focus was on reforming Uganda, driven by local frustrations with post-colonial governments. However, over time, and through connections with global jihadist networks, the ADF expanded its reach, particularly through its relocation to the Congo-Uganda borderlands, exploiting the region's instability. This expansion marked the beginning of the group's shift toward global jihadist ambitions, as its isolation in the borderlands allowed it to forge deeper ties with transnational jihadist movements.

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[191] Prunier, "Rebel movements." See also Kristof Titeca and Daniel Fahey, "The many faces of a rebel group: The Allied Democratic Forces in the Democratic Republic of Congo," *Internal Affairs* 92, no. 5 (2016), 1193.

[192] Abu Bashir, interview

[193] Abu Bashir, interview.

[194] Titeca and Fahey, "The many faces," 1193.

As the ADF established itself in the forests of northeast of Beni, in the Democratic Republic of Congo, it gradually built a well-organized society in the areas bordering Uganda. Amidst intermittent military operations against it by both Uganda and DRC armies, the ADF leadership was able to maintain a series of autonomous, "Sharia-ruled" camps that contained mosques, schools, health centres, courts, a police force, an internal security force, and a prison.[196] Although the fact is rarely acknowledged, the ADF camps in DRC constitute the first semi-autonomous jihadi mini-State in contemporary Africa, as their efforts predate by a few years the experiment in statehood by Al Shabaab in Somalia by a few years.

The ADF's leadership also maintained relationships with local business and political leaders, and cultivated contacts with both national and international financiers, further entrenching its influence.[197] In the wake of the rise of Daesh (the Islamic State in Syria and Iraq), the ADF declared a new allegiance (bai'at) to the group, becoming part of the Islamic State Central Africa Province (ISCAP). This alignment further cemented its evolution from a regional insurgency into a transnational jihadist movement with connections to global jihadist networks.[198] As Scorgie's analysis underscores, the ADF's transformation was not just a reaction to local grievances but a strategic adaptation to global jihadist opportunities, enabled by its position in the Congo-Uganda borderland.[199]

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[195] Lindsey Scorgie, *Conflict at the Edge of African State: The ADF Rebel Group in the Congo-Uganda Boarderland*, Maryland: Rawman and Littlefield, 2022.

[196] Titeca and Fahey, "The many faces," 1193.

[197] See, for details, UN Security Council Report, "Letter dated 22 January 2014 from the Coordinator of the Group of Experts on the DRC addressed to the President of the Security Council," S/2014/42. Former member Abu Rahma, who was a close friend and aid to Jamilu Mukulu before eventually deserting the movement to seek government amnesty, acknowledges the support received, in kind and money, from "Sudan brothers" (the government of Sudan) in the initial stages of their activities (Abu Rahma, interview). Narrating the Mpondwe border attack that forced the Uganda military to withdraw for over three days, Abu Bashir, who was one of the commanders of the operation, affirms that the target was to control the Kasese airstrip for easy access to weapons from supporting states (Zaire and Sudan). It should be noted that Museveni's Uganda, too, had been providing aid to South Sudan's People Liberation Army (SPLA), and Laurent Kabila's Alliance of Democratic Forces for the Liberation of Congo (AFDL). Sudan, at the same time, was also supporting Joseph Kony's infamous Christian fundamentalist rebel movement, the Lord's Resistance Army (LRA), which was fighting Museveni's government from Northern Uganda. Sudan's and Zaire's support of the ADF, in sum, was more tactical than ideological; the first ceased when Uganda and Sudan signed their 1999 peace accord, while the second ended with the 1997 overthrow of Mobutu Sese Seko. When queried about support from prominent Ugandan sources, both Abu Bashir and Abu Rahma denied it, claiming that it was very difficult to solicit funds from within and that even the money that could take them from Kampala to join the other fighters in the Zaire Forest, was raised thanks to their effort, by

As Scorgie's analysis underscores, the ADF's transformation was not just a reaction to local grievances but a strategic adaptation to global jihadist opportunities, enabled by its position in the Congo-Uganda borderland. The ADF's trajectory from Sajico to ISCAP highlights the fluid nature of religious insurgencies in Africa, where local, regional, and global factors intersect to produce complex and dynamic movements. Through its strategic alliances and ideological shifts, the ADF has maintained its relevance on both the local and international jihadist stage, making it a key player in the broader landscape of Islamic militancy in Africa.

Conclusion

The quest for Islamic identity has been a persistent theme throughout the history of Islam in Uganda, tracing back to Mutesa's Islamization efforts and the subsequent religious wars following his death. Even during periods of marginalization, Ugandan Muslims have prioritized preserving their Islamic identity while seeking avenues for worldly survival. This chapter has traced these developments, beginning with pre-colonial Buganda. It established that Islam was not only the first foreign religion to enter Uganda from both the north and the south but also the one that inspired fierce efforts by early converts to preserve its identity. Upon its introduction from the south, the religion was embraced by the royal family, with attempts made to establish it as a state religion. While these efforts were crucial for the religion's growth, they also raised questions about the intersection of Islam with Buganda's culture. Some youths preferred a distinct Islamic identity, while others, including the king, sought a

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selling their belongings to leave "in the path of God." Abu Rahma, however, who was directly involved in the transfer of funds, adds that "haters" of Museveni's regime from the Ugandan diaspora often financed the group.

[198] See, Abdulhakim Nsobya, "ADF and the Making of IS-CAP: Analysis of an Internal Document in Luganda," In *Trans-Local Entanglements: Jihad and War on Terror in Contemporary Africa*, eds. Andrea Brigaglia and Alessio Iocchi (Napoli: Unior Press, Forthcoming).

[199] Lindsay Scorgie,

balance. Ultimately, those who refused to compromise were massacred for their defiance against the king.

The chapter also documented the events following Mutesa's death, including the religious wars in which various groups vied for central leadership and the preservation of their religious identity. These conflicts resulted in the exile of Muslims and the eventual British colonization of Uganda. The attitudes of both colonial and post-colonial governments, as discussed in this chapter, intensified feelings of marginalization and otherness among Muslims. These sentiments were particularly evident when Amin Dada, a Muslim army general, took power. The chapter has also discussed Amin's actions of using religion for political gains whose implications were after his fall, laying grounds subsequent vengeance by non-Muslims who felt discontented under Amin's Islamized Uganda.

Moreover, the recent insurgent movement, ADF, with its quest for political power and establishment and theocratic state has also been explored. Drawing on the long and deep-seated socio-political grievances, the ADF's evolution and its shift from a local Salafi movement to a transnational jihadist organization were accompanied by a parallel transformation in its use of media to propagate its ideological vision. This transformation reflects the increasing role of media in shaping and propagating religious identity, particularly in the context of insurgent movements. As it will be explored coming chapters, the ADF's use of media—whether through recorded sermons on social media—demonstrates how mediated platforms serve as vehicles for reinforcing religious identity and promoting political objectives.

The chapter's key argument is that Muslim media and the quest for Islamic identity in Uganda are not merely the byproducts of internal theological and political conflicts within the Muslim community. Rather, they are intricately tied to the broader political history of Uganda, which has been shaped by religious and ethnic tensions, as well as a legacy of political marginalization. From the efforts of early Muslim converts to the rise of the ADF, the quest for Islamic identity has been intertwined with struggles for political power, survival, and religious autonomy. The following chapters will explore how the media navigate these identity issues and the role they play in shaping the Muslim identity in Uganda.

CHAPTER THREE

REVIEW OF THE LITERATURE

Introduction

New media, much like traditional platforms such as *minbars* or pulpits, provide religious actors with means to convey specific images of religion and belief. These platforms not only facilitate connections with religious beliefs, institutions, and a wider religious community, but they also serve as arenas for religious expression, exploration, legitimation, and discussions of religious identity. Through this mediation, religious identities, are asserted, confirmed, contested, and constructed - both independently and in relation to ongoing discourses that reveal points of convergence and conflict among different groups.

This chapter examines the role of new Muslim media in shaping and constructing the identity of various Muslim groups. It addresses the first objective of this study: to explore the the relationship between new media and religion on both global and regional levels and to identify existing gaps in the literature. The chapter argues that contemporary religious media serve as an extension of traditional religious communication platform, such as the pulpit, *minbar*, seminary, or madrasah. These new media opportunities enable the dissemination of religious teachings - specifically Islamic teachings in the case of Muslim media- to a wider audience, encompassing topics such as politics, health, wellness, and even personal integrity, thereby making both worldly and Islamic knowledge more accessible. However, they also introduce competition and sectarianism, as various Muslim groups strive to define their identities, reflecting the dynamics that existed within mosques and madrasahs before the advent of modern technologies like radio, television, and the internet.

The chapter is organised into four sections. Following this introduction, the key concepts are briefly defined. The chapter then reviews studies on religious media and identity construction in the Global North before shifting focus to Africa. It concludes by identifying gap in the existing literature and summarizing the chapter’s key points. Before proceeding to the detailed discussion, it is essential to clarify the concepts of media, religion, and identity as used in this study. While not aiming to provide a universal definition, it is important to establish working definitions that re relevant to the context of this dissertation. [200]

Defining Key Concepts

Religion

In the edited book, *"Keywords in Religion, Media, and Culture"* David Morgan a material culturalist defines religion as embodied practices that cultivate relationships among people, places, and non-human forces - such as nature, spirits, ancestors, saints, and gods - leading to the formation of communities and sensibilities that shape those who participants.[201] However, defining religion is contentious, with the literature being diverse and fragmented. Scholars in religious studies have not reached a consensus on a single definition that fully encapsulates the term's meaning. For instance, Marxists view religion as an illusion, that serves as an opiate to mask the experiences of alienation and a social construct used by certain groups to advance their interests.[202] Critics of this view, however, argue that it overlooks the role of religion in emancipation movements,[203] and fails a source of piety[204] and expression.[205]

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[200] The dominant assumption that definitions are essential for understanding the meaning of utterances is challenged by Wittgenstein: When I give the description: "the ground is covered with plants" do you want to know what I am talking about until I can define a plant?" in *Philosophical Investigations* [PI], 70, c.f. Talal Asad, "Thinking about Religion through Wittgenstein," *Critical Terms* 3, no. 3 2020), 431. However, in the case of this thesis, it is important since the key concepts that guide this study are broad and used interchangeably.

[201] David Morgan, "Religion and Media: A Critical Review of Recent Developments," *Critical Research on Religion*, 1, no. 3 (2013), 347.

[202] Cf. Emrys Schoemaker, 2016. Digital Faith: Social Media and the Enactment of Religious Identity in Pakistan. PhD diss, Landon School of Economics, 2016.

[203] See Abdulkader Tayob, *Islamic Resurgence in South Africa: The Muslim Youth Movement,* (Cape Town: University of Cape Town, 1995).

[204] See Saha Mahmood, *Politics of Piety: The Islamic Revival and the Feminist Subject* (Princeton University Press, 2011).

[205] Linda Woodhead, "Women and Religion," in *Religion in the Modern World: Traditions and Transformations*, ed. Linda Woodhead, Paul Fletcher, Hiroko Kawanami, and David J. Smith (Routledge: London, 2002).

Other notable scholars, such as Emile Durkheim,[206] Max Weber,[207] and Clifford Geertz,[208] have offered structuralist and functionalist definitions of religion, but these have been heavily critiqued by postcolonial thinkers, particularly those drawing on Michael Foucault 's genealogical approach.[209] Among these thinkers is David Chidester, an emeritus professor in comparative religions, at the University of Cape Town. Chidester has shown how the concept of religion was reproduced in the structures established by the postcolonial modern state and used in the colonial and imperial projects to subjugate and exterminate indigenous populations.[210] He argues that the term "religion" has been applied within biased systems of classification, fostering unimaginable violence, brutality, and domination in colonial conquest. Given Chidester's insights, using the term "religion" uncritically requires caution.

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[206] Emile Durkheim in 1912, viewed religion as a source for social order and integration. Following the idea of a 'totem,' Durkheim described religion as an embodiment of society in symbolic form. Like Marxists, Durkheimians assumed that religion is based on materialism to which broader collective representations and culture rest, leading towards a group rather than individualist accounts. However, this idea is criticized for its failure to account for the historical processes through which religion rises and falls. On Durkheim and social integration theory see Emile Durkheim, *The Elementary Form of Religious Life,* Translated by Joseph W. Swain (London: George Allen & Unwin, 2012).

[207] Max Weber on the other hand emphasized the religious role in the individual's need for meaning. For Weber, religion can only be understood from a viewpoint of the meaning of religious behaviours. In this case, religion serves as a source of cultural identity and an explanation of social change, such as the emergence of capitalism from Protestantism. However, this idea has been criticized for failing to recognize the importance of rationalism. Earlier on, Protestants adopted rationalism in favor of Catholicism's traditionalism which has been a driving force behind capitalism and modernity. On Weber's approach to religion, see Max Weber, "*The Sociology of Religion*," Trans Ephraim Fischoff, (Boston, MA: Beacon Press, 1993). Also see, R. H. Tawney, *Religion and the Rise of Capitalism* (London: John Marry, 1948), for more about the critic.

[208] Inspired by Weber and Durkheim, functionalists such as Geertz (1973) emphasize the meaning that individuals ascribe to their experiences. They conceptualize religion as a way for human beings to interpret and be in the world, bringing meaning to chaos and disorder. For functionalists, religion is a cultural phenomenon with an existential function. In contrast to functionalists, however, scholars such as sociologists Peter Berger and Thomas Luckmann suggested the opposite. Although they share the dichotomy of tradition and modern societies, they understand religion from the individual's perspective as a resource or sacred canopy that provides order and legitimizes the vulnerable social structure that individuals recognize as reality. See Peter L. Berger and Thomas Luckmann, *The Social Construction of Reality* (London: Penguin Press, 1991), 113. However, this account was also criticized by scholars such as Meredith McGuire and David Horrell. They specifically argued that this approach fails to account for the manipulative use of religion and thus conceals the operation of power. See, David G. Horrell, "Berger and New Testament Studies." In *Peter L. Berger and the Study of Religion*, ed. Linda Woodhead with Paul Heelas and David Martin (London: Routledge, 2001); Meredith B. McGuire, *Lived Religion: Faith and Practices in Everyday Life* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2008).

[209] Michael Foucault is credited for pioneering these critical perspectives using a genealogical approach developed by Nietzsche. In it, Foucault pointed to unexpected outcomes of what started as rational and objective quests to understand the human condition. See Michael Foucault, "Nietzsche, Genealogy, History," in *Language, Counter-Memory, Practice: Selected Essays and Interviews* ed. D.F. Bouchard (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1977).

[210] See David Chidester, *Savage Systems: Colonialism and Comparative Religion in Southern Africa* (Charlottesville: University Press of Virginia, 1996); David Chidester, "Classify and Conquer: Friedrich Max Muller, indigenous Religious Traditions, and Imperial Comparative Religion," in *Beyond Primitive: Indigenous Religious Traditions and Modernity,* ed. J. Olupona (New York: Routledge, 2004); David Chidester, *Empire of Religion: Imperialism and Comparative Religions* (Berkeley: University of Chicago Press, 2014).

In his essay *Beyond Religious Studies*, Chidester suggests a Hegelian approach of "cancelling and keeping" or "disposing and transposing"[211] - a method that deconstructs the term "religion" from its colonial bondage while reconstructing it as a category linked to material dynamics, social formations, and mobile circulation as presented in his recent book, *Religion: Material Dynamics*.[212]Similarly, in *Genealogy of Religions*, Talal Asad rejects the concept of religion as merely a symbolic activity that is separate from instrumental daily life. He argues that any attempt at a universal definition of religion will inevitably fail because the concept is a product of western modern discourses and originates from a political struggles to define modes of thought and power in society.[213] Asad further explores the connection between religion and secularism, demonstrating how religion is vital to constructing a secular framework and ethos within modern state discourse.[214] Asad's proposal to understand religion as a discursive practice has significantly influenced the study of religion and media, as religious media inherently serve as forms of religious discourse.[215]

While Asad and Chidester's contributions, along with those of other postcolonial thinkers, are highly acknowledged, they have been criticised for not fully overturning the colonial epistemological framework. In his paper "*Decolonising the Study of Religions*, Abdulkader Tayob points out that their use of Western norms and terms to deconstruct the dominant narrative keeps their contribution trapped in the Western intellectual traditions, thus reproducing more binaries. To truly "decolonise" the study of religions, Tayob proposes an approach that defines religion free from colonial epistemological narratives and traces its history away from the West.[216] Tayob's critical approach emphasises the reflections of intellectuals from the Orient particularly Muslim scholars from the 19th century to the present on religion as a discursive term.[217]

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[211] David Chidester, "Beyond Religious Studies? The Future of the Study of Religion in a Multidisciplinary Perspective," *Nederlands Theologisch Tijdschrift* 71, no. 1 (2017), 75.
[212] David Chidester, *Religion: Material Dynamics* (Berkley: University of California, 2018).
[213] See Talal Asad, *Genealogies of Religion: Discipline and Reasons for Power in Christianity and Islam* (Baltimore and London: John Hopkin University Press, 1993). In this book, Asad argues that religion is constituted by practices and discourses normally excluded from religious realms.
[214] Talal Asad, "Reading a Modern Classic: W.C. Smith's Meaning and End of Religion", in *Religion and Media* ed. Hent de Vries and Samuel Weber (California: Stanford University Press, 2001), 220.
[215] Charles Hirschkind, *The Ethical Soundscape: Cassette Sermons and Islamic Counter publics* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2006).
[216] Abdulkader Tayob, "Decolonizing the Study of Religions: Muslim Intellectuals and the Enlightenment Project of Religious Studies," *Journal for the Study of Religions* 31, no. 2 (2018), 13.

Media

The Oxford English Dictionary defines *media* as the plural form of "medium," referring to the main means of mass communication. However, media is not merely a modern phenomenon associated with technological development; certain kinds of media existed even long before the Industrial Revolution. Various objects and phenomena including chairs, wheels, mirrors, schools, cocker ball, and even waiting rooms, have been considered mediums by different authors.[218] Others are the electoral system, general strike, the street, art, belief, and love.[219] In this context, media can be defined as things and phenomena that connect ideas, situations, environments, and people. Thus, items and objects such as mosque *minbar*, church podiums, synagogue *bemas*, madrasahs, and Friday sermons (*khutbar*s) among others, fall into this category.

Media is as old as the history of human and has always been central to religious belief, as every religion involves some form of mediation between the physical and spiritual, or between the individual and the religious community.[220] This broad view of includes not only at its technologies but also its products, services, practices and policies - encompassing their creation, circulation, and consumption. While the media signifies a variety of items and phenomena,[221] this study recognizes the distinction between "old" and "new" media, which can further be categorized into print, electronic, commercial/marketing, and digital media. Older media include songs, dance, drums, and theatres. Print media include - encompassing books, newspapers, magazines, journals, and cartoons among others are part of both old and new media. Electronic media include radio and television, satellite broadcasting (audio-visual), film and documentary (audiocassettes, videocassettes, CDs, DVDs, etc). Commercial/marketing media include posters, billboards, flyers, and banners. Digital media entails communication formats that use digital signals such as the internet, cell phone/SMS, videogames, and MP3s. Social Media Networks (SMNs) such as Facebook, YouTube, WhatsApp, and Telegram, which use internet-powered communication formats, are included in the digital media.

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[217] See Abdulkader Tayob, "Decolonizing the Study of Religions: Muslim Intellectuals and the Enlightenment Project of Religious Studies." *Journal for the Study of Religions* 31, no. 2 (2018), 13-14.

[218] Patrick Eisenlohr, "Introduction: What is a Medium? Theologies, Technologies, and Aspirations. *Social Anthropology* 19, no. 1 (2011); Marshall McLuhan, *Understanding Media* (New York: McGraw-Hill, 1964), and Flusser Kittler, *Literature, Media, Information Systems*. Johnston (ed.). (Amsterdam: G+B Artis International, 1997).

[219] Jean Baudrillard, *Simulacra and Simulation* (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 1994); Eisenlohr, "Introduction: what is a Medium? Theologies, Technologies, and Aspirations," 2.

[220] De Witte, Marleen. "Religion and Media," in *the International Encyclopedia of Anthropology*, ed. Hilary Callan (Oxford: John Wiley & Sons, 2018), 4.

[221] See Patrick Eisenlohr, "The Anthropology of Media and the Question of Ethnic and Religious Pluralism," *Social Anthropology*, 19/1, 2011, pp. 40 – 55, p.1.

In the study of religion, scholars have primarily recognised “media” as utilities of mass communication with the term “new” denoting technologies offering communication capabilities to a larger audience.[222] This includes innovations associated with print technology, radio, television, and the internet as used in the contemporary mass communication industry.[223] For this study, *media*, refers to the various communication platforms used to disseminate information, ideas, and cultural content to audiences. *Traditional media* encompasses established forms of mass communication such as radio, television, and print, which typically offer one-way communication with limited audience interaction. On the other hand, *new media* refers to not only platforms (digital or online) that enable interactive communication and user generated content (e.g social media, websites and other internet-based channels) but also those types of media that incorporate telephone and internet technologies in the producing and disseminating media products.

Thus considering that definition, radios stations are considered to be new when they incorporate telephone services, livestreaming and interactive communication. They can also be traditional if analysed in relation to digital platforms such as social media networks. In this way, the previously popular media used by Ugandan Muslims is now becoming traditional (old) as new ones emerge. Old media, also include print and pinned manuscripts, personal face-to-face, Friday sermons via *minbar* in mosques, face-to-face religious seminars (locally known as *darasa*), as well as sermons during family and other social gatherings.

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[222] Dorothea E. Schultz, *Muslims and New Media in West Africa: Pathways to God* (Bloomberg and Indianapolis: Indiana University Press, 2012), 76; Musa Ibrahim, Media, Religion and Public Sphere in Contemporary West Africa: Islamic Radio and Television Programming in Ghana” (master’s thesis, University of Cape Town, 2013), 5.

[223] Peter Horsfield, “Media” in *Key Words in Religion, Media and Culture*, ed. David Morgan (London and New York: Routledge, 2008), 111.

Identity

Identity is one of the widely used terms in social sciences, carrying different meanings in different research paradigms.[224] The *Encyclopaedia of Identity* defines it as an individual's self-esteem, self-consciousness, or understanding of how they relate to the social world.[225] In the study of religions, Identity is often presented as metaphysical or as a religious group's identification with certain doctrines. In this work, I use a straightforward definition of identity as what distinguishes individuals or groups from one another and signifies membership in a certain society with clearly defined boundaries. These distinctions are often defined in terms of religion, culture, or politics.

This study focuses primarily on religious identity and consider the complex relationship between religion, culture, and politics. The study also acknowledges the diversity of Muslim groups in Uganda, including different sects and identities, the term "Muslim Identity" as used in Uganda including common threads in how media shape Islamic identity. Here, "Islamic identity" refers to the identity shaped by the interpretation of Islam, including its sociocultural and political meanings.[226] Like other forms of identity formation, Islam provides the framework through which the world is viewed and basic principles of life are established. Within such a community, religion becomes the most salient source of personal and social identity, and religious identity can be ascribed, chosen, or declared. The study also acknowledges the fluidity of religious identities as observed by Abdulkader Tayob, with individuals continuously changing, negotiating a renegotiating their identities over time.[227] Therefore, in this study, I do not suggest a single unified identity but rather examining how various media platforms contribute to shaping both shared and distinct aspects of identity among different Muslim group.

Furthermore, the concept of 'Muslim identity' in this study encompasses both Ugandan Muslims living within the country's borders and those in the diaspora. The Ugandan Muslims diaspora, while sharing a religious and cultural heritage with Muslims in Uganda, often reconstruct its identity in response to different socio-political and cultural environments abroad. Diasporic Muslims may engage with Ugandan Muslim-owned media to maintain connections to their homeland and religious traditions, but their responses and identity negotiations differ from those of non-diaspora Muslims. This study acknowledges these dynamics that while both groups are part of the same broader community, the media consumption patterns, and identity formations are shaped by distinct contexts. The analysis, therefore, accounts for these dynamics while focusing primarily on Ugandan -origin Muslims and their interaction with media, whether in Uganda or abroad.

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[224] Lori Peek, "Becoming Muslim: The Development of Religious Identity," *Sociology of Religions* 66, no. 3 (2005), 216-219

[225] Ronald L. Jackson II and Michael A. Hogg, "Introduction," in *Encyclopedia of Identity,* ed. Ronald L. Jackson II and Michael A. Hogg (Thousand Oaks, California: Sage Publications, vol 1, 2010), xxv.

[226] Borrowing from Sunarwoto Dema, "Dakwah Radio in Surakarta. A contest for Islamic Identity: Contrasting Images and Interpretations," (2013), 196.

[227] Abdulkader Tayob, "The Shifting Politics of Identity," in *Islam and Modernity: Key Issues and Debates* ed. Armando Salvatore and Martin van Bruinessen (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2009).

Religion and Media

The relationship between and new media technology has become an increasingly significant area of inquiry among scholars.[228] However, much of the existing literature reflects a long history of Western influence and a tendency for religious studies and media studies to overlook each other. David Morgan, in an insightful review of major developments in the religion and media filed, noted that media studies scholars often assumed that religion effectively expired following the 1789 French Revolution and Karl Marx's dismissal of religion as the "opium of the masses."[229] Meanwhile, scholars of religions were largely preoccupied with analysing the content of religious texts, often neglecting the material tools that facilitated their delivery.[230] Morgan argued that:

> Religious studies and media studies as academic fields are not themselves so very old, of course, but each rest on identifiable cultural artefacts as an empirical basis for identifying the sort of thing they do. One studies religion, comparing them, tracing their histories, and analysing their ideologies, politics, and rites, with a strong legacy of attending to theologies or rationale of beliefs. The other studies

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[228] See for example: J. Newman, *Religion and Technology: A Study in the Philosophy of Culture* (Westport: Praeger, 1997). Among other studies. For the latest long bibliography visit the "Network for New Media, Religion and Digital Culture Studies" website, accessed on September 1, 2021, via https://digitalreligion.tamu.edu/biblio

[229] David Morgan, "Religion and Media: A Critical Review of Recent Developments," *Critical Research on Religion* 1, no. 3 (2013), 349.

[230] Ibid. Specifically, here Morgan argued that these perceptions led to a narrow and limited understanding of religion as primary belief and media as predominantly channels of communication. in this article, Morgan defines religion as the embodied practices that cultivate relations among people, places, and non-human forces such as nature, spirits, ancestors, saints, and gods among others, leading to the formation and creation of communities and sensibilities that shape those who participate in it. As for media, it is defined as "technologies of sensation, as embodied forms of participation in extended communities joined in imagination, feeling, taste, affinity and affect," 349.

> of media, focus on histories punctuated by technological domination and change, political control, and commercial exploitations with a strong traditional emphasis on the content and effects of individual mediums. Once again, the analogy of the two discourses is striking, and yet the two have spent much of their history ignoring one another.[231]

Morgan's observation is particularly relevant when surveying literature that examines the relationship between religion and media in Africa. In their edited book, *New Media, and Religious Transformation in Africa,* Rosalind Hackett and Benjamin Soares argue that while it is important to study religion alongside media and vice versa - due to their inseparability, scholarship has largely neglected this connection.[232] Brian Larkin further contends that religious transformation in Africa, particularly within Islam cannot be adequately understood without considering the media forms that help shape religious rituals and practices.[233]

Similarly, during an international conference on new media and religious transformations, held in Abuja, Nigeria, Professor Walter Ihejirika called for a "new beginning" in the study of religion from of African perspective.[234] For Ihejirika, this new beginning meant not only bringing African scholars into conversation but also bridging the gap between the two fields of inquiry. He stated:

> For a long time, research in the field of media and religion has been dominated by Western issues and concerns and categories deriving thereof have been used as measuring yardsticks for the field….it is true that in the past decade, many African and non-African scholars have started to present the African perspective in the study of media and religion, but the present conference is a kind of milestone: it is the first major international conference, which addresses this African perspective. Formerly, there have been individual research and individual views presented here and there, but for the first time, African and

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[231] Ibid., 348.

[232] Rosalind Hackett and Benjamin Soares, "Introduction," in *New Media and Religious Transformations in Africa*, edited by Rosalind Hackett and Benjamin Soares (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2015), 1.

[233] Brian Larkin, *Signal and Noise: Media, Infrastructure and Urban Culture in Nigeria* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2008).

[234] Walter C. Ihejirika, "Research on Media, Religion and Culture in Africa: Current Trends and Debates," *African Communication Research* 2, no. 1 (2009), 1.

> non-African scholars involved in the field have gathered under one roof… In years to come, historians of this field of study will look back and see this conference as one of the major events that raised it to higher levels.[235]

Despite the promise of this "new beginning," the special issue of the journal *African Communication Research* published the following year (2009) did not include a single paper focused on East, or Southern Africa. The issue was dominated by studies from West African countries with Nigeria leading the way. In his review of the current trends in the study of religion and media, Professor Muhammed Haron rightly noted, that: "despite the presence of numerous media studies programmes and religious studies courses in the region, and even though there have been some signs of interest in this area, research on the relationship between religion and the media has not yet taken off as a viable field of focus."[236] Haron's observation underscores the ongoing scarcity of studies on religion and media in Africa, particularly in East Africa.

This is not to say that there have been no attempts to explore the relationship between religion and media in the region. The edited volume *Religion, Media, and Marginality in Modern Africa* made a significant contribution to the field with chapters focusing on both Islam and Christianity in East Africa. For example, Heike Behrend's chapter uncovers Muslim discourses on photography in Kenya, while Jorg Haustein examines the press representation of Muslims in Tanzania during colonial times and how such representation shaped colonial perceptions and practice.[237] Additionally, Hassan Juma Ndzovu a religious study has made significant contributions to the field with a focus on the intersection of religion (particularly Islam), media and politics in modern Kenya.[238]

However, there remain a noticeable lack of empirical studies focused on the Muslim media in the interior regions of East Africa, including e Uganda. This gap in the literature highlights the importance of the current project, which aims to address the unexplored relationship between religion and media in this part of the continent.

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[235] ibid., 2.

[236] Muhammed Haron, "Religion and the Media: Reflections on their Position and Relationship in Southern Africa" *Global Media Journal, African Edition* 4, no. 1 (2010), 28.

[237] See Heike Behrend, "Photography as Unveiling: Muslim Discourses and Practices on the Kenyan Coast," and Jorg Haustein, "East African Islam in German Colonial Press," in *Religion, Media, and Marginality in Modern Africa*, Athens, Ohio: Ohio University Press, 2018.

[238] See for examples, Hassan J. Ndzovu, "Broadcasting Female Muslim Preaching in Kenya: Negotiating Religious Authority and the Ambiguous Role of the Voice," *The African Journal of Gender and Religion* 25, no. 2 (2019).

Studies in Religion and Media Technology

Contemporary scholarship points to three dominant approaches to understanding the relationship between religion and new media technology: functionalists, essentialists, and interactive approaches.[239] A closer examination of these approaches reveals varying degrees of acceptance and rejection of media technologies within religious contexts, ranging from uncritical acceptance to outright rejection, with some scholars seeking a middle ground between these extremes.

This first approach views media as a tool or instrument employed to achieve religious purposes and goals, emphasising its utility in religious practice. The second approach, in contrast, is characterised by a rejection of new media technologies – particularly television and internet – arguing that they are fundamentally incompatible with the nature and objectives of religion and religious beliefs. The third approach, developed more recently, seeks to balance these two perspectives, acknowledging the potential benefits of media while also recognising its limitations and potential conflicts with religious values.

The Essentialists Approach to Religion and New Media

The essentialist approach views media as having an intrinsic and independent cultural and historical identity, suggesting that these technologies inherently possess characteristics that influence human life in profound ways.[240] Proponents of this school of thought argue that new media, though their interaction with various aspects of human life, tend to reproduce or even replace ideals traditionally associated with the ritualised aspects of religion. Consequently, any attempt to use media for religious purposes is seen as fundamentally contradictory to the essence of religion.[241]

Prominent figures within this approach include Martin Heidegger and Neil Postman, who view media technology as more than just a tool;[242]they view it as an ontological phenomenon that has been integrated into the very structure of human existence. For Heidegger, technology, including media is not merely an instrument but a force that reveals and shapes reality. He argues that media technology is a reality within which revelation and evolution occur, leaving humans with little choice but to confront the threat it poses to their essential nature.[243] Heidegger warns that:

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[239] Sayed H. Hosseini, "Religion and Media, Religious Media, or Media Religion: Theoretical Studies," *Journal of Media and Religion* 7, no. 56 (2008).
[240] Hosseini, "Religion and Media, Religious Media, or Media Religion: Theoretical Studies" 59.
[241] Ibid.
[242] Martin Heidegger (1889-1976) was a German philosopher best known for his contributions to his book *Being and Time* (1927). This book explores what it means to be human in a technological age. Neil

> The threat to man does not come in the first instance from the potentially lethal machines and apparatus of technology. The actual threat has already afflicted man in his essence.[244]

Heidegger believes that the technological revolution compels humans to adopt calculative thinking, which ultimately erodes the originality of human nature.[245] He critiques the functionalist view by stating:

> We are delivered over to technology in the worst possible way when we regard it as something neutral, for this conception of it, to which today we particularly like to do homage, makes us utterly blind to the essence of technology.[246]

In essence, Heidegger argues that media technology is designed to dominate and reshape human culture and history, rendering any attempt to "religionize" the media futile and unproductive. He further cautions that:

> Technology is a way of revealing. If we give heed to this, then another whole realm for the essence of technology will open itself up to us.[247]

Postman (1931-2003) on the other hand was an American author and student of Martin Heidegger. He was critical of digital technology including the use of personal computers in schools. He is best known for books such as *Amusing Ourselves to Death: Public Discourse in the Age of Show Business* (1985), *Conscious Objections* (1988) and *Technopoly: The Surrender of Culture to Technology* (1992) among others.

[243] Martin Heidegger, *The Question Concerning Technology and Other Essay*. Tr. William Lovett (New York: Harper and Row, 1977) 3-37.

[244] Martin Heidegger, *Discourse on Thinking* (New York: Harper and Row, 1966), 56.

[245] Hosseini, "Religion and Media, Religious Media, or Media Religion: Theoretical Studies, 60.

[246] Heidegger, *The Question Concerning Technology and Other Essay*, 4.

[247] Ibid, 6

This suggests that failing to resist technological domination could lead to severe consequences, including a loss of authentic human identity, where everything becomes a construct or simulation.[248]

Neil Postman, another influential figure in this school of thought, echoes similar concerns in his book *Amusing Ourselves to Death*. He argues that media technology, particularly television, trivialises serious topics such as politics and religion by reducing them to mere entertainment. Postman warns that if society continues to embrace media technology uncritically, culture will decline as people becomes passive audiences, turning public discourse into a "vaudeville act."[249] He was particularly concerned that television was already undermining the "serious and rational public conversation" that had been sustained by the print media for centuries.[250]

Regarding religious experience, Postman contends that the characteristics of television make authentic religious experiences impossible.[251] He criticises televangelists like Billy Graham, who praised television, as a powerful tool for communication,[252] Calling those views "gross technological naivete."[253] Postman argues that the sacredness of traditional religious spaces cannot be replicated in the context of television, where religious programs are often interspersed with commercial. Secular images, and profane discourse. He notes:

> There is no way to consecrate the space in which a television show is experienced. It is an essential condition of any traditional religious service that the space in which it is conducted must be invested with some measure of sacrality…. But this condition is not usually met when we are watching a religious television program.[254]

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[248] Jay P. Telotte, "In the Realm of Revealing: The Technological Double in the Contemporary Science Fiction Film," *Journal of Fantastic in the Arts* 6, no. 2-3 (1994).

[249] Neil Postman, *Amusing Ourselves to Death: Public Discourse in the Age of Show Business* (New York: Penguin Books, 1985), 11.

[250] Ibid., 33.

[251] Ibid., 85.

[252] Ibid, 85.

[253] Ibid, 85

[254] Ibid, 86.

Postman further critiques the blending of religious media programming with entertainment, where religious preachers use celebrities from the movie industry to attract the audience, turning religious services into mere spectacles.[255]

In the context of the internet, Greg Armfield and Robert Holbert follow a similar essentialist line of thought. They argue that the more religious a person is, the less likely they are to use the internet and the new media.[256] Influenced by the secularisation thesis, these scholars viewed the internet as a product of modernity that is fundamentally incompatible with religious values and beliefs. They suggest that as new media technology become more pervasive, they will lead to the decline of religion, replacing it with nihilism.[257]

These scholars also assert that the internet poses a threat to religious traditions,[258] particularly in the Islamic world, by offering alternative sources of information that challenge traditional religious authority.[259] .[260] They claim that the internet undermine the cohesiveness of religious communities by detaching their members from shared rituals, collective identity, and communal participation, ultimately threatening the very fabric of religious life.[261]

Functionalists Approach to Religion and New Media

The functionalist approach views media as a neutral tool or instrument that be used for various purposes, including the transmission of religious message. Unlike essentialists, who believe that media have intrinsic characteristics that shape human experiences and cultural identities, functionalists emphasise the utility of media as a vehicle for communication, devoid of any inherent cultural or historical identity.[262].[263] This perspective aligns with the view that technology, including media, is a means to an end, serving the goals set by human beings.[264]

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[255] Ibid, 88.

[256] Greg Armfield and Robert Holbert, R. “The relationship between Religiosity and Internet Use,” *Journal of Media and Religion* 2, no. 3 (2009).

[257] See for example: Alister McGrath, *The Twilight of Atheism: The Rise and Fall of Disbelief in the Modern World* (London: Rider, 2004); Pippa Norris and Ronald Inglehart, *Sacred and Secular: Religion and Politics Worldwide* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press 2004); Rodney Stark, “Secularization, R.I.P,” *Sociology of Religion* 60, no. 3 (1999).

[258] E.g., in Confucian societies, see for example, Mary Bockover, “Confucian Values and the Internet: A Potential Conflict,” *Journal of Chinese Philosophy* 30, no. 2 (2003).

[259] Abdalla Adam, “Islam and the Internet,” 2002, 3. Retrieved on August 30, 2021, from http://www.kanoonline.com/publications/islam_and_the_internet.htm

[260] See Eileen Barker, “Crossing the Boundary: New Challenges to Religious Authority and Control as a Consequence of Access to the Internet,” in *Religion and Cyberspace,* ed. Morten Hojsgaard and Margit Warburg (London: Routledge, 2005). For an in-depth analysis of this claim see Heidi A. Campbell, 2010. “Religious Authority and Blogosphere,” *Journal of Computer-Mediated Communication* 15, no. 2 (2010).

[261] See for example: Lorne Dawson, “The Mediation of Religious Experiences in Cyberspace,” in *Religion and Cyberspace*, ed. Morten Hojsgaard & Margit Warburg (London: Routledge, 2005); Ralph Schroeder, Noel Heather, and Raymond M. Lee. “The Sacred and the Virtual: religion in Multi-User Virtual Reality,” *Journal of Computer-Mediated Communication* 4, no. 2 (1998).

Martin Heidegger, although critical of the functionalist perspective, acknowledges this viewpoint by stating:

> One says technology is a means for a goal and the other says technology is a human activity. These two definitions of technology belong to each other because defining the objectives and providing appropriate means to reach those goals is a human activity.[265]

In this sense, even as Heidegger critiques the functionalist understanding of technology, he affirms its essence as a tool or instrument that serves human objectives. From this perspective, media technology lacks an independent cultural identity but is instead employed for the dissemination of information or the achievement of specific objectives.

Pat Robertson a conservative Christian and former host of the long-running religious program, *the 700 Club* on CBN Television, echoes this functionalist view. He argued that:

> It is craziness and complete absurdity if someone says that the church should not give in on accepting television. Needs are the same and messages are also the same, but the means to transmit could differ. It would be madness and idiotic if the church refuses to deal with the strongest medium of education in the United States of America.[266]

Similarly, Sheikh Salih ibn Fawzan al-Fawzan, a prominent Muslim Salafi scholar, support thue use of social media for religious purposes, stating:

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[262] James A. Anderson and Timothy P. Meyer, “Functionalism and the Mass Media,” *Journal of Broadcasting* 19, no. 1 (1975).

[263] Hosseini, “Religion and Media, Religious Media, or Media Religion: Theoretical Studies,” 57.

[264] See, for example, Brian Gilchrist, “Questions Concerning Ge-Stell: Heideggerian Confrontations with Technology,” *Explorations in Media Ecology* 14, no. 3-4 (2015).

[265] In David F. Krell, *Martin Heidegger: Basic Writings* (New York: Harper and Row, 1997), 40.

[266] In Neil Postman, *Amusing Ourselves to* Death,” 240.

> With the help of social networks, you must spread the correct Aqedah (monotheism) and the teaching of Islam with which the prophet came. You must distribute this through the media. This is a rare opportunity for you, use it.[267]

Both religious' figures reflect the functionalist understanding of media as a neutral medium that can be utilized for positive purposes, including religious dissemination and transmission.[268]

Contemporary studies in religion and have increasingly recognised the potential of new media as a valuable tool for religious communities.[269] These studies argue that new media offer robust and participatory mechanisms that can enhance the impact of religion on individual members of a religious community.[270] They challenge the assumption that the relationship between religion and new media is inherently antagonistic.[271] As Mookgo Kgatle suggests, technology can enhance religious practices by expanding and creating of religious communities, there by enriching the communal aspect of religion.[272]

In this context, new media technology can support traditional expressions of piety, such as attending church or mosque services, observing rituals, and engaging in religious preaching in various forms.[273] For example, watching religious preaching n television, using mobile ringtones that future a call to prayer or Quran recitation, or displaying religious images on devices are all ways in which new media can be integrated into religious life.[274] As scholars like Gabriel Faimau, Camden Behrens, and William Lesitaokan argue, the intersections between religious engagement and new media enable religious groups to practice and preach their beliefs to a broader audience.[275]

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[267] Salafi Tv (الشاشة السلفية), "Prominent scholar Al-Fawzan recommends the use of social media in spreading the call to Allah and responding to the advocates of misguidance." (In Arabic: العلّامة الفوزان ينصح باستغلال وسائل التواصل الإجتماعي في نشر الدعوة إلى الله و الرد على دعاة الضلال) YouTube video, May 2, 2016. Accessed on from https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=mWGFVM3Tktk on Jan 20, 2022.

[268] Stewart Hoover and Lynn S. Clark, "At the interaction of media, culture, and religion," in *Rethinking Media, Religion, and Culture* ed. Stewart M. Hoover and Knut Lundby (London: Sage Publication, 1997), 20. also, see; Ben Armstrong, *The Electric Church* (New York: Thomas Nelson, 1979).

[269] See for example: Randolph Kluver and Pauline Hope Cheong, "Technological Modernization, the Internet, and Religion in Singapore," *Journal of Computer-Mediated Communication* 12, no. 3 (2007).

[270] Chaeyoon Lim and Robert D. Putnam, "Religion, Social Networks, and Life Satisfaction," *American Sociological Review* 75, no. 6 (2010), 914.

[271] Alex Verschoor-Kirss, "Even Satan Gets Likes on Facebook: The Dynamic Interplay of Religion and Technology in Online Social Media," *Journal of Religion and Society* 14, no. 1 (2012), 1.

[272] See Mookgo S. Kgatle, 2018, "Social Media and Religion: Missiological Perspective on the Link between Facebook and the Emergency of Prophetic Churches in Southern Africa." *Verbum et Ecclesia* 39, no. 1 (2018), 2.

[273] Verschoor-Kirss, "Even Satan gets likes on Facebook: The Dynamic interplay of Religion and Technology in Online Social Media," 9.

[274] Ibid.,5. Also see Sophie Zviadadze, "I 'like' my Patriarch. Religion on Facebook. New Forms of Religiosity in Contemporary Georgia," *Online-Heidelberg Journal of Religion on the Internet* 6, no. 1 (2014), 164.

Heide Campbell introduces the concept of "spiritualized technology" to describe how religious communities can infuse new media with religious legitimacy.[276] According to Campbell, religious users often conceptualise and adapt media technology for spiritual purposes, engaging in a "social process of negotiation" to shape technology in line with their religious values and desires[277] This process differ from how non-religious groups interact with technology, as religious groups operate within a worldview imbued with spiritual meanings and values.[278]

In response to perceived dangers from "improper" use of social media, religious groups including Muslims in Uganda, have increasingly turned to a technology as a tool for "dawah" (the call to Islam), aiming to take "Islam to the next level of Media"[279] This reflects the functionalist view that media, as neutral tool, can be harnessed to serve religious objectives and further religious causes.

Interactive Approach

The interactive approach offers a nuanced perspective on the relationship between religion and new media, positioning itself between the extremes of functionalism and essentialism.[280] This approach recognises the mutual and reciprocal relationship between religion and media highlighting how they influence and shape each other.

Stewart Hoover, along with his colleagues at the Centre for Media, Religion, and Culture at the University of Colorado at Boulder, is a prominent figure in the development of the interactive approach. Hoover's work focuses on the role of media in the creation, interpretation, and application of religious symbols. Unlike the essentialist view, which often confines religion to institutional or sacred domains, Hoover argues that religion is deeply intertwined with culture and cannot be separated from it. He contends that religion's role is to give meaning to human life, and it should be understood within that broader cultural context.[281] Hoover's approach, which he initially called "culturalist" in 2002[282] and later developed into "constructivist" in 2006,[283] emphasises the importance of understanding media not just in terms of its effects but as part of a larger meaning-making process. This perspective aligns with Max Weber's understanding of religion as a foundation of cultural identity and a rationale for social change, such as the emergency of capitalism.[284]

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[275] Gabriel Faimau, Camden Behrens, and William O. Lesitaokan, *New Media and the Mediatization of Religion: An African Perspective* (Newcastle: Cambridge Scholars Publishing, 2018).
[276] Heidi Campbell, "Spiritualising the Internet: Uncovering Discourse and Narratives of Religious Internet Usage." *Online-Heidelberg Journal of Religion on the Internet* 1, no. 1 (2005).
[277] Ibid., 3.
[278] Randolph Kluver and Pauline Hope Cheong, 2007, "Technological Modernization, the Internet, and Religion in Singapore," *Journal of Computer-Mediated Communication* 12, no. 3 (2007).
[279] This is the slogan of Thuraya Islam Media-Uganda. See its Facebook page, https://www.facebook.com/thurayyaIslamMediacompany/ (accessed Dec 2022)
[280] Hosseini, "Religion and Media, Religious Media, or Media Religion: Theoretical Studies," 62.

The editors of the book *Religion, Media, and Marginality in Modern Africa* also adopt an interactive viewpoint. They effort a broad definition of media, encompassing various forms of communication from traditional texts like scriptures to modern platforms such as social media. By doing so, they avoid privileging one type of media over the another. Instead, they argue that social change occurs through complex, interlocking processes involving technology, society, politics, culture, and economics.[285]This understanding situates media and religion within an interactive lens, where neither is seen as dominant, but rather as intertwined elements of contemporary life.

The interactive approach also moves away from focusing solely on the effects of media, adding an interpretive paradigm that centres on the meaning making process. This involves exploring how individuals and communities experience and reflect on media in their daily lives. By doing so, this approach blurs the boundaries between the sacred and the profane, challenging the strict dichotomies often emphasised by functionalists and essentialists.

In summary, the interactive approach provides a more balanced and holistic understanding of the relationship between religion and new media. It recognises the inseparable connection between religion and culture and explore how media serves as a space for meaning making and identity construction. While it may not provide definitive answers to the complex relationship between religion and media, it offers a framework that goes beyond theoretical concerns to consider the lived experiences and cultural contexts in which religion and media intersect.

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[281] Hoover and Lundby, *Rethinking Media, Religion and Culture*. London: Sage Publication, 20.
[282] Stewart Hoover, "Religion in the Media Age," *The Expository Times*, 113, no. 9 (2002)
[283] Stewart Hoover, *Religion in the Media Age* (London: Routledge, 2006), 292.
[284] Max Weber, *The Sociology of Religion*, translated by Ephraim Fishoff, Boston, (Massachusetts: Beacon Press, 1993), 1. See also Emrys Schoemaker, "Digital Faith: Social Media and the Enactment of Religious Identity in Pakistan," (PhD thesis, London School of Economics, 2016), 45.
[285] Felicitas Becker, Joel Cabrita, and Marie Rodet, *Religion, Media, and Marginality in Modern Africa* (Ohio: Ohio University Press, 2018), 18.

In the next section, we will turn to empirical literature emanating from the Global North and South, before concluding with an examination of literature on how media contributes to identity construction.

Empirical Studies

Building on the theoretical approaches discussed earlier, the latter the second half of the twentieth century, saw a significant rise in the use of new media by religious organizations to influence and shape the identity of their followers.[286] By mid- mid-1970s, many media outlets in the United States of America (USA) - both public and private - had begun dedicating airtime to religious broadcasts.[287] This development brought religion to the forefront of public discourse, establishing it as a central topic of public discourse, establishing it as a central to on the airwaves.

Stewart Hoover, through a qualitative-interpretative approach, identified the "domestic sphere of the household"[288] as a key site for understanding the interaction between religion and media. In his research, Hoover found that the presence of lived religion and spirituality within household played a crucial role in shaping changes in thinking, behaviour, and identity.[289] He documented how religious families in the United States used media as enhance their spiritual lives, noting that the selection of media resources was often influenced by the diverse religious traditions and backgrounds within these households.

The trend of religious broadcasting was not confined to United State; it also gained momentum in Africa. From colonial period onward, media in Africa has been closely linked to missionary efforts aimed at spreading European civilization and Christianity.[290] Radio broadcasting, which begun in South Africa in 1924 and soon spread to Kenya in 1927, and the rest of the continent by the early 1950s, invariably included religious programming.[291] After independence, African governments recognised that radio could serve not only political and commercial purposes but also foster religious, social, and cultural development. Radio's ability to transcend distance and illiteracy, made it a powerful tool for reaching local communities in newly independent societies.[292]

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[286] Hoover, *Religion in the Media Age*, 60.
[287] Ibid., 234.
[288] Ibid,5.
[289] Ibid., 227.
[290] Franz van der Puye, "Media and the Preservation of Culture in Africa," *Culture Survival Quarterly Magazine* 22, no. 2 (1998). For a recent detailed analysis of digital media and proselytization of Christianity in Uganda see,

In contemporary Africa, religion broadcasting has evolved into a key strategy for proselytization, with both Muslims and Christian groups using media to compete for followers and establish religious dominance. Francis Ngatigwa describes this phenomenon as a "new scramble and partition of Africa"[293] where religious media outlets vie for influence over content and audiences. This approach to proselytization is relatively new in Africa, where formal education, health services, and public rallies were traditionally the main avenues for religious outreach.[294] However, since the latter half of the twenty-first century, new media especially radio, have become instrumental in these efforts, serving as a vital medium for increasing followers, strengthening believers' faith, and competing for social, economic, and cultural influence in the religious landscape.[295]

Professor Asonzeh Ukah, a scholar from the Global South has been instrumental in exploring this field, particularly in his work on the relationship between religion and media. In his study titled; "Mediating Armageddon: Popular Christian Video Films as a Source of Conflict in Nigeria" Ukah examines the growing power of popular religious films in shaping religious identity and fostering discord.[296] Although the study focuses specifically on films, Ukah's

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Lydia Nabunya Nsaale Kitayimbwa, "Communicating the Gospel in a Digital Age: A Case Study of Dioceses of Kampala and Namirembe in the Anglican Church of Uganda," (PhD thesis, Stellenbosch University, 2022).

[291] See Less Sharnick-Udemans, Religion and Public Broadcasting in South Africa (PhD thesis, University of Cape Town, 2016).

[292] Franz van der Puye, "Media and the Preservation of Culture in Africa," *Culture Survival Quarterly Magazine* 22, no. 2 (1998).

[293] Ngatigiwa, "The Media in Society: Religious Radio Stations, Social-Religious and National Cohesion in Tanzania," 38.

[294] Thomas Spear and Isaria N. Kimambo, *East African Expression of Christianity* (Dar es Salam: Mkuki na Nyota, 1999).

[295] Ngatigiwa, "The Media in Society: Religious Radio Stations, Social-Religious and National Cohesion in Tanzania,"38.

[296] Asonzeh F-K, Ukah, "Mediating Armageddon: Popular Christian Video Films as a Source of Conflict in Nigeria." In *Displacing the State: Religion and Conflict in Neoliberal Africa*, ed. James Howard Smith and Rosalind I. J. Hackett (Notre Dame, Indiana: University of Notre Dame Press, 2011).

approach relevant to understanding the broader dynamics of religion and media in Africa. He argues that these films not only serve proselytization purposes but also act as instruments of intra- and inter-religious competition, promoting identity politics that can lead to religious violence.[297]

Ukah highlights how these films are produced not only to preach but also to establish religious hegemony by “othering” certain elements within society. He further notes that in the contexts where governments are dysfunctional and corruption is rampant, these films provide alternative narratives that resonate with audiences seeking solutions to their everyday frustrations. In this sense, media becomes a powerful tool for religious leaders to extend their influence beyond traditional boundaries, reaching wider audiences and addressing social issues through a religious lens.[298]

Returning to radio broadcasting, in Africa, radio remain central in the daily lives of many people, extending its role into not only social but also economic and political activities.[299] Despite the growing accessibility to smartphones, the internet, and global television, radio remains the preferred medium due to its affordability and ability to transcend territorial and literacy barriers.[300] In African, radio continues to be a dominant force in mass communication, with approximately 80 to 90 percent of households owning a radio set.[301] This, enduring radio culture has made religious broadcasting a natural and significant part of the African media landscape.

In East Africa, radio has particularly dominated the mass media industry.[302] As of 2016, Uganda had 292 licensed radio stations and 70 television stations, with the Uganda Communications Commission (UCC) overseeing all communication networks.[303] Apart from the Uganda Broadcasting Corporation (UBC) which is owned by the state, the broadcasting media are owned by religious organizations and leaders, politicians, businessmen and women, NGOs, and very few cases, communities.[304] Religious broadcasting media are categorized as either commercial, private, or community based, and predominantly owned by religious organisation, political figures, business leaders, NGOs, and in a few cases, local communities. These outlets are concentrated in urban centres for commercial and other strategic reasons[305]but have also empowered marginalized groups to participate in discussions on development, politics, and the preservation of their cultures and religions.[306]

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[297] Ibid., 214.

[298] Ibid.

[299] Franz van der Puye, “Media and the Preservation of Culture in Africa,” *Culture Survival Quarterly Magazine* 22, no. 2 (1998).

[300] Mary Myers “Radio and Development in Africa: A Concept Paper,” Canada: *International Development Research Centre (IDRC)*, (2008), 47.

[301] AMDI. African Media Development Initiative: Research Summary Report. (London: *BBC World Service Trust*, 2006), 26; Myers, Mary. 2008. Radio and Development in Africa: A Concept Paper, 8.

[302] The East African Community (EAC) is a regional intergovernmental organization comprising six countries: Burundi, Kenya, Rwanda, South Sudan, Tanzania, and Uganda. For more see the EAC website; https://www.eac.int/ retrieved on May 30, 2020.

[303] See UCC’s website: www.ucc.org

New Media in the Muslim World

The introduction of new media technologies has played a significant role in bringing Islam into the public sphere transforming public debates and sparking new religious discussions. Islamic films and novels have emerged as prominent topics in these discourses, creating new spaces in response to demands of emerging voices within the Muslim community.[307] However, compared to their Western counterparts, there is still limited understanding of Muslim media within the Muslim world. A survey of 345 published studies on media and the construction of Muslim identity revealed that the majority of research focuses on Western countries, with only a small fraction dedicated to Muslim countries and Muslim media.[308]

Earlier, Hirschkind had categorized media in public life into tow modes: disciplinary and deliberative.[309] The disciplinary mode of media tends to favour authoritative religious discourse, prioritising ideological aspects over the dialogical aspects in new media.[310] In contrast, the deliberative mode democratizes religious authority by enabling argumentation, contestation, and dialogue, thus fostering a more open and participatory religious discourse.

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[304] National Electronic Media Performance Study (NEMPS), "The Uganda Communications Commission's 2nd National Electronic Media Performance Study 2012 for Eastern and Northern Uganda Regions." (Kampala: *Development Research and Social Policy Centre Ltd*, 2012), 8.

[305] Open Society Foundations (OSF), "Public Broadcasting in Africa Series - Uganda: A Survey by the African Governance and Advocacy Project (AfriMAP)." Open Society Initiative for East Africa (OSIEA) and Open Society Media Program (OSMP), (Nairobi: *Open Society Initiative for East Africa*, 2010)12, 67.

[306] Kennedy Javuru, Community Radio in East Africa: For or By the Community? In *Community Radio in the Twenty-First Century*, ed. Janey Gordon, Oxford: Peter Lang, (2011), 1.

[307] Nilufer Gole, "Islam in the Public Sphere: New Visibilities and New Imaginaries," 14, no. 1 (2002); Armando Salvatore, *The Public Sphere: Liberal Modernity, Catholicism, Islam* (New York: Palgrave, 2007).

[308] Saifuddin Ahmed and Jorg Matthes, "Media Representations of Muslims and Islam from 200 to 2015." *International Communication Gazette* 79, no. 3 (2016).

[309] Charles Hirschkind, "The Ethics of Listening: Cassette-Sermon Audition in Contemporary Egypt," *American Ethnologist* 28, no. 3 (2001).

[310] Musa Ibrahim, Media, "Religion and Public Sphere in Contemporary West Africa: Islamic Radio and Television Programming in Ghana" (MA thesis, University of Cape Town, 2013), 10.

One study relevant to the current thesis is Goran Larson's work, *Muslim and New Media*.[311] Larson examines the historical debates on the introduction and the use of media in the Muslim world, focusing on the implications of new media technologies for Islam. By analysing various fatwas (legal rulings) from different Islamic schools of thought, Larson highlights the central issue of who defines authentic Islam in the age of new. His study maps the evolution of media technologies in the region – from print to broadcasting, photography to film, and more recently, the internet and cell phones- shedding light on how Muslims have navigated these developments. Larson found that debates over power and authority were at the centre, fatwas often addressing how to maintain religious teachings without diluting then in the face of new media.

In another insightful study, Laura Mandell explores the role of new media in the Middle East, challenging secular assumptions that media would lead to social change, modernity, and the decline of religion. Secularists believed that media could liberate societies from religious authority, moving them toward egalitarianism and democracy. However, Mandell argues that this narrative does not hold true for Muslim societies, particularly in the Arab Islamic world. Her findings indicate that the media in these contexts has remained critical of secular narratives while supporting professional ethics and standards. Mandell's study underscores the dynamics of Islamic media and the importance of inter-Islamic rivalries in shaping Islamic programming, a point closely related to current research.[312]

Dorothea Schulz is among the few Western scholars who deeply explored the intersection of religion and media in Africa, particularly in North and West Africa. Her studies, especially on broadcasting media and gender, have laid a crucial foundation for further scholarship. In her research on women's use of new media technologies in Mali, Schulz argues that women's engagement in religious communication through media has sparked controversies regarding the authenticity and authority of their public religious speeches.[313] Traditionally, debates on the permissibility of female public engagements were dominated by voices that deemed it impermissible for a woman to appear in public, particularly in the religious contexts involving the opposite gender.[314]

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[311] Goran Larson, *Muslims and the New Media: Historical and Contemporary Debates* (Furnham, Surrey: Ashgate, 2011).

[312] Laura Mandell, "Mediated Islam: Media Religion Interface in the Middle East." (paper presented at the Hamrin International Conference, Jonkoping, Sweden, Sept 3-5, 2009).

[313] Dorothea E. Schulz, *Muslims and New Media in West Africa: Pathways to God* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2012).

Historically, as noted by Ndzovu, Institutions of Islamic authority and leadership - such as the Caliphate, juridical scholars (*ulama*), legal scholars (mufti), and the judges on Islamic matters, among others controlled by male members of the society.[315] This male dominance extended not only to mosque sermons (pulpit) or public face-to-face gatherings but also to broadcasting media such as television and radio.[316] Schulz's study examines how broadcasting media has transformed what were once considered authoritative, standardized and gender-specific forms of religious leadership, and how these changes affect the gendered dynamics of media practice."[317] She effectively highlights the role of Muslim women's groups and female program presenters in redefining religious authority in the patriarchal Muslim communities of contemporary Mali.

Similarly, in a study on public contest over Quranic interpretation and the emergency of Nigerian reformist activism, Andrea Brigaglia emphasises the critical role played by the national media, particularly Radio Kaduna.[318] Brigaglia paper focuses on three major figures - Sheikh Abu Bakr Gumi, Sheikh Umar Sandal, and Sheikh Tahir Bauchi – who became well-known for their radio broadcasts the late 1960s. These preachers, previously recognised for their sermons in local mosques, gained national prominence through their media presence. Transition to radio broadcasting revolutionised the religious landscape in in Nigeria expanding the scope of their influence beyond the boundaries of the *minbar* and the borders of the mosque to a larger audience. This shift also played a crucial role in navigating and shaping the existing polarising identities between Sufi and anti-Sufi Nigerian Muslims as a new *minbar* for religious debates and contestations.

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[314] Schulz, *Muslims and New Media in West Africa: Pathways to God*.

[315] Hassan J. Ndzovu, "Broadcasting Female Muslim Preaching in Kenya: Negotiating Religious Authority and the Ambiguous Role of the Voice 1," *The African Journal of Gender and Religion* 25, no. 2 (2018), 17; Hilary Kalmbach, "Social and Religious Change in Damascus: One Case of Female Islamic Religious Authority," *British Journal of Middle Eastern Studies* 35, no. 1 (2008); Nina Hoel, "Sexualizing the Sacred, Sacralizing Sexuality: An Analysis of Public Responses to Muslim Women's Religious Leadership in the Context of Cape Town Mosque. *Journal for the Study of Religion* 26, no. 2 (2013), ISSN 1011-7601.

[316] Ngatigiwa, 46.

[317] Schulz, *Muslims and New Media in West Africa: Pathways to God*, 24.

[318] Andrea Brigaglia, "The Radio Kaduna *Tafsir* (1978 – 1992) and the Construction of Public Images of Muslim Scholars in the Nigerian Media," *Journal for Islamic Studies* 27, (2007).

New Media in the Muslim Minority Context

Mass media play a vital role in shaping and disseminating ideologies[319] thereby influencing in the production of knowledge about cultures and communities.[320] In the context of Islam and Muslims in minority settings, contemporary studies and debates often highlight issues of representation. The aftermath of the 9/11 attacks, coupled with the subsequent War on Terror (WoT) led by the United States and its allies - resulting in wars in Afghanistan (2001), Iraq (2003), and Libya (2011)- has intensified these concerns. Additionally, the Arab Spring, increased migration from the Middle East to the West (Europe and North America), and the rise of global jihadist movements have exacerbated fears of insecurity, making Muslims targets of suspicions. These developments have revitalized Edward Said's Orientalists discourse on Orientalism.[321] Today, Muslims and Islam are at the crux of much criticism and debate, particularly in Europe and North America. According to Kimberly Powell, there is a pervasive antagonist view against Muslims and Islam across societies, with the most strained socio-political relationships observed in the United States.[322]

In Africa, while Schulz presented an antagonistic relationship between media and religious authority in Muslim-majority Mali, Abdulkader Tayob studied the interaction between electronic media and the Muslim minority context of South Africa. Tayob's study focused on South African Muslim community radios within the broader context of recognition and representation politics. He argued that South African Muslims' engagement with media reflects a delicate balanced between gaining recognition and ensuring accurate representation.[323] The study revealed the efforts of South African Muslims to curve out a space for themselves in the new post-apartheid landscape, democracy emphasised equitable representation for previously disadvantaged groups, including Muslim minorities.

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[319] See for example: Stuart Hall, "The Whites of their Eyes: Racist Ideologies in the Media," in *The Media Reader* ed. Manuel Alvarado and John O. Thompson (London: BFI, 1981); Todd Gitlin, *The Whole World is Watching: Mass Media in the Making and Unmaking of the New Left* 1980 (Berkeley, CA: University of California Press, 1980).

[320] See for example: Elizabeth Poole, *Reporting Islam: Media Representation of British Muslims* (London: IB Tauris, 2002).

[321] I.e., as demonstrated by Edward W. Said in the book, *Orientalism*. See: Edward W. Said, ", *Orientalism*, (New York: Vintage Books, 1979).

[322] Kimberly. A. Powell, "Framing Islam: An Analysis of US Media Coverage of Terrorism Since 9/11." *Communication Studies* 62, no. 1 (2011).

[323] Abdulkader Tayob, Media and Muslims Between Recognition and Representation. Paper Presentation for symposium: *Muslims and the Media in South Africa: Beyond Headlines, Hype and Conspiracy*, 24 Oct 2010.

As a result, despite their small numbers, Muslim in South Africa successfully secure broadcast licences for community radio stations and televisions channels in all the major cities, which continue to play a significant role in promoting values and positive images of Islam. Toyo's study identified intense rivalry and debate such as conflict over women's roles on *Radio Islam* or disputes over the *Kramats* and *bid'a* (innovations in religious practice) on Voice of the Cape radio. Despite these internal differences, South African Muslims presented a unified front in national media, defending Islam and Muslims against misrepresentation and voicing their concerns during the War on Terror (WoT), the 2006 Danish and Zampiro Cartoon controversy, and other public issues. Tayo concluded that Muslim media outfits functioned as extensions of the mosque *minbar* (pulpit) and Madrasah (religious school), offering new opportunities to teach Islam and extend its influence on politics, health, wellness, and personal integrity, beyond the physical sacred walls of the mosque. However, these media platforms also reflected the competition and sectarianism typical of traditional religious spaces.[324]

Similarly, Musa Ibrahim identified similar patterns in the study that investigated the Muslim community and their engagement with new Muslim media in Ghana after the liberalisation of airwaves. In his study, Ibrahim found that the liberalisation led to an increased presence of Islam in Ghanaian news media, providing a platform for transmitting knowledge, values, and positive images of Islam. However, it also introduced new challenges, particularly in the form of competition between different Muslim groups. State and private media promoted new identities, with hosts and guests using the platforms to present positive images of Islam and suggest ways for Muslim to position themselves as honourable citizens. At the same time, these media spaces became arena for deliberation and contention among various Muslim factions, including Salafis, Sufis, public intellectuals, and ordinary citizens, each vying for influence and control over the representation of Islam.[325]

In East Africa, Esha Faki Mwinuihaji and Fredrick Wanayama examined the impact of 9/11th attacks and the War on Terror (WoT) on Muslim media in the region. Their study, titled "Media, Terrorism, and Political Mobilisation of Muslims in Kenya" highlighted how these events motivated the emergency of Muslim media and increased Muslim participation in the public life. Historically marginalised, Muslims in East Africa viewed themselves as a minority with minimal political influence since independence. However, with the War on Terror, combined with the liberalization of airwaves, led to a shift from their previous peripheral status, as they begun to from national political alliances in hopes of protecting their interests.[326]

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[324] Ibid.

[325] Musa Ibrahim, "Media, Religion and Public Sphere in Contemporary West Africa: Islamic Radio and Television Programming in Ghana."

Kai Kresse's work further emphasises the role of media in shaping and reconstructing the identity of Muslims in the coastal regions of Kenya.[327] Kresse's study show how coastal Muslims, in their struggle to voice their marginalisation, have adopted new media to create spaces for self-expression and engage in renegotiations of their position within the Kenyan post-colonial context. Through these new public spaces, they have managed to challenge the declining political influence of the former Arab Swahili elite. For instance, Rahma radio, through its program *Elimika na Stambuli* ("Get Educated with Stambuli"), criticises coastal Muslim elites and political representatives preserved to have failed their community. The program, led by Stambuli Abdilahi Nassir, aims to stimulate critical thinking and provoke reactions to build general political sensitivity among coastal Muslims.[328] The live phone-in discussions on everyday matters further demonstrate that media serves as an accessible platform for the mediation and negotiation of social meaning, within a wider "struggle for orientation."[329]

New Media and Religious Identity

Identity is a foundational concept in understanding the complex relationship between the personal and the social realm, the individual, and the group, the cultural and the political dimensions of life. It also plays a crucial role in analysing how social groups interact and how media influence these interactions. Roger Rousse defines identity as encompassing both individual personhood as well as collective self-image shared by members of social groups and communities.[330] Individual personhood in this case is a reference to the uniqueness and differentiation from other people, as well as continuity across time and space.[331] Identity includes the emotional attachments or bonds that individuals develop through their shared membership in a social group.[332]

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[326] Esha Faki Mwinyihaji and Fredrick O. Wanyama, "The Media, Terrorism, and Political Mobilization of Muslims in Kenya." *Religion, Media and Politics* 7, no. 1 (2011).

[327] Kai Kresse, *Swahili Muslim Publics and Post-Colonial Experience* (Indiana: Indiana University Press, 2018).

[328] Kresse, *Swahili Muslim Publics and Post-Colonial Experience*, 151.

[329] Roman Loimeier, *Between Social Skills and Marketable Skills: The Politics of Islamic Education in 20th Century Zanzibar* (Leiden: Brill, 2009), 8.

[330] Daniel R. Rousse, "Questions of identity: Personhood and Collectivity in Transnational Migration to the United States," *Critique of Anthropology* 15, no. 4 (1995).

Religions is a central component of human identity, as belonging to a particular religion involves not only sharing beliefs and participation in rituals - both communal and individual – but also being part of a broader community and, in many cases, a culture. Religious and community media often refer to their audiences as "community" or "*umma*," reflecting the targeted nature of their outreach. These media outlets are typically organized around the interest of their clearly defined audience, even if there is diversity within the group. Religious media aim to reinforce religious identity and the potential converts, transcending culture and racial boundaries and providing members with a sense of belonging under the disguise of a unified "umma."[333]

The relationship between new media and identity has drawn substantial attention from scholars, with literature spanning various perspectives. As Mia Lovheim notes, the discourse ranges from utopian vision of disruption to empirical mapping and more nuanced theorization.[334] Some studies view new media as a provider of space and greater freedom in the emerging spiritual marketplace, where users are able to explore and mix their spiritual identities.[335] However, subsequent empirical research has questioned these claims, concluding that the influence of alternative identity formations on religious practice is minimal and often speculative.[336] Other studies have examined how online identities are integrated into everyday life, recognising the continuity and connection between individuals' online and offline experiences.[337]

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[331] Roy F. Baumeister, *Identity: cultural change and the Struggle for the Self*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1986.

[332] Abebe Zegeye and Richard Harris, "Media, Identity and the Public Sphere in Post-Apartheid South Africa: An Introduction," *African and Asian Studies*,1, no. 4 (2002); Henri Tajfel, "Social Categorization, Social Identity, and Social Comparison," in *Differentiation Between Social Groups: Studies in the Social Psychology of Intergroup Relations*, ed. Henri Tajfel eds. (New York: Routledge, 1978).

[333] Tanja E. Bosch, "Community Radio and Identity Construction Post-1994," *Communicare* 26, no. 1 (2007), 124.

[334] Mia Loveheim, "Identity," in *Digital Religion: Understanding Religious Practices in the New Media worlds*, ed. Heidi Campbell (New York: Routledge, 2013).

[335] Ibid, 45.

[336] Lorne L. Dawson, "Researching Religion in Cyberspace: Issues and Strategies," In *Religion on the Internet: Research Prospects and Promises*, ed. Douglas E. Cowan and Jeffrey K. Hadden (New York: Jai, 2000), 37.

[337] See, for example, David Feltmate, "You Wince in Agony as the Hot Metal Brands You": Religious Behavior in an Online Role-Playing Game," *Journal of Contemporary Religion* 25, no. 3 (2010).

In their study, *Mass Media and Religious Identity*, Helen Berger, and Douglas Ezzy explored the role of visual media in shaping religious identity focusing on young witches (aged 17-23 years) from the USA, UK, and Australia.[338] They argued that representations of witchcraft in the visual mass media and other cultural resources such as books and internet sites, provide mediated social interactions that sustains the plausibility of witchcraft as a religion. The study digs deeply into identity formation and the ”third person effect: theory, first proposed by Philips Davison in 1983 and later developed by Elizabeth Bird in 2003.[339] This theory suggests that while people often claim that media does not affect them personally, they believe it influences others.[340] Burger and Ezzy identified that media representations not not only increase thoughts about becoming a witch, but also encourage young people who identify themselves as witches to develop their skills. This could be a critique of the inaccurate practices in the media and an urge for perfection. The study, however, tends to place the responsibility for those identity formations solely on the media, neglecting other social and contextual factors that may have influenced the decisions of these individuals – a common critique of scholars of media effects.

Ulku Guney’s research on religious identity construction, war, and mass media highlights a strong connection between these elements. In his survey of British Muslim Asians aged 16 and 23, Guney found that wars in the Middle East and the representation of Muslims in the media played a significant role in identity formation and were linked to the infamous 2001 “race riots” in Britain. Guney’s findings suggest that the identities of many young Muslims in Western countries are shaped by conflicts Muslim majority countries such as Afghanistan, Iraq, and Palestine, and by media coverage of Islam and Muslims. These young Muslims often express feelings of global attachment and solidarity with their co-religionists in these war-torn regions, reinforcing a sense of alienation in their minority context.[341] Guney’s findings are particularly relevant when considering the experiences of Muslim minorities in countries like Uganda, which share similar characteristics with the British context.[342]

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[338] Berger, A., Helen and Ezzy, Douglas. 2009. Mass Media and Religious Identity: A Case Study of Young Witches,” *Journal for the Scientific Study of Religion* 48, no. 3 (2009).

[339] Philips W. Davison, “The Third-Person Effect,” *Public Opinion Quarterly* 47, no. 1 (1983); Elizabeth S. Bird, *The Audience in the Everyday Life*. New York: Routledge, 2003.

[340] Berger and Ezzy, “Mass Media and Religious Identity: A Case Study of Young Witches,” 506.

[341] Ulku Guney, “We see our people suffering: The War, the Mass Media and the Reproduction of Muslim identity among Youth,” *Media, War, & Conflict* 3, no. 2 (2010).

Tanja Bosch's study on community radio and identity construction in post-1994 South Africa offers additional insights into the role of media in shaping identity. Bosch found that both secular and religious radio stations in South Africa played significant roles in interpolating diverse identities through their programming. For example, *Bush Radio*, a secular station created space for various gay identities in one program *In the Pink*, while also providing space for youth to air their views in new political dispensation, fostering a generational consciousness through the *Children's Radio Education Workshop.* In the same study, Bosch found religious community-based radio stations, Muslim Radio 786, and Radio Islam, as well as two Christian stations Tygerberg and CCFM as central pillars of identity building in South Africa. According to Bosch, these stations are more like virtual churches or mosques that serve the purpose of therapy and confession and providing an outlet for frustrations beyond physical boundaries. This phenomenon, which Bosch terms "instantaneous religious community building"[343] Aligns with the community integration perspective explored by scholars like Robert Park, Robert Merton, and Morris Janowitz. Their research suggests that the individuals who regularly attend religious services are more integrated into their communities, and as a result, are more likely to engage with local media to stay informed about community developments.[344]

This perspective is particularly interesting considering Schultz and Hirschkind's studies on Muslim engagement with media in the African contexts like Mali and Egypt.[345] Their research shows how new media can facilitate community integration by providing platforms for religious knowledge and discourse. New media technologies, such as cassettes, audio and video CDs, and internet, open new spheres of public participation, creating new kinds of media producers and consumers while overcoming traditional hierarchies and forms of exclusion. Although debates continue about whether these technologies create new dialogic contexts or establish new forms of control and discipline over discourse,[346] it is evident that mediatisation of religious communication and knowledge becomes compromises traditional boundaries of interpretation and restriction of meanings. As Eickelman and Anderson note, members of religious establishments are often wary of how mass media decentralise and erode traditional authority, broadening and democratizing religious discourse and debate beyond scholarly circles.[347]

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[342] See Boguslaw Zero, "Politics of Muslim Minority in Uganda and Burundi." *Przeglad Orientalistyczny* 2, no. 3 (2020)

[343] Bosch, "Community Radio and Identity Construction Post-1994," 125.

[344] Robert E. Park, "Urbanization as measured by the Newspaper Circulation," *American Journal of Sociology*, 34, (1929); Robert K. Merton, *Social Theory and Social Structure* (New York: The Free Press, 1949); and Morris Janowitz, *The Community Press in an Urban Setting* (Glencoe, IL: Free Press, 1952).

[345] Dorothea E. Schultz, "Promises of (Im)mediate Salvation: Islam, Broadcast Media, and the Remaking of Religious Experience in Mali," *American Ethnologist* 33, no. 2 (2006); Dorothea E. Schultz, "Mass-Mediated Subjectivities in Urban Mali," *Visual Anthropology* 20, no. 1, (2007); Charles Hirschkind, "Cassette Ethics: Public Piety and Popular Media in Egypt," in *Religion, Media, and the Public Sphere*, ed. Birgit Meyer and Annelies Moors (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2006b).

Schultz encapsulates this phenomenon, observing that "the spread of small media facilitates, among other factors, the access to religious knowledge… [and] encourages individual interpretation."[348] This process of individual meaning-making becomes particularly significant in contexts like Uganda, where Muslim religious authority is disputed and contested. Consequently, media play a key role in creating communities through discussion, argumentation, and engagement with a uniform message. Even when interpretations differ, individuals become part of a community of listeners and viewers, locating themselves within the realm of that religious media community. As noted by, Charles Hirschkind, faith becomes a marker of identity through which individuals and the communities engage with modernity. While Muslims in Uganda may is still be interested in the news, sports, politics, and society, they choose to access those domains through the lens of religious media. This raises important questions about how these lenses are framing their society, which issues are being amplified or blurred, and how this framing affects those who view their world and surroundings through it. This study seeks to explore these questions, situating them within the broader literature on Muslim media and identity in Uganda.

Conclusion

This chapter has explored key literature on the intersection of religion, media and identity, highlighting the complexities inherent in these concepts. It began by defining these key terms, acknowledging that their definitions are often shaped by perspectives and politics of those proving them. This discussion then reviewed different approaches to studying the relationship between religion and new media, identifying three primary approaches: essentialist, functionalist, and interactivist. Of these three, the interactivist approaches was favoured for its ability to balance the extremes of essentialists rejectionism and functionalist utopianism.

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[346] Patrick Eisenlohr, "The Anthropology of media and the question of ethnic and religious pluralism," *Social Anthropology* 19, no. 1 (2011).

[347] Dale Eickelman & Jon Anderson, *New Media in the Muslim World: The Emerging Public Sphere*. (Bloomington, IN: Indiana University Press, 1999).

[348] Dorothea E. Schultz, "Charisma and Brotherhood' Revisited: Mass-Mediated Forms of Spirituality in Urban Mali," *Religion in Africa* 33, no. 2 (2003), 153.

The chapter also examined the empirical studies on media and religion from both the Global North and South, noting a significant gap in research from the Global South and underscoring the importance of this study. Special attention was given to literature on new media technologies and their role in identify formation, building, and construction, a field that has been a focus of researchers over the past three decades. The literature revealed parallels with Ugandan context, particularly concerning Muslim identity and the challenges faced by Muslims as a marginalise religious minority. Ugandan Muslims, like their counterparts inKenya, Ghana, and South Africa, grapple with internal theological and political debates while also navigating negative media portrayals and feelings of alienation.

This chapter sets the stage for the subsequent theoretical framework that will guide this study. As a largest religious minority in Uganda, Muslims engagement with media is not only a means of defending their faith but also away to assert their identity in a complex socio-political landscape. The next chapter will delve into the theories that underpin this research, proving the foundation for a deeper understanding of how new media influences Muslim identity in Uganda.

CHAPTER FOUR

THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

Introduction

In this chapter, examines the theories used to analyse Muslim media and religious identity in contemporary Uganda. The chapter addresses the second objective of this study: to discuss specific theories from media studies and academic study of religions that are relevant to communicating religion in the age of the new media technologies. The exploration of these theories is essential for identifying and addressing the complexities of religious communication in the digital era.

This chapter focuses on five key theories: mediatization theory, media framing theory, uses and gratification theory, media ritual theory, and Talal Asad's theory of religion as a discursive tradition. Mediatization theory examines how media logic shapes media production and consumption of religious content; framing theory explores how narratives are constructed within media content; the uses and gratification theory investigate the motivations behind media consumption; and media ritual theory delves into the ritualistic aspect of media engagement. Finally, Talal Asad's theory of religion - as the discursive tradition offers a unique perspective on to how Islam should be understood and studied within its cultural and historical contexts.

In the previous chapter, I reviewed major issues in the academic study of religion and media over the past three decades, highlighting the diverse ways in which media technology has impacted religious practices and expressions. These studies confirmed that media has not only resulted in changes to how religious beliefs are practised but has also altered how religious meanings are expressed via media. The theories discussed in this chapter are instrumental in understanding media as a culturally embedded institution that mediates communication and offers new avenues for meaning making in the context of religious identity.

Mediatisation Theory (MT)

Mediatization theory has emerged as a critical framework for revisiting and reframing old, fundamental questions on the media's role and influence in culture and society. It is particularly significant for analysing and discussing how media becomes intertwined with and influence other fields or social institutions such as politics, family, and religion.[349] Mediatisation theory examines how media and mediation shape and frame the process and discourse of socio-political and cultural communication, as well as the society in which these communications occur.[350] It highlights the long-term process through which social institutions and modes of interaction in cultural and societal context.

This theory challenge to instrumentalist view,[351] which treats media as a mere tool/instrument/medium that transfers messages from the sender to the receiver.[352] Instead, mediatisation acknowledges media as a culturally embedded and autonomous institution that influences and interacts with other social institutions, such as religion. Media is not just a companion to religious institutions; it operates with its own logic which other institutions, including religion, must navigate.[353]

Over the past two decades, mediatization has gained acceptance in both religion and communication studies, particularly in describing media influence on society.[354] The theory posits that[355]media at the heart of every human endeavour, such as politics, culture, and religion among others, making it integral to the global community can no longer exist outside the media.[356] Unlike the traditional view of media as neutral mediators,[357] mediatisation suggests that media actively shapes the construction of issues and events, infiltrating all domains of society.[358]

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[349] Stig Hjarvard, "The Mediatization of Religion: Theorizing Religion Media and Social Change," *Journal of Culture and Religion* 12, no. 2 (2011), 1; Godfrey N. Danaan, "A theoretical Discourse on the Mediatization and Framing of Jos Ethno-Religious Conflicts," *Journal of Arts and Humanities* 6, no. 2 (2017), 46.

[350] Musa Ibrahim, "Media, Religion and Public Sphere in Contemporary West Africa: Islamic Radio and Television Programming in Ghana" (MA thesis, University of Cape Town, 2013), 4.

[351] Peter Horsfield, "Media, Culture, and Religion: An Introduction," in *Belief in Media: Cultural Perspectives on Media and Christianity*, ed. Peter Horsfield, Mary Hess, and Adan Medrano (Aldershot: Ashgate, 2004), 24.

[352] Heidi A. Campbell, "Understanding the Relationship between Religion Online and Offline in a Networked Society," *The American Academy of Religion* 80, no. 1 (2012), 82; Peter Horsfield and Paul Teusner, "A Mediated Religion: Historical Perspectives on Christianity and the Internet," 13, no. 3 (2007), 279

[353] Cloete, "Mediated Religion: Implications for Religious Authority," *Verbum et Ecclesia* 37, no. 1 (2016), 1611.; Cloete, "Mediated Religion: Implications for Religious Authority," 1611; Hjarvard, "The Mediatization of Religion: Theorizing Religion, Media and Social Change," 121

[354] Hjarvard, "The Mediatisation of Religion: Theorizing Religion, Media and Social Change," 121.

[355] Danaan, "A Theoretical Discourse on the Mediatization and Framing of Jos Ethno-Religious Conflicts,"47; Nick Couldry and Andreas Hepp, "Conceptualizing Mediatisation: Contexts, Traditions, Arguments," *Communication Theory* 23, no. 3 (2013), 191.

[356] Danaan, "A Theoretical Discourse on the Mediatization and Framing of Jos Ethno-Religious Conflicts,"47.

[357] Ibid.

[358] Ibid., 48.

In the absence of a single definition[359], mediatization can be understood as a process where media becomes increasingly influential, leading to a growing dependency upon its logic. This aligns with research showing that media institutions and technologies play significant role in societal changes.[360] For instance, political institutions have adjusted to the demands of both news and entertainment media.[361] In a similar vein, religion as a social and cultural institution has in various ways become influenced by the media. In such a manner studying media and religion through a mediatization framework concurs with scholarship that affirms media affects the institutionalized religious authority.[362] These studies contend that through agenda-setting function media can decide on what to report on and how to report on it. The agenda-setting function implies that the previous powers of religious institutions to define and frame religious issues are now in the hands of the media. This shift opens the door for a more secularised, mediated religion, where religious symbols and practices are increasingly detached from traditional religious institutions.[363]

Mediatisation theory diverges from two dominant media models of media theory: the media effects model and the uses and gratification model. While the media effects model focuses on how media changes attitudes and behaviours, and the uses and gratification model[364] examines how individuals use specific forms of media for various purposes.[365] Mediatization theory occupies a third position and is sceptical of these two models because both conceptualize media as something separate from culture and society.[366] Mediatization theory stresses the interaction and transaction between media, actors and structures."[367] Mediatization theory assumes that media are not outside society, but part of its social fabric.

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[359] David Deacon and James Stanyer, "Mediatization: Key Concept or Conceptual Bandwagon?" *Journal of Media, Culture & Society* 36, no. 7 (2014), 1032.

[360] Andreas Hepp, Stig Hjarvard, and Knut K. Lundby, "Mediatization: Theorizing the Interplay between Media, Culture, and Society," *Journal of Media, Culture & Society* 37, no. 2 (2015), 315; Kho S. Nie, K., Chang P. Kee, and Ahmed, Abdul Latif Ahmed, "Mediatization: A Grand Concept or Contemporary Approaches?" *Procedia – Social and Behavioral Sciences* 155, no. 3 (2014), 363.

[361] Jesper Stromback, "Four Phases of Mediatization: An Analysis of the Mediatization of Politics." *The International Journal of Press/Politics* 13, no. 3 (2008).

[362] Cloete, "Mediated Religion: Implications for Religious Authority," 3.

[363] Gordon Lynch, "What can we learn from Mediatization of Religion Debate?" *Culture and Religion* 12, no. 2 (2011), 205.

[364] Thomas E. Ruggiero, "Uses and Gratification Theory in the 21st Century," *Journal of Mass Communication and Society* 3, no. 1 (2009).

[365] Hjarvard, "The Mediatization of Religion: Theorizing Religion, Media, and Social Change," 121.

[366] Hjarvard, "The Mediazation of Religion: Theorizing Religion, Media, and Social," 122.

[367] Ibid., 123.

Media is integrated into the working of almost all types of society's public as well as private communication. It is through this social integration that media may extend their influence and be implicated in the transformation of social institutions, including religion.[368] Thus, mediatization as a concept according to this assumption transcends and includes media effects.[369]

There is a valuable critique against mediatization theory which is worthy of note. The most pertinent part of it is from two scholars: Mia Lovheim and Gordon Lynch, as well as David Deacon and James Stanyer.[370] Lovheim argues that the mediatization theory operates with a limited understanding of religion as a cognitive phenomenon and mediation as a single act of communication, thus losing sight of the reciprocal nature of communication.[371] Lynch on the other hand views mediatization theory to be narrow and obscured from generalization.[372] In her view, the theory is very contextual, historical, and culturally specific and therefore doesn't provide an adequate general change. As for Deacon and Stanyer, they accuse the theory of being too simplistic and that the notion of powerful media influence advanced in mediatization literature is exaggerated.[373] Although Deacon and Stanyer acknowledge the potential influence of media, they argue that the different causes of change, other than media agents could be identified. In their view, such an account is driven by a narrow set of "casual variables" – the mass media – considered to be powerful enough on their own to bring about change in all contexts and ignores the role of non-media factors in influencing the changing communicative practices.[374] They insist that since media logic is not sufficient to change communicative practice, mediatization, in which media logic is embedded, is incapable of providing a theoretical framework for advancing research on cultural changes influenced by the media.

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[368] Ibid., 124.

[369] Winfried Schulz, "Reconstructing Mediatization as an Analytical Concept," *European Journal of Communication*, 19, no. 1 (2004), 90.

[370] Mia Lovheim, "Mediatisation of Religion: A Critical Appraisal," *Interdisciplinary Journal* 12, no. 2 (2011), 154; Lynch, "What can we learn from the Mediatisation of Religion Debate? Deacon and Stanyer, "Mediatisation: Key Concept or Conceptual Bandwagon?"

[371] Lovheim, "Mediatisation of Religion: A Critical Appraisal," 154.

[372] Lynch, "What can we learn from the Mediatisation of Religion Debate? 203-210.

[373] Deacon and Stanyer, "Mediatisation: Key Concept or Conceptual Bandwagon?"; Jesper Stromback and Frank Esser, "Mediatisation of Politics: Transforming Democracies and Reshaping Politics," in *Mediatisation of Communication*, ed. Knut Lundby (Berlin: De Gruyter Mouton, 2014), 384; Andreas Hepp, "The Communicative Figurations of Mediatized Worlds: Mediatisation in times of the Mediation of Everything," *European Journal of Communication* 29, no. 1 (2013), 615; Stig Hjarvard, "The Mediatisation of Society: A Theory of the Media as Agents of Social and Cultural Change," *Nordicom Review* 29, no. 2 (2009), 175.

[374] Deacon and Stanyer, "Mediatisation: Key Concept or Conceptual Bandwagon?" 1041.

Despite critiques against mediatization theory, it remains a valuable framework for examining religious media in contemporary Uganda. The theory helps researchers to understand media as a cultural form that coexists alongside other cultures and institutions such as religion and religious institutions. Moreover, mediatization theory presents the ability of media to use religion and create religious experiences through secular symbols and narratives. It resists a linear understanding of media effects but is open to diversity and ambiguity which can guide a researcher to an open-ended process of research that could result in different conclusions in different contexts. Furthermore, this approach is vital in understanding the complex relationship between changes in media and communication on one hand and changes in various fields of religion, culture, and society and deters researchers from a one-sided 'media-centric' approach to a more holistic and adaptive 'media-centred' pathway[375].

Given the centrality of media in all aspects of human efforts, the mediatisation framework is essential for holistic understanding the interplay between Islam and new media in Uganda. It provides a theoretical foundation for interdisciplinary research, allowing scholars from various disciplines to explore media's impact on their fields. As Andrea Hepp and others have suggested, this interdisciplinary dialogue benefits from expertise of researchers in mediated communication and its transformative potential.[376] In this study, which views religion as a social phenomenon, embedded in both social and cultural life, the mediatization framework is crucial for to examining how Islam and new media intersect in Uganda.

Media Ritual Theory (MRT)

Media Ritual Theory is one of the theoretical frameworks in media and communication studies. It borrows it is a thematic approach from the field of anthropology. Popularised by Nick Couldry, the theory is based on James W. Carey's ritual view of communication in which he argues that reading and writing news is a dramatic ritual act.[377] To James Carey, communication – i.e., the interactional sending and receiving of messages/information[378] - is a ritualistic practice responsible for forming social realities and community bonds through its conversational capacity. It is a ritual that involves humans and communities joined together through ritualistic practices of communication. This can be seen in ceremonies such as religious activities that bring people together in activities such as prayers, communion, and other activities that combine faithful members in a single space. Since rituals are known to include the daily routines of people,[379] Carey argued that the daily messages are not simply transmitted but are created and shared ritualistically which in turn draws people together in a fellowship to participate, converse, and share common beliefs,[380] a characteristic of the contemporary new media age. This perspective is particularly relevant in the contemporary era of new media, where daily interactions through media continue to build and maintain social connections.

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[375] Andreas Hepp, Stig Hjarvard and Knut Lundby, "Mediatization: Theorizing the Interplay between Media, Culture and Society." *Media, Culture and Society* 37, no. 2 (2015), 326.

[376] Andreas Hepp, Stig Hjarvard and Knut Lundby, "Mediatization: Theorizing the Interplay between Media, Culture and Society." *Media, Culture, and Society* 37, no. 2 (2015), 327, See also, Danaan, "A Theoretical Discourse on the Mediatization and Framing of Jos Ethno-Religious Conflicts," 49.

[377] James W. Carey, *Communication as Culture: Essays on Media and Society* (Routledge: New York and London, 1992).

Expanding on Carey's ideas, Nick Couldry developed Media Ritual Theory in 2003 as a theoretical framework to examine how media serves as a conduit between society and various social institutions.[381] Media ritual according to Nick Couldry represents a range of circumstances in which media stands for organisation or institution to connect to members of the society.[382] He defined media rituals as formalized actions centred around key media-related events, locations, or symbols that connect individuals to broader societal values.[383] These rituals can occur in places like media studios, in moments where ordinary people interact with the media, or when non-media individuals perform for the media, such as posing for a camera.[384] Couldry, drawing on Emile Durkheim, viewed rituals as shared actions and behaviours that contribute to social integration,[385]noting that with the rise of new media, rituals are increasingly being mediatized.[386][387][388]

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[378] Peter Kastberg, *Knowledge Communication: Contours of a Research Agenda* (Berlin: Frank & Timme GmbH, 2019), 56.

[379] Laura S. Grillo, "Africa Rituals," in *The Wiley-Blackwell Companion to African* ed. by Elias Kifon (Bongmba. Blackwell Publishing Ltd, 2012).

[380] Carey, *Communication as Culture, Revised Edition: Essays on Media and Society*, 157.

[381] Nick Couldry, *Media Rituals: A Critical Approach* (London: Routledge, 2003).

[382] ibid., 3

[383] ibid., 29

[384] Ibid., 51

Media ritual theory introduces ritualization which looks at the links between ritual actions and communities in which rituals are performed and in which the links between media and rituals are more regular and embedded in everyday life. The theory further promotes the contribution of media to contemporary societies thereby presenting a careful watch of boundaries between institutions and the public to protect the integrity of media in connecting social centres with the audience as it presents social realities.[389] We can see that media ritual theory is very important in explaining media's impact on society and even with the evolution of new media technology will not seriously deter its relevance.

Criticism of Couldry's theory, notably from Cottle, points to its broad application and challenge of clearly distinguishing true media rituals from other forms of ritualization.[390] Cottle argues that media rituals are not always immediately recognised and that rituals rooted in traditional social and cultural institutions, such as religious ceremonies, are more easily identified and appreciated within the media space.

Despite these criticisms, Media Ritual Theory remains valuable for understanding the complexities of new media technology and its impact on both media consumers and producers. In the contemporary era, religious rituals have extended beyond the confines of sacred spaces, with the liberalization of airwaves and internet access allowing religious groups and organisations to broadcast religious rituals virtual communities.[391] This transformation underscores the significancy of Media Theory in this study, as it provides a critical framework for analysing the intersection of media, religion, and identity in Uganda.

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[385] Ibid., 4

[386] See Xi Cui, "Mediatised Rituals: Understanding the Media Age of Deep Mediatisation." *International Journal of Communication*, 13, (2019); Helen Anderson, "Siblings in Cyberspace: Carey's Ritual Model of Communication in the Digital Age." *Intersect* 4, no. 1 (2011).

[387] Helen Anderson, "Siblings in Cyberspace," 95.

[388] Atma Funomena, "For the Love of Art: Nicolaus Coundry's Media Rituals, its Validity and Influence in Modern Society." *ATMA & FUNOMENA*, September 8, 2017. Accessed from https://atmafunomena.wordpress.com/2017/09/08/nicolas-couldrys-media-rituals-its-validity-and-influence/

[389] Nick Couldry, "*Media Rituals: A Critical Approach*,"13.

[390] Simon Cottle, "Mediatised Rituals: A Reply to Couldry and Rothenbuhler." *Media, Culture, & Society* 30, no. 1 (2008): 137.

[391] See: Heidi A Campbell, "Surveying Theoretical Approaches within Digital Religion Studies." *New Media and Society* 19, no. 1 (2017), 15.

Media Framing Theory (MFT)

Media Framing Theory (MFT) is an extension of Agenda Setting Theory (AST) both rooted in the social constructivist tradition. While AST focuses on how the media directs public attention to certain issues, MFT delves deeper into the specific ways in which the media presents these issues, shaping how audiences perceive and interpret them. Categorizing it as a theory,[392] an approach,[393] or a paradigm[394] is subject to debate which is beyond the scope of this study, however the core idea of framing theory is that journalists selectively construct narratives by emphasising certain aspects of reality over others, thereby guiding the audience to think and act in specific ways.[395] This process of selection and emphasis allows media outlets to manipulate the audience's perception by altering portions of perceived reality..[396]

Framing theory was introduced by sociologist Erving Goffman in 1973 who highlighted the significant role media frames play in shaping public perception of social realities.[397] Later, scholars expanded on this by describing news production as a strategic action that involves a deliberate choice of words and framing devices to achieve a particular effect.[398] This framing process enables media consumers to locate, perceive, identify, and categorise various events or issues in ways that influence their decision-making.[399]

Robert Entman further defined framing as the act of selecting certain aspects of perceived reality and making them more prominent in a communication text, with the intention of promoting a specific problem definition, causal interpretation, moral evaluation, and/or treatment recommendation that describes an item.[400] In this context, the selected frame often mirrors advocacy journalism,[401] where media might choose to report on a person, a topic, a group, or issue in a way that highlights particular attributes – whether negative or positive. For example, focusing solely on the negative aspect of a politician can lead the audience to develop a skewed perception, reinforced the intended narrative.[402]

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[392] Paul D'Angelo and Jim A. Kuypers, *Doing New Framing Analysis: Empirical and Theoretical Perspectives* (London: Routledge, 2010), 1.

[393] Zhogdand Pan and Gerald M. Kosicki, "Framing Analysis: An Approach to News Discourse," *Political Communication* 10, no.1 (1993).

[394] Robert M. Entman, "Framing: Toward Clarification of a Fractured Paradigm." *Journal of Communication* 43, no. 4 (1993).

[395] Godfrey N. Danaan, "A Theoretical Discourse on the Mediatization and Framing of Jos Ethno-Religious Conflicts" 2017, p.50.

[396] Danaan, "A Theoretical Discourse on the Mediatization and Framing of Jos Ethno-Religious Conflicts," 50.

[397] Eva-Karin Olsson, Lars W. Nord and Jesper Falkheimer, "Media Coverage Crisis Exploitation Characteristics: A Case Comparison Study," *Public Relations Research* 27, (2015).

[398] Hanna O. Vincze, "The Crisis' as Journalistic Frame in Romanian News Media." *European Journal of Communication* 29, no. 5 (2014), 568.

[399] Erving Goffman, "*Frame Analysis: An Essay on the Organization of Experience* (New York: Harper & Row, 1974), 21.

[400] Entman, "Framing: Toward Clarification of a Fractured Paradigm."

Framing theory also provides a useful lens for examining how media shapes the worldview of its audience. Research on internation media coverage, particularly regarding developing countries, illustrates this by revealing how Western media often frame these regions through a predominantly negative lens, omitting positive aspects and contributing to a biased global perspective.

In the context of this study, framing theory is employed to analyse how Muslim media in Uganda sets and produces content. It is particularly relevant in understanding how issues are framed by Muslim clerics on both broadcasting media and YouTube channels, and the subsequent impact these frames have on audience interpretation and meaning making. The theory helps to identity not only the framing strategies used by Muslim media but also the effects these strategies have on shaping the audiences' perceptions and beliefs.

Use and Gratification Theory (UGT)

Uses and Gratification Theory (UGT) was formally developed by Blumler and Katz, who argued that[403] communication research should not only focus on the effects of media but also how individuals actively use media to fulfil their needs.[404] However, O'Denohoe points out that this theory traces its roots back to the 1940s, emerging as an antidote to the Magic-bullet theory which is advocated by the Frankfurt schools.[405] The Frankfurt School viewed media as having a direct and powerful influence on individual behaviour and beliefs. In response, UGT with other emerging theories challenged this perspective by emphasising the active role of individuals in interpreting and using media to satisfy both conscious and unconscious needs.

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[401] Caroline Fisher, "The Advocacy Continuum: Towards a Theory of Advocacy in Journalism," *Journalism Journal*, 17 no. 6 (2016).

[402] George Fallis, *Multiversities, Ideas, and Democracy* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2007), 245.

[403] Jay G. Blumberg and Elihu Katz, *The Uses of Mass Communications: Current Perspective on Gratification Research* (Beverly Hill, C.A: Sage 1974).

[404] Sandara J. Ball-Rokeach, "A Theory of Media Power and Theory of Media Use: Different Stories, Questions, and Ways of Thinking," *Mass Communication & Society* 1, no. 2 (1998).

[405] Stephanie O'Denohoe, "Advertising uses and gratifications," *European Journal of Marketing* 28 no. 8 (1993).

UGT posits that individuals are not passive recipients of media messages but are active participants who select and use media based on their perception, individual differences, and specific needs. The theory operates on the assumption that audiences use media with intentional objectives and that the decision to link gratification with the choice of the media lies largely in the hands of the audiences. Additionally, media must compete with other sources of needs and gratifications such as social interactions or personal activities. The gratifications sought from media - such as entertainment, escapism, and information vary depending on the social and psychological disposition of the media audience.[406]

Despite its contributions, UGT has faced criticism. Ball-Rokeach *et al*. argue that the theory is vague and lacks a strong theoretical foundation, merely extending selective influence theories without providing sufficient data on why people engage with mass media.[407] Lamett *et al.* criticise UGT for overestimating the audience's active power and control while downplaying the powerful effects of media.[408] They suggest that needs and gratification should be seen as mediators rather than substitutes for the media's influence on audiences.

Nevertheless, UGT remains significant in this study because it recognizes the rational capacity of media consumers. This understanding is crucial for new media stakeholders, as it provides insight into how information can be presented to the needs of their audiences. By understanding the audience's context and the specific media outlets they rely on, communicators, including those in Muslim media, can more effectively deliver content that gratifies their audience's needs.

In Uganda, as elsewhere, people access new media for various reasons. The Ugandan media landscape benefits from a high level of dependence from a committed audience that turns to media for education, religious guidance, spiritual nourishment, entertainment, socialization, information, and news. Understanding the specific needs of media users, and tailoring content to meet those needs is important for satisfying the audience. Since new media technology is a significant space where religiosity and spirituality are practiced, meeting the needs of media consumers can attract more religious seekers[409] Therefore, UGT is an important theory for this study, as it underscores the importance of content that fulfils the needs of the intended Muslim audience in Uganda.

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[406] O'Denohoe, "Advertising uses and gratifications."

[407] Ball-Rokeach, "A Theory of Media Power and Theory of Media Use."

[408] Guy E. Lamett, B. Reeves and C. R. Bybee, "Investigating the Assumptions of Uses and Gratifications Research." *Communication Research*, 4 (1977).

Religion as a Discursive Tradition (RDT)

Talal Asad introduced the concept of Islam as a discursive tradition in his influential paper *The Idea of an Anthropology of Islam*.[410] This theory provides scholars with a framework for approaching the study of Islam by focusing on the relationship between Islamic concepts and their connectedness to religious texts such as the Quran and hadith. Asad defines a tradition as consisting of discourses that guide practitioners on the correct form and purpose of a given practice, emphasising that these discourses are linked to a historical past, an evolving present, and a future that ensures the tradition's continuity. In the context of Islam, the discursive tradition is centred on the distinction between what is permitted (halal) and what is forbidden (haram), instructing Muslims on how to perform practices based on the Quran, Hadith, and the Sunna of the Prophet Muhammad.

Asad's theory challenges scholars to study Islam starting with its discursive tradition, which is deeply connected to the founding Islamic texts, i.e., the Quran and Hadiths. He argues that this tradition is not static but is continually shaped by present circumstances to remain relevant for the future. For a practice to be considered Islamic, it must be connected to both the Islamic past and future through the present context, rather than merely imitating past actions or relying solely on Muslim assertions.

Asad developed this theory in response to scholars like Ernest Gellner and Clifford Greetz, who failed to account for the diversity of Islamic practices across different time and places. These scholars i.e. Ernest Gellner[411] and Clifford Geertz often assumed a uniformity in Islamic practices, neglecting the historical and political differences that shape the various forms of Islam.[412] In the Uganda context, Asad's approach helps rectify the tendency to view the Islamic community as monolithic, instead recognising the nuanced and diverse discourses that shape practices.[413]

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[409] Sven Windahl, Benno Signitzer, and Jean T. Olson, *Using Communication Theory: An Introduction to Planned Communication* (London: SAGE Publications, 2008), 198.
[410] Talal Asad, "The Idea of an Anthropology of Islam." *Qui- Parle,* 17, no. 2 (2009).
[411] Ernest Gellner, *Muslim Society* (Cambridge University Press: Cambridge, 1981).
[412] Ibid., 5.

By applying, Asad's concept of discursive tradition, this study seeks to understand how Ugandan Muslim scholars (*ulama*) use Islamic concepts rooted in the past, supported by foundational texts, to address contemporary issues and guide the future. This approach highlights the dynamic interplay between past, present, and future in sustaining Islamic traditions.

Critics of Asad's theory argue that it prioritises theology over factors and places excessive emphasis on religious texts. They contend that relying solely on these tests overlooks the fact that, after the end of revelation, interpretations were left in the hands of orthodox jurists, whose understandings were influenced by various considerations and conceptions of the truth. Critics, such as Shahab Ahmed argued that orthodoxy can become a site of dogmatic power, where those in authority prescribe restrictive interpretations of Islam, potentially excluding alternative views[414].

Ahmed further suggests that the understanding of Islam and Muslims identity should be related to the changing dynamics of Muslim communities across time and space. He emphasises the importance of independent reasoning (*Ijtihad*) in developing new vocabularies and interpretations that reflect the diversity and contradictions within Islamic practices. This approach, according to Ahmed, can help conceptualise unity within the diversity and contradiction and captures the totality of all practices that claim affinity with Islam.[415]

While these critiques are significant, Asad's theory remains relevant because even *Ijtihad* often relies on foundational sources of Islam the Quran and Hadith. In cases where these texts are insufficient for legal rulings, Muslims scholars (or *Mujtahid*) use analogical reasoning

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[413] See for example, Yusuf Kasumba, "The Development of Islam in Uganda 1962 – 1992 with Particular Reference to Religio-Political Factionalism," (Master's thesis, Makerere University, 1995); Abasi Kiyimba, "The Muslim Community in Uganda through One-Hundred and Forty-Years: The Trials and Tribulations of a Muslim Minority," *Journal of African Religion and Philosophy* 2, (1990); Anas Kaliisa, "Leadership Crisis Among Muslims of Uganda (1850-1993)," (Masters Dissertation, Kampala: Makerere University, 1994); and Kanyeyihamba, *Reflections on the Muslim Leadership Question in Uganda*.

[414] Shahab Ahmed, *What is Islam? The Importance of Being Islamic* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2016), 271.

[415] Ibid., 15.

(*qiyas*) to derive judgments (*hukm*) for unprecedented cases, demonstrating the continued importance of these texts.[416]

Building on Asad's theory, Abdulkader Tayob introduced the concept of religious discourse as a "language games,"[417]suggesting that religion should be understood as complex linguistic rather than as a closed cultural or social system. Tayob argues that Islam, as a language game, encompasses certain beliefs and practices without starting from theoretical assumptions about what Muslims should do.[418] Instead, it focuses on what Muslims have actually done and the effects of those actions. The the rules of Islamic discursive traditions, according to Tayob, are not rigid borderlines to be (or not to be) crossed but guidelines that permit interpretation, debate, deliberation, and contestation.

In summary, Asad's theory of Islam as a discursive tradition, enriched by Tayob's concept of language games, offers a robust framework for understanding the dynamic and evolving nature of Islamic practices. This approach is particularly valuable for studying the diverse and context-specific ways in which Ugandan Muslim clerics engage with Islamic concepts, linking the past with the present and future in their efforts to define true Islam.

Conclusion

In conclusion, this chapter has explored five theories that are essential for understanding the relationship between religion and new media in the contemporary media landscape. The selected theories have provided insights into how media producers and consumers navigate the unique dynamics between religion and new media. The chapter covered theories relevant to both media and religious studies, including mediatization theory, media framing theory, uses and gratification theory, media ritual theory, and Talal Asad's concept of religion as a discursive tradition.

Mediatization theory was examined for its explanation of perversive influence of media logic on media production, reflecting on the individual, societal, cultural, and organizational changes driven by active use of media and the implications these changes bring. The chapter argued that the continued mediatisation of religious messages contributes to the resurgence of religion in public space a unique aspect that defies the proponents of secularism's assumptions.

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[416] See Wael B. Hallaq, "Was the Gate to Ijtihad Closed?" *International Journal of Middle East Studies* 16, no. 1 (1984).

[417] Abdulkader Tayob, "Jihad Against Drugs in Cape Town: A Discourse-Centre Analysis," *Social Dynamic* 22, no. 2 (1996).; Abdulkader Tayob, "*Religion in the Modern Islamic Discourse*; Abdulkader Tayob, "Back to the Roots, the Origins and Beginning: Reflection on Revival (Tajdid) in Islamic Discourse," *Temenos* 50, no. 2 (2014).

[418] Abdulkader Tayob, "Epilogue: Sermons as Practical and Linguistic Performances: Insights from Theory and History," *Journal of Religion in Africa* (2017)

Couldry's Media Ritual Theory (MRT) was discussed for its insights into the ritualistic aspects of the media, offering valuable knowledge for media producer to consider when crafting and presenting messages. The chapter suggested that applying MRT to religious new media could address challenges embedded in religious communication, especially in fostering communities of faith through media.

Media Framing Theory (MFT) was highlighted for its analysis of how media narratives are constructed, providing a framework for scrutinising identity formation. The chapter also examined the Uses and Gratification Theory (UGT) and Talal Asad's concept of religion as a discursive tradition (RDT). UGT addresses the motivations behind media consumption, emphasising the importance of understanding the needs of consumers for effective communication. Talal Asad's RDT offers a distinctive approach to studying religion, particularly Islam, by focusing on the connection between past, present and the future practices.

In summary, with the widespread use of new media across various fields, it is crucial to study Muslim media use in Uganda and its role in shaping Muslim identity through lens of these five theories. Despite the increasing use of media by Muslims in Uganda, there is lack of comprehensive information on its methods, benefits and effectiveness. Additionally, due to limited scholarly work on Muslim media in the country, the broader significance of new media for the Ugandan Muslim community remains unclear. The next chapter will discuss the methodology and research design employed to gather the data used in this study.

CHAPTER FIVE

METHODOLOGY

Introduction

Researching Muslim media in Uganda presents a unique set of challenges due to the limited scholarly work available on the subject. This scarcity complicates the research process, demanding specialised skills, specific research tools, and techniques to navigate this relatively unexplored field fully and confidently. In this chapter, I outline the methodology employed in this study, beginning with a discussion of researcher's philosophical standing point (paradigm). The study is positioned within both positivist and constructivist paradigms, reflecting a socio-material ontological perspective.

I then describe the mixed methods approach used in this research, specifically the triangulation exploratory design, which integrates qualitative and quantitative data to comprehensively address the research questions. The study area and sources of the data collected, including Kampala city and its surrounding districts, and selected media outlets: Voice of Africa FM, Bilal FM, and Pearl of Africa FM radios stations, the Facebook page, Thuraya Islam Media, and the YouTube channel, "Manya Obusilamu."

Following this, I discuss the ethical considerations taken into account during data collection process, as well as the procedures followed for gathering and analysing data. The chapter concludes with an account of the challenges encountered during fieldwork and data collection, followed by a summary of key points.

Research Paradigm

This thesis is guided by a relational socio-material perspective that significantly shapes the research methodology and design. The socio-material perspective challenges the dichotomy often assumed by positivist and interpretivist researchers, who typically view "the human" and "the social" as separate from "the material."[419] Instead social-material researchers posits that the world is composed of ontologically distinct entities that interact and connect to produce a particular phenomenon.[420] From this viewpoint, there are no discrete "beings" - whether social or material- nor are there distinct subjects or objects. Rather, all presumed actors, entities, or categories are seen as relational enactments or material configurations within the world.[421]

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[419] Lotta Hultin, "On Becoming a Sociomaterial Researcher: Exploring Epistemological Practices Grounded in a Relational, Performative Ontology," *Information and Organization*, 29, no. 2 (2019), 92.
[420] Ibid., 92.

researchers operating within a socio-material framework contend that subject and object, structure and agency, body and mind, knower and known are ontologically inseparable.[422] This perspective diverges from positivist approach, which assumes the existence of an objective, knowable physical and social world independent of human perception. Positivists believe that this world can be understood through objective and impartial research[423]leading to insights that form the basis of universal theories which go beyond time and context. However, positivist approach has been critiqued for its insufficiency in distinguishing between facts and beliefs and its dualistic ontology, which artificially separates subjects from objects and human from nature.[424]

In contrast, interpretivist researchers embrace an ontology that denies the existence of an external world independent of human creation. Constructivists, a brunch of interpretivists thought, argue that social phenomena and their meanings are produced by social actors through interaction and interpretation.[425] They emphasise that knowledge and truth are constantly evolving,[426] rejecting the positivist notion of cause and effect in favour of subject-centred descriptions that focus on interpreting texts, practices, and technologies.[427] Despite its strength, the interpretivist emphasis on interpretation has drawn criticism, often placing researchers in a relativist position.[428]

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[421] Hultin, "On Becoming a Sociomaterial Researcher: Exploring Epistemological Practices Grounded in a Relational, Performative Ontology," 93.; Karen Barad, "Posthumanist Performativity: Towards Understanding How Matter Comes to Matter," *Signs* 28, no. 3 (2003), 802; Karen Barad, "*Meeting the Universe Halfway: Quantum Physics and the Entanglement of Matter and Meaning* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2007).

[422] Hultin, "On Becoming a Sociomaterial Researcher: Exploring Epistemological Practices Grounded in a Relational, Performative Ontology," 96.

[423] John W. Creswell, *Research Design: Qualitative, Quantitative and Mixed Methods Approaches* 4th ed. (Washington DC: Sage Publications, 2014).

[424] Karen Barad, *Meeting the Universe Halfway: Quantum Physics and the Entanglement of Matter and Meaning* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2007).

[425] Alan Bryman, *Social Research Methods* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2012), 33.

[426] Ibid., 34.

[427] See Michael Crotty, *The Foundations of Social Research: Meaning and Perspective in the Research Process* (London: Sage, 1998).

[428] Cited from Emrys Schoemaker, "Digital Faith: Social Media and the Enactment of Religious Identity in Pakistan," (PhD thesis, London School of Economics, 2016), 60.

The socio-material perspective, on the other hand, posits that while a material world exists ontologically, our knowledge of it is inevitably interpretive and provisional rather than representational.[429] This approach offers an alternative to the polarised positions of constructionist and positivist perspectives. A socio-material ontology prioritizes relations over entities, asserting that everything - including people – is always a nexus of relations.[430] It addresses constructivists concerns by considering the relationship between social and material entities as a product of specific phenomena. From this perspective, reality is not composed of independent things or hidden forces behind phenomena but is understood as a dynamic process of intra-activity.[431]

Thus, the socio-material ontology rejects the objectivism of positivism, not by transforming it into a particular act of measurement under specific conditions. It also challenges the pure subjectivity of constructivism, arguing that observing subjects is part of reality. While socio-materialists have faced criticism for being overly descriptive, relativistic, and lacking sufficient resources for making political and moral judgement,[432]proponents argue that a thorough understanding, and description of the network are essential before taking any moral stance.[433]

Research Approach and Design

This study employs a mixed-method research approach, utilising a triangulation-exploratory design to compressively investigate Muslim media in Uganda. A mixed-method research approach involves the collection, analysis, and integration of both qualitative and quantitative data within a single study, offering a richer, more nuanced understanding of the research subject.[434] Given the equal importance of both qualitative and quantitative data in this study, a triangulation (concurrent) exploratory mixed research design was adopted. This design allows for the simultaneous collection and analysis of data types within the same timeframe ensuring that method is given equal weight.[435]

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[429] Schoemaker, "Digital Faith: Social Media and the Enactment of Religious Identity in Pakistan," 70; Barad, "*Meeting the Universe Halfway: Quantum Physics and the Entanglement of Matter and Meaning*."

[430] Schoemaker, "Digital Faith: Social Media and the Enactment of Religious Identity in Pakistan, 70

[431] Barad, *Meeting the Universe Halfway: Quantum Physics and the Entanglement of Matter and Meaning*, 140.

[432] See Langdon Winner, "Upon Opening the Black Box and Finding it Empty: Social Constructivism and the Philosophy of Technology." *Science, Technology, & Human Values* 18, no 3 (1993), 364.; Andrea Whittle and Andre Spicer, "Is Actor-Network Theory Critique? *Organizational Studies* 29 no. 4, (2008), 613.

[433] See also Bruno Latour, *We have never been Modern* (Cambridge MA: Harvard University Press, 1991), 130.

[434] Abbas Tashakkori and Charles Teddlie, *Handbook of Mixed Methods in Social and Behavioural Research*. (Washington DC: Sage Publications, 2010).

The choice of this design was driven by the study's dual focus: the quantity and quality of media content broadcasted by Muslim media outlets in Uganda, and the identification of relevant participants. The quantitative component provided insights into the landscape of Muslim media in the country, including the number of media outlets (both 'old' and 'new') and the specific number of programs relevant for content analysis. The qualitative component, on the other hand, enabled an in-depth exploration of these media outlets in their natural settings, offering fresh avenues for interpretation and analysis.[436] By integrating these two approaches, the study was able to identify and analyse Muslim media in contemporary Uganda, particularly in relation to religious identity and attitudes.

A multiple case study research strategy was employed to address the research questions comprehensively.[437] In the formative stage, the researcher identified the general survey on Muslim media in Uganda was conducted, alongside the selection of the study area. Three radio stations, one Facebook page and one YouTube channel were purposively selected as case studies. The study area included Kampala, the capital city of Uganda, as well as the surrounding districts (i.e., Mukono, Mpigi, Wakiso, Luweero, Nakasongola, Kayunga). Key informants for this study were also identified during this phase.

The qualitative approach played a central role in data collection and analysis, focusing on the in-depth explanations of the selected case studies. The quantitative component was utilised to survey and identify the Muslim media outlets, programming patterns, and key informants. The data obtained during this phase informed the subsequent qualitative data collection process. The qualitative phase involved anthropological in-depth fieldwork, including oral interviews, and participant observation. Different sets of interview questions were administered to four different groups of key informants: media practitioners, Muslim clerics, Muslim public intellectuals, and Muslim media audiences.

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[435] John W. Creswell, *Research Design: Qualitative, Quantitative and Mixed Methods Approaches*, 62-64

[436] C.R. Kothari, *Research Methodology: Methods and Techniques* (New Delhi: New Age International, 2nd Ed, 2004).

[437] Ibid.

Additionally, archival research was conducted at the national broadcaster, Uganda Broadcasting Cooperation (UBC), to establish the nature of religious broadcasts over the years. This archival research provided historical context and supplemented the qualitative and quantitative data collection during the fieldwork.

Data Collection Process

The data collection for this study was conducted over an eighteen-month period, from January 2019 and June 2020, encompassing three distinct phases of fieldwork. The first phase, carried out between January and June 2019, focused on a preliminary survey. This phase was crucial for selecting relevant case studies, piloting research instruments, and identifying key informants, laying the groundwork for the subsequent phases of data collection. Establishing contacts with key informants during this period was instrumental in ensuing the smooth progression of the research.

The second phase of data collection took place from August and December 2019 and involved qualitative fieldwork in Kampala. During this phase, weekly interviews were conducted with various key informants, supplemented by participant observations and monitoring of radio stations and online platforms. The relationships established with media owners during the first phase facilitated access to extensive recording of radio programs, providing a rich source of data for analysis.

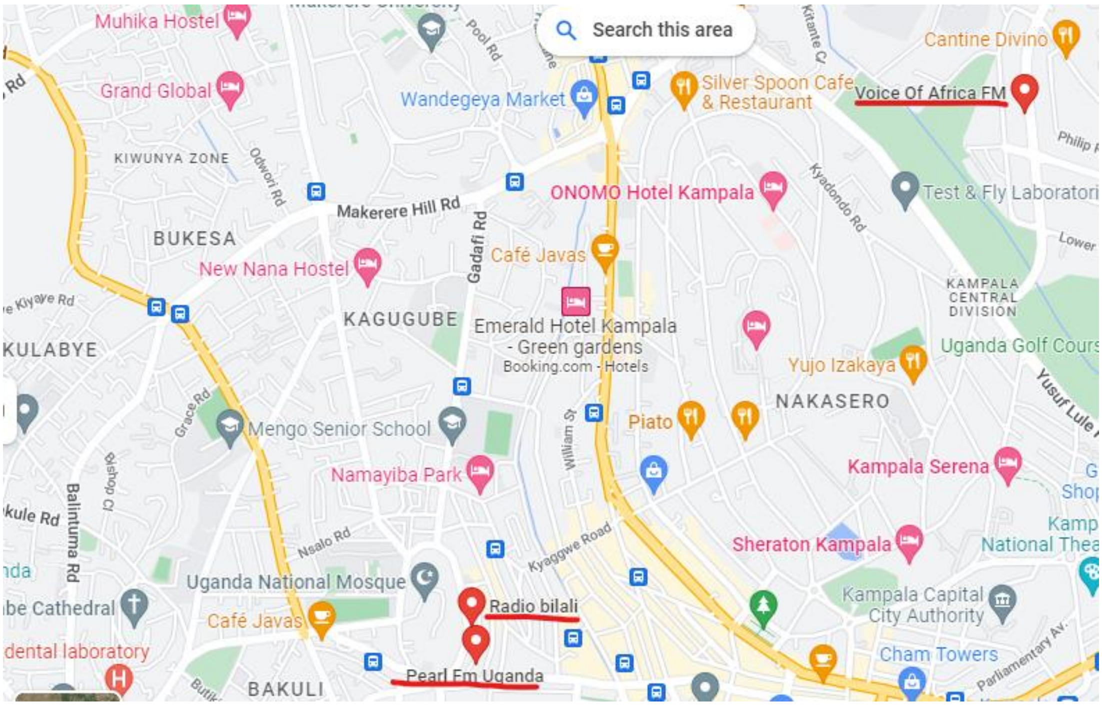
The third and final phase, conducted between January June 2020, involved intensive fieldwork aimed at validating and correlating the information obtained from key informants. This phase included the conduction of focus groups and additional interviews, further enriching the data set and allowing for a deeper understanding of the research question.

Study Location

The fieldwork for this study was conducted in Kampala, the capital and most populous city of Uganda. Kampala was purposively selected as the study location for several reasons. First, as the economic engine and largest city in Uganda, Kampala is a home to a population exceeding one million, approximately 22 percent identifying as Muslim (See table below). This demographic diversity is mirrored in the city’s cultural, ethnic, and religious composition, making it an ideal setting for the role of media in shaping the Muslim identity in Uganda.

Second, Kampala hosts the headquarters and broadcasting studios of the three Muslim radio stations central to this study. The Voice of Africa (VOA) FM broadcasts from John Babiha Avenue, in Kololo suburb, Radio Bilal FM is located on Old Kampala Hill, and Pearl of Africa FM operates from 6B Berkeley Road, also on Old Kampala Hill in close proximity to Bilal FM. The concentration of these media outlets within Kampala underscores the city's significance as a hub for Muslim media in Uganda, further justifying its selection as the primary fieldwork site.

Fig1: Google Map of Kampala Showing the Location of the Three Radio Stations



Search this area
Muhika Hostel
Grand Global
Wandegeya Market
Silver Spoon Cafe & Restaurant
Voice Of Africa FM
Cantine Divino
KIWUNYA ZONE
Makerere Hill Rd
ONOMO Hotel Kampala
Test & Fly Laboratori
BUKESA
New Nana Hostel
Gadafi Rd
Café Javas
Kyadondo Rd
KAMPALA CENTRAL DIVISION
KAGUGUBE
Emerald Hotel Kampala - Green gardens
Booking.com · Hotels
KULABYE
Yujo Izakaya
Uganda Golf Cours
NAKASERO
Mengo Senior School
Piato
Namayiba Park
Kampala Serena
William St
Balintuma Rd
Bishop Cl
Nsalo Rd
Kyaggwe Road
Sheraton Kampala
National Thea
Uganda National Mosque
Radio bilali
Kampala Capital City Authority
Café Javas
Pearl Fm Uganda
Cham Towers
dental laboratory
BAKULI
Parliamentary Av.
Yusuf Lule

Source: Google Map Data, 2022, Scale: 500:1

Third, while the coverage of all the three radio stations under study – Voice of Africa FM, Bilal FM, and Pearl of Africa FM - extends beyond Kampala to rural parts of central Uganda, including districts such as Mukono, Wakiso, Luweero, Nakasongola, Kayunga, and Mpigi, Kampala remains the city with the highest concentration of Muslims in the country. According to the 2014 national census, Kampala had a Muslim population of 268,797 people (See the table below). Given the aim of this study to examine Muslim media and its role in shaping the Islamic identity, it was essential to conduct the research in an area with a substantial Muslim population.

Table 1: Population Distribution of Muslims in Areas of Muslim Radio Coverage[438]

District	Population	Number of Muslims	Share of Muslims
Kampala	1,187,795	268,797	22.6%
Mukono	795,630	165,817	20.9%
Wakiso	907,736	164,256	18.1%
Luweero	478,492	89,232	18.6%
Nakasongola	127,048	9,428	7.4%
Kayunga	294,568	76,127	25.8%

Source: Uganda National Population and Housing 2014 census report.[439]

Moreover, Kampala is the centre of theologically and politically diverse Muslim groups in Uganda. The city hosts the national body Uganda Muslim Supreme Council (UMSC), as well as the headquarters of the 'Supreme' Mufti of Uganda, a political rival of the officially recognised UMSC, based on Kibuli Hill and are often referred to as the *Kibuli sect*.[440] Additionally, the city is home to the headquarters of various Salafi-oriented groups, including Jamia al-Dawah al-Salafi (Association for the Proselytization of Salafism) and Uganda Tabliq Community. Also, until its demolition in 2018, Usafi mosque in Mengo, a Kampala suburb, served as the headquarters of the Salafi Foundation (TSF), the progenitor of the ADF Jihadi-Salafi rebel movement was in Mengo.[441] Furthermore, Kampala also hosts significant institutions associated with other Islamic groups, such as the Ahmadis and Shias, which have established several schools and universities.

In addition to the Kampala-based radio stations, the study also utilized the YouTube digital platform to analyse video lectures by Ugandan clerics affiliated to different sects, but most especially those from the Jihadi-Salafi sect. This approach was necessary to access content produced by members of Allied Democratic Forces (ADF), a Jihadi-Salafi rebel movement operating in the Rwenzori region, which borders Uganda and the Eastern Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC). As the ADF is designated as a terrorist group by the Ugandan government and other states involved in the US's War on Terror (WoT) project, their access to traditional media such as radio and television is restricted, making social media an alternative platform for disseminating their version of Islam. YouTube, a video hosting site featuring user-generated content,[442]has become a key medium for ADF clerics to communicate their messages.

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[438] For area of coverage see: "Census of all FM Radio Stations in the Country and their Coverage." Report submitted to the Parliament of Uganda on May 12th, 2020. Available online: https://parliamentwatch.ug/wp-content/uploads/2021/07/Census-of-all-Radio-Stations-in-the-Country-and-their-Coverage-1.pdf

[439] The detailed report is available on chrome extension://efaidnbmnnnibpcajpcglclefindmkaj/https://www.ubos.org/wp-content/uploads/publications/03_20182014_National_Census_Main_Report.pdf, retrieved on 20 June 2020

[440] See: Joseph Kasule, *Islam in Uganda*, 2022.

[441] See Abdulhakim Nsobya, Uganda's Militant Islamic Movement ADF: A Historical Analysis, *Annual Review of Islam in Africa* 12, no. 13 (2016).

Since its inception in 2005, YouTube has been adopted by various peripheral groups and movements as communication tool due to its accessibility; videos can be viewed by anyone, even without a registered user's account.[443] In Uganda, YouTube is commonly used to access information that might be censored by mainstream media. As of February 2022, DataReportal, an online platform that monitors global digital usage, ranked YouTube as the most visited website in Uganda after Googel.com.[444] The platform is particularly significant for hosting channel that feature Ugandan Muslim research and clerics. Among these, Thuraya Islam Media is the oldest, while ADF's Channel "Manya Obusilamu" is notable for its establishment and viewership. Additionally, the inclusion of channels like Muslimah Coffee Talk highlights platforms that cater to women clerics and professionals, underscoring the diverse and dynamic nature of Muslim media in Uganda.

Table 2: Selected Ugandan Muslim Clerical YouTube Channels

Name	**Affiliation**	**Date**	**No. of Subscribers**	**No. of Views**
Thuraya Islam Media	Salafi (mainstream)	2014	407,000	3,669,899
Manya Obusilamu	ADF/Jihadi-Salafi	2018	118,000	108,141
Shukuran Dawa Centre	Salafi (mainstream)	2019	339,000	75,816
Muslimah Coffee Talk	Uganda Muslim Women Civilisation Initiative (UMWCI)[445]	Nov 5, 2022	80	721

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[442] Paul A. Soukup, "Looking at, Through, and with YouTube," *Communication Research Trends* 33, no. 3 (2014).

[443] Ronald J. Chenail, "YouTube as a Qualitative Research Asset: Reviewing User Generated Videos as Learning Resources," *The Weekly Qualitative Report* 1, no. 4 (2008).

[444] See: https://datareportal.com/reports/digital-2022-uganda

[445] See the group's website; https://umwci.org/ accessed Jan 2, 2023.

Umoja Media Uganda	Non-Salafi (Sufi oriented)	Jun 10, 2022	463	18,684

Source: Field Data

Population Sampling

A population refers to the entire group or set of items relevant to a particular field of inquiry,[446]while a sample is the subset of individuals or items from that larger population. Sampling is the process of choosing a representative sample from a larger population for inclusion in a study.[447] The selection of a sample population is guided by the research approach, questions, and design, all of which are crucial to the study's outcomes.[448] In this study, a triangulation mixed-method research approach was selected, not only because it facilitates both quantitative and in-depth qualitative research but also because it aids in the identifying the sample population through conducting a survey.

Sampling is essential for gathering relevant data needed to generate nuanced answers to the research questions.[449] The focus here is not merely on the size of the sample but rather on selecting a sample that can provide meaningful information in response to the research questions. This study began with a survey of all the Muslim radio and television stations in Uganda as well as some of social media platforms operated by Muslim groups in Uganda, after which three radio stations and two social media channels were purposively selected. As of 2022, Uganda had seven officially recognised Muslim radio stations and three television stations, covering various regions with significant Muslim populations, including Central Uganda, Eastern Ugandan, and the West Nile region.

Table 3: Muslim Radio and Television Stations

Media	**Frequency**	**Year Established**	**Ownership**	**Location**	**Coverage**
Radio Stations					

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[446] C.R. Kothari, *Research Methodology: Methods and Techniques* (New Delhi: New Age International, 2004), 55

[447] Greg Guest, Emily E. Namey, Marilyn L. Mitchell, *Collecting Qualitative Data: A Field Manual for Applied Research* (New York: SAGE Publications, 2017), 2.

[448] See Creswell, *Research Design: Qualitative, Quantitative and Mixed Methods Approaches*.

[449] Wendy Luttrell, *Qualitative Education Research: Reading in Reflexive Methodology and Transformative Practice* (London: Routledge, 2010), 6.

Voice of Africa[450]	92.3 FM	2000	Union of Muslim Council (UMC)	Kampala	Kampala, Mukono, Luweero, Nakasongola, Kayunga, Wakiso
Radio Bilal	94.5 FM	2006	UMSC	Kampala	Kampala, Mukono, Luweero, Nakasongola, Kayunga, Wakiso
IUIU FM[451]	93.1 FM	2012	Islamic University in Uganda (IUIU)	Mbale	Mbale, Bulanbuli, Kween, Kapchorwa, Bukwa, Sironko, Bududa, Manafa, Tororo, Butaleja, Budaka, Bukedea
Pearl of Africa[452]	104.7 FM	2013	Next Media Uganda (Ltd)	Kampala	Kampala, Mukono, Luweero, Nakasongola, Kayunga, Wakiso
Ummah FM	92.7 FM	2015	Ummah Community Radio Uganda (Ltd)	Arua	Arua, Yumbe, Koboko, Maracha, Zombo, Nebbi
Radio Masaba	89.1 FM	2015	Private	Mbale	Mbale, Bulanbuli, Kween, Kapchorwa, Bukwa, Sironko, Bududa, Manafa, Tororo, Butaleja, Budaka, Bukedea
Ribat FM	91.7 FM	2019	UMSC	Yumbe	Arua, Yumbe, Maracha, Zombo, and Nebbi
Television Stations					
Salam TV	Azam: 155, StarTimes: 293	2015	Next Media Uganda (Ltd)	Kampala	Uganda and beyond via TV Digital Platforms
IUIU TV	On-line	2020	IUIU	Mbale	On-line
Global TV	Online	2020	UMSC	Kampala	Online

Source: Field Data

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[450] https://voiceofafricafmuganda.com/
[451] https://iuiufm.iuiu.ac.ug/Default.aspx
[452] https://pearlfmuganda.com/

This table lists the Muslim radio and television stations operating currently in Uganda. Of the seven radio stations, three (Voice of Africa, Bilal FM, and Pearl of Africa FM) broadcasts from Kampala city and cover districts within central Uganda. The others, IUIU FM, Radio Masaba, Ribat FM and Ummah FM, broadcast from Mbale, Yumbe and Arua respectively, targeting audiences in the Eastern and the West Nile regions. The three TV stations, Salam TV, IUIU TV, and Global TV - broadcast via satellite platforms and on YouTube.

For practical reasons, including time, resources, and logistical constraints,[453] the study purposively[454] selected three radio stations – Voice of Africa (VOA) FM, Bilal FM, and Pearl of Africa FM - and two social media channels -, Thurayya Islam Media Facebook page, and Manya Obusialmu YouTube Channel – for qualitative analysis. VOA and Bilal FM mostly host traditionalist Muslim clerics, while Pearl FM primarily features mainstream Salafi clerics and preachers. The Thurayya Islam Media Facebook page hosts video lectures from mainstream Salafi clerics and preachers, while the Manya Obusilamu YouTube channel is owned by the ADF. The selection of these stations and channels followed a combination of pragmatic and theoretical reasons. Pragmatically, the proximity of radio stations in Kampala made them easily accessible for participant observation and key informant interviews, reducing travel time making fieldwork manageable. Theoretically, the two radio stations target primarily Muslim audiences in Kampala, creating competitive environment where each stations strives to construct a distinctive narrative that legitimises its organisational identity.[455] This made it easier to explore how each station contributes to shaping Islamic identity in Uganda.

Furthermore, the researcher's access to the internet enabled a digital survey of the Thurayya Islam Media Facebook page and the Manya Obusilamu YouTube channel. The Manya Obusilamu channel is particularly significant as it represents the alternative media outlets used by the ADF; a group designated as terrorists by the Ugandan government. Due to censorship, ADF clerics are denied access to mainstream media, such as radio and television. Therefore, they utilize social media platforms like YouTube to communicate with the Ugandan audience, defining what they consider authentic Islam in contrast to other Muslims in the country. The inclusion of this channel in the study was important to present the diverse voices of Muslims in contemporary Uganda, particularly those adhering to Sunni Islam.

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[453] Kothari, *Research Methodology: Methods and Techniques*, 55-56.

[454] Creswell, *Research Design: Qualitative, Quantitative and Mixed Methods Approaches*, 239

[455] See W. Timothy Few and Molly E. Few, "Identity, Competitors & Distinctiveness: Who are We? Who We Are? *Institute of Behavioral and Applied Management* 18, no. 1 (2018), 63.

Table 4: Selected Radio and Social Media Channels

Name	Type	Year Established	Ownership
Voice of Africa FM	Radio Station 92.3 FM MHz	2000	Union of Muslim Council (UMC)
Radio Bilal FM	Radio Stations 94.1 FM MHz	2006	Uganda Muslim Supreme Council (UMSC)
Pearl of Africa	Radio Stations 104.7 FM MHz	2013	Next Media Uganda (Ltd)
Manya Obusilamu	Social Media Network: YouTube Channel	2018	Allied Democratic Forces (ADF)
Thuraya Islam Media	Social Media Network: Facebook	2008	Thurayya Islam Media (Ltd)

Source: Field Data

In the table above, three radio stations and two social media channels selected as the sample population for this study. The two FM stations, Voice of Africa and Bilal FM, represent the traditionalist Muslim community, while Pearl of Africa FM caters to primarily mainstream Salafi communities in Uganda. The Thurayya Islam Media Facebook page and Manya Obusilamu You Tube channel serve as alternative media platforms, with the former hosting mainstream Salafi content and the latter being associated with the ADF.

In addition to the radio stations and the social media channels, the researcher purposively selected 51 key informants for interviews from various categories. These included proprietors of the radio stations, journalists working at these radio stations, clerics who frequently appear on these stations, active listeners of the stations, and Muslim public intellectuals who use the stations to discuss Islam.

Table 5: Categories of Key Informants

Category	Description	Interviews	Selection Criteria
Media Practitioners	High-level employees of the three radio stations were interviewed including directors,	15	Purposive Sampling

(Owners and Employees)	program managers, and presenters. This group aimed to provide necessary information about the stations and their programming agendas.		
Clerics	This group included Sheikhs who are not employees of the radio stations under study but use radio to extend their preaching beyond mosques. Their responses provided insights into the uses of radio for religious goals.	10	Purposive Sampling
Public Intellectuals	This category included university lecturers and civil savants who use radio to discuss issues related to Islam. Their professional views were sought on the role of Muslim media in shaping Islamic identity	10	Purposive Sampling
Active Listeners	Active listeners of the three radio stations were identified by radio representatives in their respective areas. All interviewed listeners are members of each station's listeners' club, and they provided insights into their experiences with the programmes and the meaning they derive from them.	14	Purposive Sampling
Information coordinators	Two former members of ADF were identified to clarify on the video lectures of ADF leaders.	02	Purposive Sampling
Total number of key informants		**51**	

Source: Field Data

As shown in the table, the sample included 51 key informants drawn from a various category. The selection was purposively done to provide a fair representation of diverse views within the Muslim community in Uganda. This approach allowed the researcher to verify issues raised by one category against those raised by another during the interviews. The inclusion of the two former ADF members provided critical clarity on the content of video lectures hosted on the Manya Obusilamu YouTube channel.

Data Collection

Data collection for this project followed a mixed methods approach[456]which is particularly appropriate for exploring phenomena where existing research is sparse, fragmented, inconclusive, and contradictory.[457] To bridge the gap between positivist and interpretivist ontological positions, it was important to combine both quantitative and qualitative methods of data collection.[458]

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[456] Viswanath Venkatesh, Susan A. Brown, and Hillol Bala "Bridging the Qualitative-Quantitative Divide: Guidelines for conducting Mixed Methods Research in Information Systems," *MIS* Quarterly 37, no. 1 (2013), 21.

Given the limited availability of secondary sources on the subject, this study relied heavily on primary data is gathered firsthand and directly addresses the research questions.[459] As far as the researcher's knowledge, no prior studies on this topic have been published since the liberalisation of the airwaves in Uganda.[460]

The data collection methods employed in this study included questionnaires to identify key informants and other relevant quantitative data, interviews with key informants, focus group discussions with active listeners or consumers of the media content, participant observation, qualitative data analysis (QDA), digital ethnography (specifically, social media and weblogs)), library and archive research, as well as maintaining a research dairy technique as discussed below.

Questionnaires

As part of the data collection process, the researcher deisgned questionnaires with relevant questions during the initial phase of fieldwork. The primary objective of using questionnaires in this study was to assess the suitability of the research approach and to gather quantitative data. In designing the questionnaires, factors such as religious affiliation, ethnicity, gender, occupation, and social class were taken into consideration. A total of 150 questionnaires were distributed in Kampala, and 70% were returned and analysed. The findings from the questionnaires informed the development of these for themes for the qualitative research phase. These findings informed the design of interview guides, ensuring that key themes like media consumption habits, religious identity formation, and the role of Muslim owned media outlets such as Voice of Africa, Bilal FM, and Pearl FM were thoroughly explored in the subsequent interviews.

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[457] Ibid., 36.

[458] Ibid.

[459] See Kothari, *Research Methodology: Methods and Techniques*, 95.

[460] See, Emily Comfort Maractho, "Broadcasting Governance and Development in Museveni's Uganda." 10.

Key Informants Interview

This study engaged 51 key informants from various categories. During the data collection process, the researcher conducted in-depth, unstructured interviews with the proprietors of the radio stations under investigation, journalists, clerics regularly featured on these stations, active listeners, and Muslim public intellectuals who use these platforms to propagate their understanding of Islam. A total of 35 in-person interviews were conducted, each lasting between 60-90 minutes, while 16 interviews were carried out via telephone due to logistical constraints, primarily with respondents whom I could find meet in Kampala. The unstructured nature of these interviews offered flexibility during the interview process. While time-consuming and requiring a high level of skills, this method is particularly recommended for exploratory research.[461] The researcher employed various techniques to elicit relevant information from respondents, ensuring comprehensive understanding to the issues at hand. The in-depth, face-to-face interviews allowed the researcher to explore motivational aspects of all parties involved, which would have been difficult to achieve through other interview methods. This approach enabled the researcher to uncover unconscious, yet pertinent, information through seemingly unrelated questions, as well as gather insights into the respondents' behaviours and attitudes, particularly regarding rival groups.

In case of the Manya Obusilamu YouTube channel, the researcher conducted interviews with two former members of Allied Democratic Forces (ADF), who now resides in Kampala. These interviews provided clarity and collaboration regarding the information obtained from the video lectures by inaccessible ADF leaders.

Table 6: Interview Guide

Section	Content
General Introductions	
Introduction	Research context, purpose, consent, rights, process, background.
Interviewee Introductions	Name, place of birth, ethnicity, religious affiliation, language, level of education (Islamic and secular), religious duty (imam, teacher, preacher, etc.)
Owners, Practitioners, and Consumers	
Owners	Name of the media house, type (radio, TV, or both?), history, mission, vision, objectives, challenges and successes, duration, and other relevant information

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[461] See: Michael Q Patton, *Qualitative Research and Evaluation Methods* (Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage, 2002), 339.

Journalists	Packaging of religious programs, total number of programs, program content, pattern of production, success and challenges, other important information
Clerics and public intellectuals	Audience demographics and motivation, opinions on integrating new media into religious activities, Impact of religious media on Muslim life and religious diversity in Uganda, and changes in religious practices
Media consumers	Motivation, impact on daily life, media preferences, opinions on mediated media compared to traditional mosque-based practices

Participant Observation

Participant observation was another key technique employed in this study. The researcher spent five months immersed in the community, interacting with the study subjects including listeners, produces, and clerics. This period provided opportunities to observe media conception habits, listen to radio programs alongside the subjects and engage them in informal conversions. The researcher also conducted semi-structured interviews with listeners to gain insights into their media preferences, motivations, and the impact of media on their daily lives. to interview producers, presenters, and hosts. The researcher also engaged listeners in both formal (through interviews) and informal conversations during broadcast periods.

In addition to radio programs, the researcher participated in religious events and observed media consumers in public spaces such as community gatherings, mosques, and public transport hubs, where radio consumption and discussions often occurred. These observations allowed the researcher to document how media was engaged with communal settings.

The researcher attended mosque preaching sessions, including weekly Jumu'ah prayers, to follow up with clerics who use both the mosque *minbar* and media platforms to disseminate their Islamic teachings. These observations helped explore the relationship between traditional religious practices and the influence of media on shaping Muslim identity in Uganda.

Qualitative Content Analysis (QCA)

Qualitative Content Analysis was a key method used to analyse the documents and program schedules from the three selected radio stations. This technique allowed for a deeper interpretation of the Muslim owned media content within contemporary Uganda.[462] Weekly programs schedules from selected radio stations were collected and thoroughly analysed to determine the primary themes of their content. Additionally, two programs from each station were selected for detailed analysis to align with the objectives of this study.

This method was also applied to the analysis of content on the YouTube Channel, "Manya Obusilamu." This is the channel is known for hosting lectures by clerics associated with the Allied Democratic Forces (ADF), a rebel movement. With over ten thousand subscribers and more than one hundred views as of December 2022, this channel plays a significant role in sharing Islamic identity in Uganda.[463] Due to security concerns, the researcher relied on the content posted on the channel together with comments from the viewers to assess the impact of the channel. Two lectures, each lasting about an hour and a half-length were selected based on the speakers, topic, and view count. The lectures were delivered by two prominent figures in the ADF: Jamilu Mukulu, the group's founder, and Musa Baluku, who assumed leadership after Mukulu's arrest in 2015. These figures significantly influence the movement's interpretation of Islam, which, in turn, shapes the identity of the movement.

Table 7: Selected Programs and Video for QCA

Media Channel	**Total Number (Programs/videos)**	**Programs/Video Selected**	**Method of Selection**
Voice of Africa FM	140	Program *Da'wa* (Mon-Fri, 13-15:00H and 21-23:00)	Purposive Sampling
Pearl FM Radio	140	*Da'wa* (Mon-Fri 21-23:00) and Buuza Imam wo - 'Ask your Imam'(Sun 9-11:00)	Purposive Sampling
Radio Bilal FM	140	Program *Da'wa* (Mon -Fri 14-15:00 and 21-23:00)	Purposive sampling
Manya Obusilamu, (YouTube)	150 audio-videos	"Abdulkarimu Yafa Mukafiiri Omunnanfusi" (Abdulkarim died in disbelief, he was a hypocrite)-Jamilu Mukulu,[464] and "Omusilamu Ateegomba kulwana abeela Mukafiiri"	Purposive Sampling

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[462] For more on the Qualitative Content Analysis data collection method, see Margit Schreier, *Qualitative Content Analysis in Practice* (London: Sage Publications, 2012).

[463] See the channel via this link: youtube.com/channel/UCE7WERejkLfbWJH7t29AqsQ, accessed on Jan 2, 2023.

[464] https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=H7uRwZrqdi0

		(A Muslim with no desire to Fight is a disbeliever)-Musa Baluku.[465]	
Thuraya Media	Facebook channel	Muslim Position on the 2021 Elections in Uganda	Purposive sampling

Source: Field Data

The table above illustrates the media channels purposively selected for Qualitative Content Analysis (QCA) purposes. The two radio stations broadcast 140 programs per week, while the "Manya Obusilamu" YouTube channel had over 150 lecture videos at the time of the fieldwork. Six related radio programs (two from each radio station), one lecture from Thurayya Islam media, and two lectures from ADF's YouTube channel for extensive QCA purposes. These selections provided critical insights into how various religious groups define Islam as we shall see in the subsequent chapters.

Digital Ethnography

The digital ethnography method was primarily utilised to gather information from the YouTube channel, Manya Obusilamu and the Facebook of Thurayya Islam Media. This method involves both participation and observation in the digital research.[466] The researcher's digital observation included archiving reviews and comments on selected lecture videos from the during the fieldwork. Digital participation involved actively engaging with and closely following posts and comments on these platforms.

Social Media and Weblogs

To enhance the data collected, the research also utilised various weblogs and social media networks managed or were initiated by Muslim groups of diverse Islamic orientations. One key weblog was the Uganda Muslim Brothers and Sisters (UMBS), started by Abbey Semuwemba a Muslim social-political commentator based in the United Kingdom. The blog is an open public forum for discussing any issues concerning Uganda Muslims. Established in

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[465] https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=NxpEwLSuy9I

[466] See, for example, Dhiraj Murthy, "Digital Ethnography: An Examination of the Use of New Technologies for Social Research." *Sociology*, 42, no. 5 (2008).

2010, it has over 6000 registered members, primary Ugandans in the diaspora and educated elite.[467]

The blog offers detailed discussions on the social, economic, political, and religious life of Muslims in Uganda. UMBS participants are particularly active in sharing Muslim-related news updates. The blog also has a Facebook page and a WhatsApp group that shares similar content. For research purposes, the researcher became a registered member of these platforms, enabling close monitoring of daily Muslim-related news feeds from Uganda. Information from WhatsApp groups and blogs was vital for this study, allowing the researcher to follow discussions sourced from broadcasting activities of Voice of Africa Radio, Bilal FM, and Pearl FM. In instances requiring further clarification, direct WhatsApp messages or calls were used to contact contributors for consent and additional information.

Table 8: Surveyed Social Media and Weblogs

Name	Type	Mission	Year	Participants
Uganda Muslim Brothers and Sisters (UMBS)	Blog	Ugandan Muslim site that encourages open discussion on issues related to Islam and Muslims in Uganda	2010-	6000
Mia-Mia Foundation	WhatsApp Group	Encourages Muslims to donate 100 UGX per day. Also serves as a space for sharing and discussing information relevant to Islam and Muslims in Uganda	2015-	188
Uganda Muslim Brothers and Sis’	WhatsApp Group	Ugandan Muslim site that encourages open discussion on issues related to Islam and Muslims in Uganda	2018-	344

Source: Field Data

This table lists the social media and weblogs that were surveyed for the study. These platforms provided essential data and facilitated discussion that complemented the focus group discussions (FGD) conducted during the active filed phase.

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[467] See details about UMBS here: https://ugandamuslims.wordpress.com/organisation/

Archive Research

Archival research was employed as a key method for examining the historical documents that shed light on past events relevant to the intersection of religion and media in Uganda. This method allows for the study of materials that offer insights into earlier periods, potentially revealing information not accessible through contemporary sources.[468] The researcher analysed important primary source materials, including both published and unpublished works, old newspapers, government reports, media and communication documents relevant to the study.

To access archive material, the researcher visited several libraries, including those at Makerere University, the Islamic University in Uganda, the Uganda Communication Commission (UCC), and Kampala City Council Authority (KCCA). These libraries provided a wealth of resources that contributed to understand the history of Islam and Muslims in Uganda, as well as the dynamic relationship between media and religion since the advent of mass media in the country. Additionally, the researcher the archives of the Uganda Broadcasting Corporation (UBC) to review old broadcast programs and gain insights into the nature of religious broadcasts over the years. The table below summarises the library visited for archive research.

Table 9: Libraries Used for Archive Search

Name	**Type**
Islamic University in Uganda (IUIU)	University Library
Makerere University	University Library
Kampala City Council Authority (KCCA)	Public Library
Uganda Communication Commission (UCC)	Semi-Public Library
Uganda Broadcasting Corporation (UBC)	Semi-Public Library

Source: Field Data 2020

Research Diary

A research diary was utilized as method for collecting qualitative data during the research process. This diary was instrumental in documenting daily activities, experience, and reflections related to the fieldwork.[469] The researcher kept notes and observations, typically recorded in the evenings, which provided initial reflections on the data being collected as well as the research experience itself.

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[468] Marc J. Ventresca and John W. Mohr, "Archival Research Methods," in *The Blackwell Companion to Organizations* ed, Joel A. C. Baum (Oxford: Blackwell, 2017).

The research diary served as a valuable tool for processing ideas, documenting experiences, addressing challenges, and recording breakthroughs.[470] The researcher continued to use the dairy even after the active data collection phase to capture any additional information relevant to the study. It is served as a repository for documenting informal conversations with experts in the field at the Department for the Study of Religions at the University of Cape Town, Islamic University in Uganda, and Makerere University as well as discussions with colleagues and friends on topics related to the research. These discussions often provided valuable insights that helped in unpacking themes, testing assumptions, and exploring the implications of emerging findings. The research diary played a crucial role in reflecting on fieldwork, analysis and writing process.

Data Management and Analysis

Data Management

Interview data was collected in both Luganda and English, recorded, transcribed, and, when necessary, translated into English. Transcription and translation were sometimes conducted immediately after interviews to ensure that the insights obtained on-site were preserved. The data were then organised into themes based on similarities and differences.

Data collected from the radio stations under study were recorded in a field notebook, with some programs also recorded for later analysis. Like interview data, this information was coded based on thematic similarities and differences. For social media networks, the researcher noted and summarised informal discussions that were relevant to the study. Some participants preferred not to be recorded; in which case the researcher took notes manually.

The video lectures from the YouTube channel Manya Obusilamu were downloaded for further analysis. This data, along with the transcribed and coded information, was analysed and compared with theoretical and empirical literature themes that illuminated the relationship between media and religious identity.

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[469] Lauri L. Hyers, *Diary Data Collection as a Qualitative Research Method* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2018).

[470] Uwe Flick, *An introduction to Qualitative Research* 5th Ed., (London: SAGE, 2014), 293.

Data Analysis

Quantitative data from the questionnaires were analysed using Microsoft Excel to calculate frequencies and percentages, revealing demographic information, listenership patterns, and audiences' motivations. For qualitative data, the researcher employed an interpretative analysis, constructing themes and patterns fieldwork data to describe and explain the phenomena under study. These themes were used to relate the coded data to existing theoretical frameworks, facilitating a deeper understanding of how media influence religious identity.

Ethical Consideration

The study adhered to the UCT code for research involving human subjects (available at; http://www.education.uct.ac.za), ensuring scholarly integrity, social responsibility, and respect for participants. Given the sensitive nature of religious topics in Uganda, the researcher took care to maintain anonymity and obtain informed consent from all participants. Interviewees were free to discontinue participation at any time, and their confidentiality was safeguarded throughout the research process.[471] The researcher also ensured that all interview transcriptions were made available to participants upon request, addressing any contested information promptly.

Strengths and Limitations of the Study

Conducting research in Uganda, the researcher's country of origin, provided several advantages. Language barriers were avoided, facilitating effective communication and extraction of vital information. The researcher's familiarity with the radio stations under study, as well as the cultural and social nuances of the Muslim community, also contributed to success of the fieldwork.[472] However, being an insider presented challenges such as respondents assuming the researcher already knew certain information. In such cases, the researcher had to emphasise the importance of obtaining participants' personal opinions for the study.

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[471] On maintaining the confidentiality of respondents see, Uwe Flick, *An Introduction to Qualitative Research* 5th ed. (Los Angeles: SAGE, 2014), 49-55

[472] See Robert Yin, "*Case Study Research: Design and Methods*." 3rd ed. (Thousand Oka: Sage Publication, 2003) (see especially chapter 2).

Translation from local languages to English posed another challenge, as it sometimes led to a loss of the original meaning. To mitigate this, the researcher consulted key informants for clarification and verification.

Security concerns also limited access to certain individuals, particularly those associated with the YouTube channel, Manya Obusilamu, which is linked to a rebel movement designated by as a terrorist organisation. To address this limitation, the researcher interviewed former members of the movement who had personal connections with the speakers featured in the lecture videos.

Conclusion

This study is contributing to the limited empirical research on the relationship between religion and media in Uganda, with a specific focus on how Muslim-owned media shapes Muslim identity in the contemporary Ugandan society. The mixed-method approach, combining surveys, interviews, participant observations, focus group interviews and document collection, provided a comprehensive understanding of the subject. While the findings are contextual and not necessarily generalisable, they offer valuable insights that can inform broader studies in humanities and social sciences.[473]

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[473] See Bent Flyvbjerg, "Case Study," in *The SAGE Handbook of Qualitative Research*, ed. Norma K. Denzin and Yvonna S. Lincoln (Thousand Oaks, CA: SAGE, 2011).

CHAPTER SIX

MASS MEDIA AND RELIGION IN UGANDA

> *"Power has shifted from those who control the means of production to those who control the medium of mass communication"*[474]

Introduction

The previous chapter has examined the history of Islam and Muslims in Uganda. Following that trajectory, this examines the position of religious media and how they navigated the situation. It goes further to understand the motive behind the adoption and use of new media technology by the Muslim community in contemporary Uganda. In doing so, the chapter investigates, the issue pertaining representation of Islam and Muslims in Ugandan media a recurring theme in the reasons behind adopting the new media by Muslim respondents.

The chapter draws on scholarship that positions minority media ownership as a response to misrepresentations and marginalisation in mainstream media.[475] This aligns with the framing processes that media employ – through selection, emphasis, and exclusion – to shape audience perception. Since media is taken as a public good, ownership is tied to the freedom of speech but is rarely granted to minority groups in a competitive reality. Thus, through ownership of a media outlet a minority group can be assured of a voice in the media marketplace. Specifically, the chapter argues that Muslims in Uganda have turned to new media ownership as means of asserting their voice in a crowded and often hostile media marketplace, with the aim of countering biased portrayals of Islam. The misrepresentation of Muslims is not limited to political, economic, and social spheres, as discussed earlier, but extends to the media environment, which has historically played a role in "othering" Muslim communities.

Framing theory, which suggests that media not only reflect reality but also actively construct it through particular frames, is crucial to understanding how the Ugandan media has portrayed Muslims. By framing Muslims in certain stereotypical or negative ways, these media outlets have contributed to broader societal misperceptions. This chapter argues that Muslim media in Uganda, in response, has embraced new media technologies not just t oseek representation but to foster identity construction that reclaims their narrative from dominant media portrayals.

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[474] Extracted from Prof. Jerome A. Brown's article while citing the British M.P and publicists, R.H.S Crossman in 1965. See, Jerome A. Brown, "Access to the Press: A New Frist Amendment Right," *Harvard Law Review* 80, no. 1 (1967), 1644.

[475] Dam He Kim, "Diversity Policies in the Media Marketplace: A Review of Studies of Minority Ownership, Employment. And Content," *International Journal of Communication* 10, (2016).

Religious Mediascape in Uganda

Like elsewhere in the developing world, Uganda has a diverse media sector. Its mass media industry includes print, broadcasting (TV and Radio) and the Internet. The coverage is divided between public (state-run) and private/commercial media outlets. Few outlets fall in the community media category.[476] The framing of religious content within these media outlets – especially private broadcasting – reflects broader patterns of representations, bias, and exclusion.

In the broadcasting sector, public broadcasting, in theory, serves national interest, by promoting unity and stability while catering to marginalised groups. It is also expected to ensure that media serve the public interest avoiding one-sided reporting regarding religion, political orientation, race, gender, and ethnicity.[477] However, as Media Framing Theory suggests, the choice of content and the way it is framed can skew perceptions, even in state-controlled media. The commercial media sector on the other hand is expected to strike a balance between profits and social responsibility whilst providing a vibrant media industry that plays a key role in nation-building by reflecting the rich cultural, linguistic, religious, and regional diversity of Uganda. [478]

Religious media, categorised as a private entity, often function within the commercial sector, subject to both financial pressures and broadcasting policies. In its document that guides the standard operating procedures of religious broadcasting in Uganda, UCC defines religious programming as content that deals with matters of religion and spiritual.[479] Thus, in the Ugandan context, religious media is any media outlet with a significant portion of programs that adhere to the definition of UCC's religious programming. This framework, while providing a space for religious expression also shapes the parameters within which religious media can operate.

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[476] "Assessment of Media Development in Uganda," *International Program for the Development of Communication*, UNESCO Report 2018.

[477] Ibid.

[478] See, The Republic of Uganda: National Broadcasting Policy, (2004), 31.

[479] Uganda Communications Commission (UCC): Standards for Religious Broadcasting Programming in Uganda.

Although most religious broadcasting media outlets operate within a specific region or geographic location, most of them communicate using not only local languages but also incorporate English and Kiswahili the two official national languages of the country since 1960 and 2005 respectively. As noted elsewhere, Uganda is a multicultural and multilingual nation. It is estimated that over 40 languages are spoken in Uganda, but only English proves to have a wider and inclusive capacity. This is because, it is the formal language used in education, the judiciary, and the government. As a result, it has helped the media to spread the message beyond ethnic and cultural barriers which in turn increase the number of the targeted audience. Also, in such a diverse community, multi-lingual broadcasting helps in delivering one message at the same time while targeting diverse communities. Other local languages used include Luganda which is spoken by Baganda who constitute about 18% of the population. It is also a widely spoken second language alongside English, especially in urban centres. Specifically, Muslim radio and television stations also incorporate the use of Ki- Nubbi language to cater to the Nubian Muslim community which forms a large minority of Muslim communities in Uganda.[480] Moreover, the majority of these Muslim media are urban-based. This is attributed to the need to access commercial advertisers. Also, Muslims make up a significant number of urban populations, and for Muslim media, it is an added advantage.[481]

Religious radio and television stations in Uganda integrate mobile technology in most of their programs to increase audience engagement. Listeners call into a talk show and contribute their own opinions about the topic. As a result, the amount of information and opinion from the audience regarding a specific topic increase while at the same time helping the listener/viewers make a more informed decision. It is also in this line that instead of talking about the community for a given media audience, the people themselves talk about themselves.[482] In such a situation, therefore, Muslim media also use this option to tap into the benefits of call-in programs. They have also adopted the use of the internet to widen their outreach. Most stations have live-streaming services to reach a wider audience than traditional broadcasting could have done.[483] Additionally, most of them, if not all, are connected to major social media networks such as Facebook, YouTube, Instagram, and Twitter.

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[480] See Abudul Mahajubu, “Citizen Status Uganda: How Nubian went from Mercenaries to Citizens?” *The African Post*, January 26, 2022. Retrieved from, https://www.theafricareport.com/170660/uganda-how-the-nubians-went-from-mercenaries-to-citizens/ on 3 May 2022.

[481] Boguslaw “Zero Politics of Muslim Minorities in Uganda and Burundi.” *PRZEGLAD ORIENTALiSTYCZNY*, 2/3, 2020, pp. 256-264; Isabella Soi, “The Muslim Minority in Uganda: The Historical Quest for Unity and Inclusion.” *Africana*, (2016).

By 2022, there were nearly 300 licensed radio stations and 70 television stations serving over 35 million Ugandans.[484] Radio is a more popular medium than television and newspapers due to its affordability and accessibility. About three-quoters of the population own a mobile phone of which 16 per cent have access to smartphones. The internet penetration rate stood at 29 percent with 13 million Ugandans estimated to use the internet by January 2022.[485] A survey carried out nationally by BBC World Service in 2015 found that 87 per cent of the Ugandan adult population had a working radio, and 74 per cent owned a mobile phone in their homes. However, it was only 34% owned a working television and was concentrated in urban. The low levels of television use are because of limited access to national grids. The report also established that social media use and access to the internet increased from 40,000 (1%) in December 2000, to 19 million (43%) of the population (mostly young males 15-34) in 2017.[486]

Historical Development of Religious Mass Media in Uganda

Religious Newspaper Industry

Uganda's newspaper industry started with the initiative of the Anglican missionaries of the Church Missionary Society (CMS) in the late 1890s. On their arrival in the country, they brought with them a printing press that aided in providing printed teaching materials and translation of religious scriptures into local languages. Thus, it was the printing press that was used to print the first mimeographed newspaper. However, sketchy information exists on this mimeograph making it difficult to even establish its name.[487] In May 1900 the first recorded newspaper, *Mengo Notes* was printed at the CMS's' Industrial Mission Press located in Mengo, near Kampala city. Mengo Notes was an English newspaper edited by Rev. A. W. Crabtree. In 1907, CMS added a Luganda version newspaper *Ebifa mu Buganda,* to the English *Mengo* Notes.

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[482] See: David Okwii, "How the Mobile Phone Changed the Way We Listen to Radio in Africa." *Dignity* was last updated on June 13, 2014. Accessed from https://www.dignited.com/152/how-the-mobile-phone-changed-the-way-we-listen-to-radio-in-africa/

[483] See for example: "Uganda Radio Stations." *Streema*, accessed from: https://streema.com/radios/country/Uganda

[484] See: "Licensed Radio and Television Broadcasters as At October." *Uganda Communication Commission*, accessed March 12, 2023, from https://www.ucc.co.ug/industry-affairs/

[485] https://datareportal.com/reports/digital-2022-uganda

[486] Uganda-Media Landscape Report, *BBC Media Action*, February 2019.

[487] Ndugu Mike Ssali, "The Ugandan Press: A commentary." *UFAHAMU* 17, no. 3 (1986), 167.

CMS had two main objectives in establishing *Mengo Notes*. First, the paper was meant to act as a medium through which missionaries in Uganda and those abroad on leave would keep each other informed about their work in the Ugandan British protectorate. This could help them devise effective means in their missionary work with relevant information. Second, it was meant to focus on Church news and report on government policies which might impact missionary endeavours in Uganda. Thus, while it was a missionary newspaper, meant for missionary work, issues related to politics were fully recorded.[488] The Luganda version intended to deliver the gospel message to local Ugandans who did not understand English.[489] This could help in attracting more elite local population since by then, literacy levels were still very low and could only be accessed by the elite class.

Realizing the role of mass media particularly newspapers by then, the Roman Catholic missionaries also entered the industry. However, unlike the Anglicans who started with English newspapers, the Catholics began with *Munno* publishing it in the Luganda language. The paper was published by White Fathers and thrived until the early 1990s. By 1915, the Luganda versions had gained an incredible circulation of over 1300 copies compared to 200 copies in 1911. All the newspapers, *Mengo Notes* and *Munno* were predominantly religious in content and intended to spread the Christian mission. Later in 1951, the CMS established another publication called *New Day*, which was intended to provide more information about the mission and church's activities. The 'White Fathers' also 1956 expanded their scope with more newspapers in other local languages in the country. Papers such as *Suru Madri*, *Enyonyozi Yaitu, Rwenzori Echo,* and *Etoil York,* among others, started to appear. However, many ceased circulations during the political crises and civil wars that ravaged Uganda from the late 1960s until the late 1980s.

Table 10: Church Press (1870-1990)

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[488] Sekeba, "*Media Bullets in Uganda: A Reference Guide to History of Newspapers, their Role in Church and Politics of Uganda*."
[489] Ibid.

Name	Language	Years	Affiliation
1. Mengo Notes	English	1900	Anglican
2. *Ebifa Mu buganda*	Luganda	1907	Anglican
3. *Munno*	Luganda	1911	Catholics
4. Uganda Notes	English	1917	Anglican
5. Uganda Church Review	English	1926	Anglican
6. *Ebifa mu Uganda*	Luganda	1934	Anglican
7. *Lobo Mewa*	Acholi	1951	Catholics
8. *Suru Madri*	Lugbara	1956	Catholics
9. *Enyonyozi Yaitu*	Luganda	1957	Catholics
10. New Day	English	1959	Anglican
11. New Century	English	1976	Anglican

Source: Field Data

As seen in the table above, there are a few observable features of early Christian newspapers in Uganda. Catholics had more newspapers in local languages than their counterparts. This of course helped in the growth and development of local languages. However, most importantly is that their intended consequences of 'spreading the word of God' could easily be delivered to local audiences in the language understood and used in the country. This was strategically important given the fact that all missionary newspapers had been initiated with the main aim of delivering their religious doctrine in the homes of many people as much as possible and directing the response of the indigenous community.[490]

About the same time after *Munno,* the first secular and privately owned newspapers were established. The *Uganda Herald* was founded with a clientele of mainly Europeans and a few Asian and African-educated elites. But as literacy levels in the local population grew, so did the readership and the demand to expand the scope to include other aspects of the media.[491] In 1921, *Sekanolya* newspaper was established by local Ugandans focusing on issues of discrimination, exploitation, and oppression of the natives by both their traditional leaders and the colonial government. As seen in the previous chapter, the colonial government had created classes in the country that included bureaucrats Buganda government (led by the *Kabaka/*King and his administration), and the descendants of the local landlords (who were beneficiaries of the square-mile lands in compensation for their relentless support in the colonization process of the country) of the 1900 Buganda Agreement.[492] Thus, such newspapers were introduced to fill that gap. Later more papers joined the line, especially after World War II with agitation for independence in both English and some local languages led by war veterans who had come back with a spirit of nationalism.[493]

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[490] See Ngugu Mike Ssali "The Ugandan Press: A Commentary." *Ufahamu*, 17, no. 3 (1986).

[491] Henry Lubega, "A Look Back at the 119-year Journey of Uganda's Newspapers." *Daily Monitor*, May 19, 2019.

Muslim Newspapers

As for the Ugandan Muslim community, there was a systematic delay in embracing the newspaper industry. The delay is attributed to a lack of organisations able to establish and maintain interesting newspapers with reliable and commercially viable readership. Sekeba also points to the lack of Western education within the Muslim community. He argues that Arab Muslims who came in the 1840s were only interested in trade and teaching the Koran rather than secular (Western) education.[494] While Sekeba's argument is true, as we saw in the previous chapter, the colonial government was sceptical of Muslims and introduced a biased colonial funding policy for education.[495] Thus, they never endeavoured to advance the education of the Muslim community in the country. While huge funds were put into Christian missionary schools, nothing was done to the Muslim counterparts. This system affected Muslim advancement in education and kept them in traditional madrasah which was only teaching religious subjects and Arabic language. When they tried getting them into 'secular' schools (that were governed and controlled by Christian missionaries) the objective was to nurture them into Western Christian values. Also, to attain education the colonial government intended for Muslims to abandon what they called "fanatical' Islamic ideologies."[496]

Thus, due to the limited number of Muslim newspaper consumers, it was very difficult for Muslim-oriented print media to thrive in such an empty environment. It is also possible that such a situation explains why the scanty studies on media and Islam in Uganda are very few, if any. The same reason makes the current study significant. Accordingly, even the available work, focuses on print and only meanders when it comes to the broadcasting sector. Since Kiyimba's (1990) section on "*The Ugandan Mass Media and Islam*", nothing substantial has been done on this topic so far. Here still, Kiyimba (1990) only dealt with print media and little on the electronic side. Broadcasting media at that time was still in its infancy and Muslims were yet to join the field. Sekeba (2016)'s work "*The Media Bullets in Uganda*" is a recent publication that delves deep into the history of media. However, even though Sekeba dedicates two chapters to the Church, namely, *The Church Press*, and the *Church, Politics, and the Press*, Muslim media only appears in the footnote.[497]

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[492] A.b. Kasozi, Nakanyike Musisi, and James Mukooza Sejjengo, *The Social Origin of Violence in Uganda 1964-1985*.

[493] Jacob Matovu, "Mass Media as Agencies of Socialization in Uganda." *Journal of Black Studies* 20, no. 3 (1990), 347.

[494] Sekeba, *Media Bullets in Uganda*, 49.

[495] Kasule, *Islam in Uganda: Muslim Minority, Nationalism, and Political Power*, 96.

[496] Suleiman Kiggundu and Isa Lukwago, "The Status of Muslim Education Uganda," *Institute of Muslim Minority Affairs* 4, no. 1-2 (1982). Also see Abasi Kiyimba, "The Problem of Muslim Education in Uganda: Some Reflections," Institute *of Muslim Minority Affairs* 7, no. 1 (1986).

This however does not mean that Muslims did not engage in any type of modern media at a time. Records from available publications on the subject and the archives show that it was in 1951, that the Muslim community started to make attempts and joined the print media landscape. This was the time when Muslim publications started to appear on the streets of Kampala. Drake Sekeba (2016) and Abasi Kiyimba (1990) recorded some of these publications. According to these authors, the *voice of Islam* seems to be the first on the list. It was a monthly magazine established in 1951. It is not clear, however, the organization or person responsible for its publication. Even the vibrant Muslim organization at that time – the Uganda Muslim Education Association (UMEA) is known for only Qur'an schooling activities.[498] Besides the establishment of Qur'an schools, traces of their involvement in the media industry are vague. Thus, *Voice of Islam* seems to be a private entity published by 'concerned' members of the Ugandan Muslim community. Other publications include *Ismail News*, a fortnightly publication by the Ismail Muslim community (Kampala); *Ddobozi Ly'obusilamu* (Voice of Islam) privately owned Luganda magazine established in 1959 and edited by Mohamed Ibrahim (Kampala) and the Luganda pamphlet on the history of Islam in Uganda by Sheik Ali Kulumba (1912 – 2004), published in 1953.

Later publications before the advent of electronic media include *The Shariat*, established in 1986. It was a weekly newspaper with a focus on political issues and some Islamic teachings; *The Vicegerent*, established in 1987, by members of Uganda Muslim Youth Assembly (UMYA)

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[497] Sekeba, *Media Bullets in Uganda*.

[498] Kiggundu and Lukwago, "The Status of Muslim Education Uganda."

1987 and the *Weekly Message* which later became a print part of the *Voice of Africa* FM Radio. However, due to a lack of trained personnel, capital, and satisfactory circulation, many survived for a short while and ceased publication.[499] Other reasons were political interventions. *The Shariati*, for example, was one of the few religious papers that were critical to the state. The weekly newspaper was banned for 'security reasons' when it published confidential news on Uganda's relationship with Rwanda. The chief editor Haji Haruna Kanaabi was arrested and later convicted of a sedition charge on Aug 25, 1995. He was late released due to international pressure on Dec 27, 1996, after overturning the conviction.[500]

In recent years, the Uganda Muslim Supreme Council started the publication of *The Torch*, a newspaper which has been replaced with a weekly *Friday News* since 2017. The paper covers both religious, and other Islamic-related social, economic, and political issues. Also, the Uganda Shia community recently started a monthly newsletter. Published by Al-Mustafah Islamic College-Uganda (AIC-Uganda), the *Al-Bayan* newsletter covers a range of issues including religious, political, and social issues. By December 2018, the 80th issue had been released in full circulation in Uganda and beyond.[501]

Table 11: Muslim Newspapers

Newspaper	**Language**	**Year**	**Affiliation**
1. *Voice of Islam*	English	1951	Private
2. *Eddobozi Ly'Obusilam*	Luganda	1959	Private
3. *Ismail News*	English		Ismail Muslim community
4. *Ekitangala* (the Light)	Luganda		Private
5. *The Focus*	English		Private
6. *The Shariat*	English	1986	Private
7. *The Vicegerent*	English	1987	Uganda Muslim Youth Assembly (UMYA)

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[499] Sekeba, *Media Bullets in Uganda: A Reference Guide to History of Newspapers, their Role in Church and Politics of Uganda*, 7; Ibrahim Semuju, "Press Coverage of Islam in Uganda 1994-1996," (BA thesis, Makerere University 1998); Matovu, Mass Media as Agencies of Socialization in Uganda, 343.

[500] Interview with Haji Haruna Kanabi, Kampala, Dec 2019; See Irefworld, 'Attacks on the Press in 1996-Uganda', UNHCR, accessed from; https://www.refworld.org/docid/47c5651d19.html

[501] See: Al-Bayaan News and views, *AIC-Uganda*, December 1, 2018.

8. *Weekly Message*	English	1988	Union of Muslim Councils (UMC)
9. *The Torch*	English	2005	UMSC
10. *Friday News*	English	2018	UMSC
11. *Al-Bayaan*	English	2012	AIC-Uganda
12. *Assalaam News*	English	1986	Private

Source: Field Data

As we can see the history of the press in Uganda is a history of colonialism and Christian missionary. The church here can be credited for playing a significant role in the development of the newspaper industry. While the intention was to spread Christianity and European civilization, it also stimulated innovation and contributed to a dimension of other independent papers and publications. It was in the same manner that 1953, Sheikh Kulumba was able to write and publish his first book for a Muslim audience in 1953. It was a book that narrated the history of Islam in Uganda. In this book, he compiled stories that had been told to him by his teachers such as Sheikh Abdallah Sekimwanyi who had also produced similar work but in hand-written form. The 30-page book is now a primary source for many writers on the history of Islam in the country. The Muslim press industry could be described as an on-and-off publication due to its inconsistencies on the market.

Also, in recent years, there has been a substantial increase in coverage of Muslims and Muslim issues in both private and national newspapers. While some of it is negative but also the positive side is available. In 2012 for example, the national newspaper, the *New Vision* established a section which is dedicated to Muslim affairs.[502] The section is named “The Muslim Community” and covers news about Muslims in the country such as social support extensions to the community, or government support that targets Muslims among others. It also sometimes has educative information about Islamic teachings on matters such as the benefits of fasting during the month of Ramadan, how to attain love Allah, to political disputes within the Uganda Muslim community among others.[503]

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[502] See Soi, “The Muslim Minority Question,” 11.

[503] Moses Nampala, “Muslim Community get Food Relief,” *The New Vision*, 2022. Retrieved from https://www.newvision.co.ug/category/news/muslim-community-gets-food-relief-149361

Religious Broadcasting Media

In 1954, the colonial government established the first radio station in the country. Under the Ministry of Information, the radio promoted the colonial government agenda. It was in full and direct control of the colonial state. As argued by Mcquail,[504] the country's media system is a product of its political and economic history, and Uganda's broadcasting media landscape follows a similar pattern. Broadcasting was viewed by the colonial government as a tool that would bring a greater number of Africans into direct touch with the government than any other media. While at face value this radio establishment appeared to be a move to encourage social development, a closer look suggests that the radio was meant to control growing pro-independence movements.[505] As expected, the post-colonial government followed a similar approach. In 1963, just one year after independence, the country prepared grounds for the first television, Uganda Television (UTV). Television also followed the same pattern in promoting the agenda and ideas of the ruling government including religious matters as was the case with radio and newspaper outlets.

Noteworthy, since their inception, the two national broadcasters always set aside broadcasting time for the three major faith groups: Catholicism, Anglicanism, and Islam. Under the "Half Hour" and "Quarter Hour" arrangements, the national broadcasters allocated each religious group half an hour every week to preach and a quarter an hour for each faith to play songs or hymns. In later years, hour-length ecumenical programs for Christians were added where ministers from the Anglican, Catholic, and Orthodox churches discussed a theological topic. During this period, broadcasting media, especially radio programming was oriented towards promoting government projects and building national unity.[506] Religious programs on Radio Uganda and Uganda television, for example, were heavily limited not only in airtime allocation but in scope as well.[507] The religious content was limited not only to less than an hour per week but was also directed by the state to be cordial, respectful, and non-confrontational.[508]

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[504] Denis Mcquail, *Mass Communication Theory: An Introduction* (London: Sage, 3rd Edition, 1994), 18.
[505] See Mass Media and National Building in Uganda, 1962-1999. In Thirty Years of Independence, Makerere University.
[506] See A. Milton Obote, "A Plan for Nationhood," Transition No. 6/7, Oct. 1967: 18. For a full treatment of the early role of media in nation building see; Bernard Tabaire, "The Press and Political Repression in Uganda: Back and the Future? Journal of Eastern African Studies 1, no. 2 (2007).
[507] For a full treatment of early press in Uganda, see Zie Gariyo, "The Press and Democratic Struggles in Uganda, 1900-1962," (Kampala: Centre for Basic Research, Working Paper no. 24, 1992).

In 1993, airwaves were liberalized which allowed the existence of private/commercial and community media. Various religious groups joined the market. The Episcopal Conference, a notional body that governs the Catholic church was the pioneer in the case. The body started with *Radio Maria* in 1996, and the mission was to proclaim, "the Good News of Jesus Christ to all the people in Uganda, regardless of their religious affiliation."[509] Currently, they own over 19 radio stations, and three television stations countrywide as seen in the table below:

Table 12: Catholic Radio and Television Stations

CATHOLIC MEDIA OUTLET	AREA OF COVERAGE
1. Radio Maria-Kampala	Buganda
2. Radio Maria-Mbarara	Ankole
3. Radio Maria-Mbale	Bugisu
4. Radio Maria-Gulu	Acholi
5. Radio Maria-Nebbi	West-Nile
6. Radio Maria-Fort Portal	Tooro
7. Radio Maria-Moroto	Karamoja
8. Radio Maria-Kabale	Kigezi
9. Voice of Karamoja	Kotido
10. Radio Centenary	Masaka/Buganda
11. Jubilee FM	Tooro
12. Radio Pacis	West Nile (Arua)
13. Radio Wa	Lango
14. Delta FM	Teso
15. Kyoga Veritas	Teso
16. Radio Sapientia	Buganda/Kampala
17. Kasese Guide Radio	Bukonzo

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[508] See Uganda Broadcasting Corporation. [Faith Matters] Radio, and Television Tapes, 1958-1997, Uganda Broadcasting Corporation Archives, Kampala, Uganda.

[509] See Radio Maria (Uganda) Website: https://www.radiomaria.ug/the-organization/ accessed on March 3, 2022.

18. Radio Maria-Hoima	Bunyoro
19. Radio Maria-Lira	Lango
Television Stations	
1. Bukalango TV	Buganda/Wakiso
2. Uganda Catholic TV	Buganda/Kampala
3. TV Wa	Lango/Lira

Source: Field Data

Like the Catholic church, the Anglican community joined the broadcasting media in the late 1990s. Before the liberalization of the media, Anglicans had been active in the broadcasting sector with state media in a more advanced form. A few of the employees of Radio Uganda and Uganda Television were clergies from the Anglican community. In his remarks on the prospects of evangelism through radio broadcasting in Uganda, a veteran broadcaster and clergy Jackson Turyagenda argued that of all the historical faith groups in Uganda, the Anglican community had a better plan for engagement in broadcast media than other faith groups.[510] Turyagenda affirmed that this relationship started in 1962 when Rev. Canon John Paulton a CMS member established the Church of Uganda (CoU) Radio Centre at Bishop Tucker Theological College. The center was aimed at producing Christian broadcast content tailored to the needs and thinking of the natives, and effectively making use of the radio and television airtime given to them by the government's broadcasting sector. It could also be used to train radio and TV broadcasters with Anglican Church values.[511] Further, the centre was used to produce multi-lingual Christian broadcast content to feed the growing followers in the country.[512]

What is interesting, however, is that the Anglican community has not been so active in the private broadcasting media if compared to Catholics and later Pentecostal Christians. Fred Jenga's recent article on Christian broadcasting media identified only three Anglican Church-owned radio media outlets in Uganda. These are *Namilembe FM*, located in Kampala, *Revival Radio* in Mbarara, and *Messiah FM* broadcasting from Kasese. The church, however, partnered with different organizations to do media-related work. These organizations include *Words of Hope Ministries* an independent registered gospel recording ministry that partners with different Anglican dioceses to produce evangelical programs to evangelize native communities.[513]

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[510] Jackson Turyagenda, "Prospects of Evangelism through Radio Broadcasting Media in Developing National Community: A Ugandan Perspective," (PhD diss, Christian Theological Seminary, Indianapolis, 1982).

[511] Ibid, 67.

[512] Ibid, 72.

DIGUNA is another German evangelical agency that runs Voice of Life Radio in Arua with evangelicals proselytizing programs in the local Lugbara language. The organization was originally based in Eastern Congo. However, due to civil wars in the region, it was moved to Uganda. According to the DIGUNA website, West Nile was selected not only because it was closer to eastern DRC, but it is also a place with a substantial number of Muslims. "Since a large number of Muslims live in the West Nile, radio is a very good medium for bringing 'good news' into Muslim homes."[514] Thus, the Anglican church partnered with the DIGUNA too, to achieve their proselytizing objectives. Like the early CMS team, the most observable feature in Anglican Church media activities is the media efforts towards spreading the gospel. The media is viewed as a tool that can be used to spread Christian beliefs and values.[515]

Another religious group that has dominated the media landscape today is the Pentecostal, Evangelical Christians. Like elsewhere in Africa and beyond, Pentecostal Christians have mastered media use effectively to "spread the word of God."[516] Pentecostalism, one of the strands of Christianity that emphasizes the embodiment of the power of the Holy Spirit in a believer's daily life has grown from a small storefront congregation to a multi-congregational megachurch with a strong media presence in many African cities.[517] The group is believed to be one of the fastest-growing religious denominations in Africa.[518] In Uganda, almost every

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[513] Fred Jenga, "Selling God in Uganda": A Critical Cultural Study of Persuasion in Mediatized Neo-Pentecostalism," (PhD diss, University of Texas at Austin, 2021), 28.

[514] DIGUNA, "Arua Mission Station in Uganda" accessed from, https://diguna.de/projekte/station-arua-in-uganda/ on March 10, 2023.

[515] Fred Jenga, "Selling God in Uganda": A Critical Cultural Study of Persuasion in Mediatized Neo-Pentecostalism," (PhD thesis, University of Texas at Austin, 2021), 29.

[516] Ibid.

[517] Asonzeh Ukah, "Sacred Surplus and Pentecostal Too-Muchness: The Salvation Economy in African Megachurches," in *Handbook of Megachurches*, ed. Stephen Hunt (Leiden: Brill, 2020).

[518] See Asonzeh Ukah, "The Deregulation of Piety in the Context of Neoliberal Globalization: African Pentecostalisms in the Twenty-First Century," in *Global Renewal Christianity: Spirit-Empowered Movements Past, Present, and Future*, ed. Vinson Synan, J. Kwabena Asamoah-Gyadu and Amos Yong (Africa, Lake Mary, Fla: Charisma House Publishers: 2016), 213.

Pentecostal congregation own a radio station and/or television. Below are just a few of the registered radio and television stations operated by the Pentecostal groups in Uganda.

Table 13: Pentecostal Movements' Radio and Television Stations

Name Of Station	Location
Radio Stations	
1. Spirit FM	MUKONO
2. Fire Fm	Mubende
3. Heart Fm	Mubende
4. Mercy Fm	Mbarara
5. Grace Radio	Bushenyi
6. Life Fm	Fort Portal
7. Imani Fm	Kapchorwa
8. Faith Radio	Mbale
9. Peace Fm	Kitgum
10. Favor Fm	Gulu
11. Impact Fm	Kampala
12. Alpha Fm	Kampala
13. Radio ABC	Kampala
14. Power Fm	Kampala
15. Kingdom Fm	Kampala
16. Record Fm	Kampala
17. Family Radio	Kampala
18. Top Radio	Kampala
19. Kampala Fm	Kampala
20. Joy Fm	Kampala
21. Salt Fm	Kampala
22. Imerman Ministries Fm	Kampala
Television Stations	
1. Life Tv	Kampala
2. Miracle Tv	Kampala

3. Record Tv	Kampala
4. Lighthouse Tv	Kampala
5. Top Tv	Kampala
6. Dream Tv	Kampala
7. Salt Tv	Kampala
8. Abs TV	Kampala
9. Kingdom Tv	Kampala
10. Gugudde Tv	Kampala
11. Glorious Tv	Kampala
12. Rest Tv	Kampala
13. Ks Tv	Kampala
14. Fresh Tv	Kampala
15. Hg Tv	Kampala
16. S Tv (Shiloh)	Kampala

Source: Field Data

Apart from radio and television ownership, several leaders of evangelical and Pentecostal churches own media production studios which they use to produce broadcast content. They also frequently buy broadcast airtime from ‘secular’ radio and television stations as well as other media houses to run their programs.[519] Other Christian groups have made use of the liberalized media environment in the country. Among them are the Seventh Day Adventists and the Baptists movements. Their media outlets include both radio and television. Uganda Communication Commission (UCC) lists the following in its 2020 annual report.

Table 14: Other Christian Groups Media Outlets

Name of Station	Location	Affiliation
1. Life Radio	Mbarara	Baptist International Mission Uganda
2. Life Radio	Kanungu	Baptist International Mission Uganda
3. New Life church FM	Hoima	Madison Baptist Church
4. Word of Life FM	Masaka	Baptist International Mission Uganda

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[519] See Fred Jenga, “Pentecostal Broadcasting in Uganda,” *Journal of Communication and Religion* 40, no. 4 (2017).

5. Maranatha FM	Jinja	Busoga Inter-District BIDASO-SDA
6. Truth Radio	Mbale	Baptist International Mission Uganda
7. Calvary Radio	Soroti	Baptist International Mission Uganda
8. Trinity Radio	Kapichorwa	Presbyterian Church Uganda
9. New Life Church FM	Moyo	Madison Baptist Church
10. Prime Radio	Masaka	Seventh-Day Adventist Church
11. Ebenezer FM	Mbale	SDA Eastern Uganda Filed

Source: Field Data

As for the African traditional religious (ATR)- followers, even though their umbrella organization *Uganda National Council of Traditional Herbalists and Healers Association (Uganda N'eddagala Ly'ayo)* or NACOTHA has been in existence since 1963, the group has been reluctant to own media outlets (besides social media) as in other religious groups. However, with the advent of social media, many operate social media accounts where they showcase their beliefs. In 2017, they launched a digital app that can be downloaded on Google Play Store for easy access to their services by Ugandans.[520] They have also been active in the broadcast sector by buying airtime on 'friendly' media outlets. Some radio stations especially those that are linked to the traditional/cultural heritage of the country such as Central Broadcasting Services (CBS) of Buganda Kingdom host them together with other clergies from Abrahamic religions and discuss matters related to the 'correct' belief. On these programs, their discourse in the context of the post-colonial framework is geared towards legitimizing themselves with personal narratives and stressing a need to return to traditions. Like other religious groups, ATR followers, mostly traditional healers downgrade other 'foreign' religions. They attack their followers for their role in downgrading and alienating local practices.[521]

To round up this section, in Kampala alone, there are over 20 radio and television stations affiliated with various Christian groups. 80% of them are operated by Pentecostal faith groups. Such large control has led to the homogenization of religious content and public opinion in extension, leaving limited space for diversity. In 2017, Fred Jenga's study found that Ugandan pastors who own broadcast media houses had dominated religious broadcasting in Kampala.

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[520] Julius Luyimna, "traditional Healers go Digital, Create App." *The Newvision*, Dec 15, 2017. Accessed from: https://www.newvision.co.ug/news/1467571/traditional-healers-digital-create-app

[521] Christine Abbo, "Healing Cultural Fundamentalism and Syncretism in Buganda." *International African Affairs*, 66, no. 2 (1996).

Their programs were the most rated and they had a huge gathering. They run megachurches with weekly attendances numbering in thousands.[522]

As noted by Brigit Meyer the massive presence of the Pentecostal churches in the mass media had impacted the socio-cultural structure leading to what De Witte called "Pentecostalisation of the public sphere," which could be seen in Uganda.[523] Another observable feature is related to the motive behind the establishment of media by Christian organizations and church-affiliated groups. It is observed that the motive mainly is to spread the gospel and evangelization of Uganda. Some make it clear that they want to bring "good news" into the homes of non-Christians such as Muslims. This has however intensified competition and can explain why each religious group in the country is vowing towards owning and operating private media outlets.

The strong presence of Pentecostal groups in Uganda's airwaves has given their leaders a great influence not only in religious matters but also in the socio-political affairs of the country. It is not a coincidence that Ugandan political leaders in recent times seek endorsement by Pentecostal pastors, especially during the election period even though Pentecostals only make up 4.6% of the country's population.[524] Also, the bid towards "mass evangelism"[525] has in some instances fuelled tensions and conflict not only among the Pentecostal churches themselves but also with other religious groups especially Muslims and followers and practitioners of African traditional beliefs.[526]

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[522] See Fred Jenga, "Pentecostal Broadcasting in Uganda."

[523] See Brigit Meyer, *Translating the Devil: Religion and Modernity Among the Ewe in Ghana* (Edinburg: Edinburgh University Press, 1999); Marleen De Witte, "The Spectacular and the Spirits: Charismatics and Neo-Traditionalists on Ghanaian Television," *Material Religion* 1, no. 3 (2005).

[524] Henni Alva and Jimmy Spire Ssentongo, "Religious (de)Politicization in Uganda's 2016 Elections." *Journal of East African Studies* 10, no. 4 (2016). Also, Uganda's president, Museveni is known by Pentecostal churches as the protector of the Pentecostal community. After winning a controversial 2021 election that witnessed violence against opposition contestants and their supporters, one of the prominent pastors in the country read a joint statement commending the leadership of Museveni. On the ceremony attended by the First Lady, herself a follower of the Pentecostal community, he said, "Today we come to congratulate you upon your victory. Our relationship with you and the NRM government is not a seasonal affair but a lasting and deep partnership for our country. Your victory is ours, Uganda's, and Africa's as well...It proved that when Godly people are in leadership, the people rejoice." See: Barbara Bompani, "The Memory of Persecution is in our Blood: Documenting Loyalties, Identities, and Motivations to Political Action in the Ugandan Pentecostal Movement," *Journal of Modern African Studies* 60, no. 4 (2022), 493.

[525] This term is used by pastors in Uganda for television and radio use. They argue that two types of media are turning out to be good alternatives for doing mass evangelism with less costs than the outdoor crusades. See Jenga, "Pentecostal Broadcasting in Uganda," 63.

Muslims and Broadcasting Media

State Broadcasting Media

Similarly, Muslims have taken the benefits brought about by the liberalization of media projects. The Muslim community has in recent years established media outlets. However, like other recognized faiths in the country, Islamic programs started appearing on the Ugandan airwaves in the late 1960s via the nation's radio and television stations. It is worth noting that information on early Islamic programs in state media is not readily available from UBC archives. As a result, I relied on information from individuals and pioneering personalities who were involved in the production and presentation of these Islamic programs. Prominent among them was Haji Abdul Nsereko who had been a presenter and producer of Islamic programs on the state Radio and Television since the late 1960s. He is regarded as the first Muslim employed on Radio Uganda in 1970 and one of the very few journalists, if not the first. He joined Radio Uganda from Kibuli Muslim Secondary School after completing what is known today as the Ordinary Level (O-Level) certificate.[527] He also attained his basic Islamic knowledge from Bukoto Madrasah, an Islamic seminary established by Sheikh Abdalla Sekimwnayi (born 1869 – died 1945). Sekimwanyi was one of the locally trained Muslim scholars and he is believed to be one of the first Ugandans to make the pilgrimage to Mecca. He is also known to be the initiator of the Bukoto-Natete Jumma Sect group. This is the first section of Muslims who defied the odds of the day to perform only *Jumma* prayers on Friday without including the noon prayer (*Salat al-Duhr*). He claimed on his return that he never saw anyone in Mecca doing so, thus, Ugandan Muslims should follow the same line. It sparked a controversy that resulted in the formation of another sect within the Ugandan Muslim community called, the *Jumma-Duhr* sect, in opposition to Sheikh Sekimwanyi's assertion.[528] Nevertheless, Bukoto Madrasah benefited many Kampala Muslim residents due to its proximity to the city centre in relation to other madrasahs in villages.

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[526] For internal conflicts see Alexander Paul Isiko, "Religious conflict among Pentecostal Churches in Uganda: A Struggle for Power and Supremacy." *Technium Social Sciences Journal* 14, (2020). Inter-religious conflict prompted for government to a policy regulating faith-based groups. See Alexander Paul Isiko, "State Regulation of Religion in Uganda: Fears and Dilemmas of Born-Again Churches." *Journal of African Studies and Development* 11, no. 6 (2019).

[527] This is the equivalent of today's Uganda Certificate of Education (UCE). Students in Uganda receive this certificate when they finish the four years of lower secondary school, before joining the two-year of higher level. UCE is comparable to GCE O-Level in the UK and Grade 11 (NQF3) according to the South African Qualification Authority (SAQA). See; https://verisearch.saqa.org.za/ for more details. Last updated July 2023.

It was Sheikh Sekimwanyi's mosque and *Madrasah* that Haji Nsereko received his religious (Islamic) training. Joining Radio Uganda was not easy as he recounts. There were more than 300 people who applied for the same post. However, Nsereko was one of the 16 young members selected to continue with media training at the Institute of Public Administration which had been initiated by the government of Uganda in 1969 to mentor civil servants in the country.[529] Also, he recalls being one of the first Ugandan media practitioners who began the formal training in the media at the institute.[530] While he had joined the radio station in the news and politics department, in the absence of another qualified producer and presenter, he was called on by the Department of Religion and Culture of Radio Uganda and Uganda Television, to handle the Islamic quoter and later half hours that were allocated to Muslims on Friday. Nsereko narrates that most of the Islamic programs during the early days of the broadcast were distinctive. They consisted of recorded sermons by Muslim scholars in the country.[531]

Another important figure in the history of Islamic broadcasting in Uganda is Sheikh Abdulkadir Mbogo. He was born in 1930 to the late Muslim Kyeswa of Ntinda in the Kampala suburbs. He began his Islamic training at an early age at Wandegeya Mosque in Kampala, the capital. In 1945, he got sponsorship from Arabs to go to Yemeni for further studies until 1951. On his return, sheikh Mbogo started as mosque Imam before rising to the ranks of district Qadhi of Kampala the position he held until his resignation in 2012. Mbogo recalls his days as a preacher at then the national broadcaster Radio Uganda and the Television. He describes his activities at the stations at that time to include Islamic histories and preaching on various topics.[532] In 2020 was still active with his preaching on both state and private radio and television stations in the country. As for television, Islamic programs used to appear on Friday with Friday sermons. Sometimes Shk. Abdulkadir Mbogo could also present live sessions while Haji Nsereko presented and produced the show before Haji Haruna Mwanje Mutesasira joined the station in the 1980s.

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[528] See Yusuf Serunkuma, "Lesson from Sheik. Abdalla Sekimwanyi." *The Observer*, October 10, 2018. Accessed on March 03, 2022 from https://observer.ug/viewpoint/58879-lessons-from-life-of-shk-abdallah-sekimwanyi

[529] See for more information about UMI: https://umi.ac.ug/index.php/about-umi

[530] Interview with alhaji Nereko Mutumba, December 2019, Kampala

[531] Interview with alhaji Nereko Mutumba, December 2019, Kampala.

[532] interview with Sheikh Abdulkadir Mbogo, December 2019, Kampala.

Muslim Private Broadcasting Media

The liberalization of media in the 1990s opened new avenues for Muslim-owned broadcasting in Uganda. The first Muslim-owned radio in the country, Voice of Africa 93.2 FM radio began broadcasting in 2000. It was established by the Union of Muslim Councils for East, Central, and Southern Africa (UMC). While narrating the story of its establishment, Haji Haruna Sengomba, the secretary general by then of UMC, confirmed how difficult it was to establish the radio station. He said, after confirming support from the then Libyan President, the late Col. Muammar Gadhafi, and securing a $39,00 donation from Uganda Muslim businessman Haji Hassan Basajabala, it became difficult for the UCC to allocate operating license and frequency to the station. He believes that while it was not directly mentioned to them, it was clear that the state was still sceptical of a Muslim-owned and controlled media.[533] They had been perceived as a security threat, especially from the mid-1990s with the rise of the ADF, a jihadist movement currently affiliated with the Islamic State of Iraq and Syria. From this period a good number of Muslim youths suspected of being members of this ADF had been arrested and surveillance as well as profiling of Muslims by security agencies was at a very high rate.

Moreover, the two critical newspapers which were edited by Muslim journalists; Haji Haruna Kanaabi and Haji Husein Musa Njuki, *The Shariat* and *Assalam* respectively, had been closed by the state. The two papers had been reporting on torture incidents of Muslim youths and other political opponents in the infamous 'safe houses.'[534] The two editors were arrested leading to the death of one of them, Haji Njuki, allegedly from injuries inflicted during the arrest by plain-clothed security agents in 1995.[535] Haji Kanaabi, who survived, remained in the hands of security agents for about four months. He was only released after pressure from the international community.[536] Thus, according to Haji Ssengoba, the state was not ready to grant such community access to radio fearing that it could be used as a tool to promote anti-government rhetoric. It was through the intervention of high-profile figures within the ruling party that the licence was achieved. They were also denied a name that had any relationship with Islam, making them take a neutral name, Voice of Africa (VOA).[537]

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[533] Interview with Haji Haruna Sengoba, former Secretary General of UMC and the first Head of Voice of Africa radio, June 2019, Kampala.

[534] For more about the infamous safe houses in Uganda, see; Wendy Glauser, "Widespread Torture in Uganda in the so-called 'Safe Houses' and Elsewhere." *Human Rights House Foundation*, May 15, 2008. Accessed from https://humanrightshouse.org/articles/widespread-torture-in-uganda-in-so-called-safe-houses-and-elsewhere/ on May 05, 2022; Colman Ntunwerisho, "Impunity in the Face of Justice: The Unresolved Problem of Torture in Uganda," *Makerere Law Journal*, (2018)

[535] See: "Hussein Musa Njuki Killed in Kampala Uganda," August 28, 1995, *Committee for Projecting Journalist* (CPJ). Retrieved from https://cpj.org/data/people/hussein-musa-njuki/.

Recently, the number of Muslim radio and television stations has increased from one in 2000 to seven in 2022. From the field research, I identified seven radio and three television stations that are owned and operated by Muslims in Uganda. In Kampala, the capital city of Uganda, there are three radio and two television stations. These are Voice of Africa, Pearl, and Bilal FM radio stations. The two televisions are Salaam and Global/Bilal television stations. Mbale one of the major cities in the country has two radio stations, i.e., IUIU FM and Masaba FM stations. The only television in Mbale is the IUIU TV operated and controlled by the Islamic University in Uganda (IUIU) with headquarters in Mbale city.[538] Ribat FM and Ummah FM are the only Muslim broadcasting media in West Nile the area with the highest number of Muslims in the country. The stations broadcast from Arua city and Yumbe town respectively, under the patronage of Ummah FM Community Radio Company Limited and Uganda Muslim Supreme Council.[539]

Table 15: Muslim Radio and Television Stations

Station	Language	Region
Radio Stations		
1. VOA FM	Luganda/English/Nubian/Swahili	Kampala
2. Pearl FM	Luganda/English/Nubian/Swahili	Kampala
3. Bilal FM	Luganda/English/Nubian/Swahili	Kampala
4. IUIU FM	Luganda/English/Nubian/Swahili/Lumasaba	Mbale
5. Masaba FM	Luganda/English/Nubian/Swahili/Lumasaba	Mbale

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[536] See Amnesty International Report, 1996. Accessible via, https://www.refworld.org/docid/3ae6a9f960.html. Retrieved on May 5, 2022.

[537] Interview with Haji Haruna Sengoba, former Secretary General of UMC and the first Head of Voice of Africa radio, June 2019, Kampala.

[538] See Juma Kasadha, "IUIU Journalism Department Aims to Meet New Demands." *The Observer*, April 15, 2016.

[539] See: "Census of all FM Radio Stations in the Country and their Coverage." *Ministry of ICT and National Guidance, Report*, May 12, 2020, Ref. ADM 70/92/01.

6. Ummah FM	English/Nubian/Swahili/Lugbara	Arua
7. Ribat FM	English/Nubian/Swahili/Lugbara	Yumbe
Television Stations		
8. Salam TV	Luganda/English/Nubian/Swahili	Kampala
9. Global (Bilal) TV	Luganda/English/Nubian/Swahili	Kampala
10. IUIU TV	Luganda/English/Nubian/Swahili/Lugbara	Mbale

Source: Field Data

Besides, the Muslim-owned and operated media outlets, there is also interesting development within the Muslim community regarding new media use. There is a substantial rise in Islamic television and radio programs on private radio and television stations sponsored by mostly Muslim business entities. The moderators of these programs are practising Muslim journalists working in a particular hosting media outlet.

As we can see from the above table, seven radio stations are owned and operated by Muslim groups and individuals. They broadcast from different regions. They are based in regions with substantial numbers of Muslims in terms of demographics with programs broadcasted in both local and international languages. However, what motivated Muslims to join the media fraternity? Was it just a jump on the bandwagon since other religious groups had done so? Or is it was seen as a commercially viable venture? In the proceeding subsection, I will present what the proprietor told me about the reasons for initiating and establishing this station and correlate it with the available literature from other places where Muslims view themselves as minorities in media.

Motive Behind Muslim Media

In my conversation with Haji Abdulkarim Kalisa, the influential figure behind many Muslim-owned media outlets in Uganda, several key insights emerged regarding the motivations behind his involvement in Islamic media. Kalisa, who was the chairperson of the Union of Muslim Councils (UMC) when Voice of Africa (VOA) began broadcasting, later co-founded Pearl FM with his brother Kin Kalisa, with financial support from the Organization of Islamic Conference (OIC). Kalisa also established Salam TV, which operates under his Next Media Group (NMG).[540] Even before the launch of Salam TV, he produced and presented Islamic programs on NBS, a popular secular television station owned by his brother. In the context of media research in contemporary Uganda, the name Abdulkarim Kalisa is indispensable.

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[540] For more about NMG visit the website; https://nextmedia.co.ug/ last updated in September 2023.

When asked about his motives for engaging in Islamic media production, Kalisa stated “It is all about love and contributing to an Islamic cause.”, He explained further:

> Muslims have been left behind, neglected, and poorly represented in the mainstream and hostile Christian media. Such hostile representations have also informed the perception of the political and social institutions towards Muslims in this country. It is the reason for the marginalization, stigmatization, and humiliation Muslims face in contemporary Uganda. It is, therefore, my role as a concerned Muslim to correct these misconceptions and bring back the glory of Islam.[541]

From this quote, it is clear that Kalisa's motivation was rooted in a desire to deconstruct negative portrayals of Islam and to defend the religion through media platforms. His sentiments resonated with many Muslims I interviewed, who expressed frustration with the marginalization and victimization of their community, facilitated by biased media representations. Ugandan Muslims consistently perceived the mainstream media as hostile, with negative coverage influencing political and social attitudes toward them. These perceptions had led to various forms of activism, including protests, conferences, and religious gatherings, aimed at challenging these misrepresentations.

For instance, Hon Semuju Ibrahim Nganda, one of the Muslim legislators and former journalist told me about one incident in the early 1990s when some Muslim youths took matters into their own hands. This was during the scuffle between Muslims of old Kampala and the Muslim youths (*the Tabliqs*) from Nakasero mosque (as we saw in the previous chapter). In this incident, a journalist whose name could not be established was circumcised in public by the angry youths accusing him of mis-portraying their faith.[542]

In another case, before the spread of the internet in the country, a group of Muslim youths based at Makerere University under the Makerere Muslim Students Association (MUMSA) established a newspaper, *the vicegerent*, in 1987 intending to defend "their religion."[543] The proprietors (all students at the time and leaders in MUMSA) namely, Khalid Lubega, Sawuya Nakakande, Haruna Nsubuga, Imam Kasozi, and Kiyimba Abasi wanted to defend their faith through print media. They believed that to counter biases, they should have a newspaper that speaks to Islamic ethos.[544] To them, the catholic daily Luganda newspaper *Munno* and *Ngabo* were hostile newspapers that misinformed people about Islam. Moreover, other secular newspapers - including the government-owned Newvision - had also not performed well when it came to reporting Muslim and Islamic-related stories. Such perception guided their motive towards establishing the *Vicegerent* to counter the negative mass media that had constructed the Muslim identity with pre-conceived negative perception. Thus, countering it with a Muslim newspaper was seen as a better solution. However, the paper seized publication on financial grounds and a limited number of subscribers.

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[541] Interview with Abdulkarim Kalisa, Kampala Aug 2019

[542] Formal conversation with Ibrahim Semuju, Kampala June 2020.

The grievances voiced by Kalisa and other Ugandan Muslims are best understood through the lens of *Media Framing Theory*. As outlined in Chapter 4, media framing refers to the selection and emphasis of certain aspects of reality to promote a particular interpretation. In this case, the mainstream Ugandan media consistently framed Muslims as violent, uncivilized, or extremist, contributing to their marginalization in the public sphere. Kalisa's media activism can be seen as an effort to challenge these frames by offering alternative narratives that portray Islam and Muslims in a more positive light.

Reading and hearing Ugandan Muslim ressentiment against public mass media can be understood in what Muhammad Asad called "deep-seated prejudice against Islam."[545] Writing in 1952, Asad traced these sentiments in Western literature and linked them to the periods of the Crusades.[546] Asad, argues that before the first crusade, the literature prepared the minds of Europeans and united them against a common enemy whom Pope Urban II referred to as "the wicked race that held the Holy Land." The literature during this time provided the false colour in which Islam was to appear to the Western audience. The damage caused by the Crusades was not restricted to a clash of weapons, according to Asad. It was an intellectual damage that poisoned the West against the Muslim world through a deliberate misrepresentation of the teachings and ideals of Islam. "It was the time of the Crusades that the ludicrous notion that Islam was a religion of crude sensualism and brutal violence, of an observance of ritual instead of a purification of the heart, entered the Western mind and remained there."[547] In other words, western views on Islam and Muslims are a cultural construct carefully planned and promoted contrastingly during crusade wars.

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[543] Formal conversation with Dr Khalid Lubega and Sawuya Lubega, Kampala April 2020.

[544] ibid.

[545] Muhamad Asad, *The Road to Mecca* (London: The Book Foundation, 2014), 7

[7]3 Ibid, 7.

Noteworthy, Edward W. Said suggested that to understand the relationship that exists today between Muslims and non-Muslims in a society such as Uganda, the discourse of orientalism needs to be accounted for.[548] Michel Foucault described discourse as a variety of statements developed into a system, that consists of objects, statements, concepts, and themes. In such an instance, a structure is brought to this system through the ordering of these statements according to their connections and how they function. In turn, these statements will constitute an object and can be transformed, based on the body of knowledge that underlies the way of looking at it in line with the pre-assumed system of knowledge.[549] In this regard, Edward Said found it important to use Michel Foucault's notion of discourse to understand the "enormously systematic discipline by which European culture was able to manage - and even produce – the Orient politically, sociologically, militarily, ideologically, scientifically and imaginatively during the post-Enlightenment period."[550] Muslims in Uganda have similar perceptions and can be analyzed similarly. Through unfriendly media, images were managed and produced in a political, sociological, ideological, and imaginative manner in the country. In this case, any negative portrayal produces an unfriendly public perception, which impacts the way Ugandan Muslims are viewed by their countrymen and women.

Similarly, while surveying news stories in British media and how they inform non-Muslims about Islam, Laurens De Rooij found negative news reporting about Islam and Muslims to have informed and influenced public perception in Britain. Reporting on Islam and Muslims that commonly relate stories of terrorism, violence, or lack of integration within Western values had serious ramifications on the thoughts and actions of non-Muslims. Building on extensive fieldwork interviews and focus groups, Laurens de Rooij concluded that non-Muslim responses to such negative reports did not only reproduce local and personal contextualities but were also a result of the reporting itself.[551]

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[547] Ibid,7.

[548] Edward W. Said, *Orientalism*, (New York: Vintage Books, 1978), 3.

[549] Michel Foucault, *The Archaeology of Knowledge*, trans. Smith, A.M.S, (London: Routledge, 2002), 41.

[550] ibid, 3.

The framing of Muslims as a social and political problem in Uganda has real-world consequences It is vital as it can be a basis to gain a better understanding of how media discourse - as a set of organisational voices works - to promote specific interests that support the dominance of groups and ideas in society.[552] As Kalisa noted, these media portrayals influence the perception of Muslims by political and social institutions, contributing to their marginalization. It is not a coincidence that the Professor of Literature at Makerere University, Abasi Kiyimba attributed the 1979 Muslim massacre in western Uganda after the fall of Idd Amin to the media and the anti-Islamic press. Kiyimba argued that local media consistently framed Muslims in negative terms, exacerbating social tensions that led to violence.[553]

Abasi Kiyimba's argument speaks in conformity with Hartmann's 1974 study. Their investigation of ethnic news coverage in Britain during the 1960s found that the emerging news framework encouraged the perspective of people of colour "as problems, aberrations or just oddities."[554] Similarly, there have been allegations of systematic targeting of Muslims in the country during incidents of terrorism in Kampala or the murder of high-profile people in the country. Muslims believe that it has been fuelled by media that had portrayed them as terrorists and convinced the public whose source of information is new media. While some of the convicts are Muslims, however, it is not farfetched to underscore the language of 'radicalized Muslim youths' in the country that has consistently been used by the state and news. For example, 1995 was a period of renewed rebel movements in Uganda. On the list of rebel groups were the Lord's Resistance Army (LRA) led by Joseph Kony, the Allied Democratic Forces (ADF) led by Jamilu Mukulu, and the Federal Army, led by Herbat Itongwa.[555] However, when it came to reporting about ADF, it was referred to as a Muslim rebel group contrary to the other two groups even though all ideas were either tribal or religiously motivated.[556]

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[551] Laurens de Rooij, *Islam in British Media Discourses: Understanding Perceptions of Muslims in the News*, (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2020).
[552] Lauren R. Tucker, "The Framing of Calvin Klein: A Frame Analysis of Media Discourse About the August 1995 Calvin Klein Jeans Advertising Campaign," *Critical Studies in Mass Communication*, 15, (1998), 144.
[553] Interview with Professor Abasi Kiyimba, Dec 2020, Kampala.
[554] Safiddin Ahmed and Jorg Mattles, "Media Representations of Muslims and Islam from 2000 to 2015: A Meta-Analysis," *International Communication Gazette* 79, no. 3 (2017).
[555] See, Herbart Itongwa a Soldiers who turned guns on his government" accessed from: https://www.monitor.co.ug/uganda/lifestyle/reviews-profiles/herbert-itongwa-a-soldier-who-turned-guns-on-his-own-govt-1541122

Additionally, in his work, "Ugandan Mass Media and Islam" Abasi Kiyimba accused public media of what he called persistent ridicule of Islam. Kiyimba argued that the media particularly the press portrays Muslims in a negative form. "On many other occasions, the papers have dwelt extensively on the internal divisions within Islam. They have also given sensational coverage to, and even magnified the slightest scandal in the Muslim community."[557] To support his claim Kiyimba presented the following headlines which appeared in the local newspaper: "Rioting Muslims shot at in Masaka." *The Star*, 17 March 1987; "*Govumenti Y'Abasilamu empya yeeswanta okulayizibwa nga 1 Mey*i (The New Muslim government vows to be sworn in on 1st May) *Munno* 14 April 1987; "*Okukyala kwa Museveni e Maska Kwanise obuziina bw' Abasiraamu*" (Museveni's visit to Maska displays Muslim's dirty linen] *Ngabo* 15 July 1987; *Abakugu mu kukutula emikono ba komyewo e Khartoum*." (The Professionals in Chopping off hands have returned to Khartoum) *Ngabo* 15 July 1987.

These news headlines and the prominence given are aimed at discrediting Islam and Muslims. It created negative perceptions and guided the perception of Muslims by the public with news media as their main source of information. Muslims here are framed as heartless, brutal, uncivilized, religious fanatics in the Western context.[558] Also, they were presented as militants and terrorists,[559] or societal problems,[560] within well-constructed war and conflict stories as per the findings of Shahram Akbarzadeh and Bianca Smith.[561]

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[556] During archive research I noticed that New Vision and Monitor newspapers (popular public and private newspapers in Uganda) as well as other Luganda newspapers fell into this trap. The LRA rebel movement had a Christian motive, and the Federal Army (a tribal motive) however, reporting maintained their founding names. In other words, they were never referred to as a Christian or Buganda rebel movements. However, as for ADF, it was always referred to as a Muslim rebel group.

[557] Abasi Kiyimba, "The Muslim Community in Uganda through one hundred and forty years: The Trials and Tribulations of Muslim Minority," *Journal of African Religion and Philosophy*, 1, no. 2 (1990).

[558] As per findings see; Saif Shahin, "News Framing as Identity Performance: Religion Versus Race in the American-Muslim Press," *Journal of Communication Inquiry* 39, no. 4 (2015).

In conclusion, the motive behind the establishment of Muslim media in Uganda, as articulated by figures like Haji Abdulkarim Kalisa, is deeply rooted in a desire to counter negative framing and misrepresentation of Islam. This drive to "correct misconceptions" is consistent with theories of media framing and Orientalism, both of which highlight how media discourse can shape public perception and social realities. By creating their own media platforms, Ugandan Muslims are not only defending their faith but also reclaiming the power to frame their identity on their own terms.

Conclusion

This chapter has explored the motivations behind the adoption and use of new media technology by the Muslim community in Uganda, with a particular focus on how media representation shapes this engagement. A recurring theme in the chapter is the issue of the misrepresentation of Islam and Muslims in Ugandan media, which has significantly influenced the decision of Muslim respondents to adopt and invest in new media platforms. Media, often perceived as a public good, offers ownership tied to the freedom of speech, but this freedom is rarely accessible to minority groups within competitive media landscapes. Thus, for many Muslim proprietors and users, owning and operating media outlets has become a means to secure their voice and counteract the negative portrayals perpetuated by what they view as hostile public and private secular media.

The chapter has traced the relationship between media and religion in Uganda, from the colonial period to the present. This includes an overview of national broadcasters, the religious programming they feature, and how Muslims and Islam have been covered, particularly before the liberalization of the airwaves. Additionally, it highlighted the presence of religious media outlets owned by major religious groups such as Catholics, Protestants, and Pentecostals, and their use of media for proselytization, especially in relation to the Muslim community.

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[559] Similar to Halima Rane and Jacqueline Ewart, “The Framing of Islam and Muslims in the Tenth Anniversary Coverage of 9/11: Implications for Reconciliation and Moving On,” *Journal of Muslim Minority Affairs*, 32, no. 3 (2012); Kimberly A. Powell, “Framing Islam: An Analysis of U.S. Media Coverage of Terrorism Since 9/11.” *Communication Studies*, 62, no. 1 (2011).

[560] See Saifuddin Ahmed and Jorg Matthes, “Media Representation for Muslims and Islam from 2000 to 2015: A Meta-Analysis.” *International Communication Gazette* 79, no. 3 (2016); Brian J. Bowe and W. Makki, “Muslim Neighbors or an Islamic Threat? A Constructionist Framing Analysis of Newspaper Coverage of Mosque Controversies,” *Media, Culture & Society* 38, no. 4 (2015).

[561] As already seen in Sharam Akbarzadeh and Bianca J. Smith, “The Representation of Islam and Muslims in the Media.” *Islam in the Media* 2, (2005).

A key conclusion of this chapter is that the entry of Muslims into the media landscape was driven by a need to correct hostile narratives and ensure representation in a media market dominated by secular and non-Muslim interests. By establishing their own media, Ugandan Muslims aimed to counteract these negative frames and reassert control over their public image.

Building on these insights, the next chapter will delve into specific new Muslim media outlets to examine how their activities contribute to shaping the identity of Muslims in contemporary Uganda. It will investigate the reasons behind their establishment, their operations, and the institutions supporting them, offering a detailed analysis of how these media platforms engage with the broader socio-political and religious landscape in Uganda.

CHAPTER SEVEN

MUSLIM MEDIA AND COMPETING ISLAMIC DISCOURSES

Introduction

The previous chapter has presented a detailed overview of the state of media and religion in Uganda from its inception to the present Building on that foundation, this chapter focuses on a selection of new Muslim media outlets and the activities they engage in. While the initial motive behind the establishment of these media platforms was to protect and defend the positive image of Islam and Muslims in Uganda, these platforms have also become sites for enacting and shaping diverse Islamic identities. These identities are based on competing theological and political positions, with internal debates and contestations about what constitutes the 'true Islam' playing a significant role. This chapter examines the reasons for the establishment of these media outlets, their activities, operations, coverage, and the institutions behind them. Additionally, it explores the intra-Muslim competition and sectarian rivalry that has emerged within these media spaces, revealing how traditional theological and political debates, once confined to mosques and madrasas, have migrated into the digital sphere.

Muslim Media and Uganda's Changing Islamic Landscape

Like elsewhere in Africa, the post-liberalization period has resulted in the proliferation of privately owned religious media. Uganda is hosting over 200 private radio stations, a sizable number of Television stations as well as a significant portion of the population with internet access that facilitates social media use. Amongst them are Muslim media (including radio, television, and social media pages) with diverse Islamic inclinations. Such media industry reflects the diversity of Islamic groups in the country. Through media, Ugandan Muslims of diverse Islamic orientations can promote their political and theological positions while contesting opposing voices.

We have seen in the previous chapter that Muslims found it important to find avenues that could help in solving the issue of representation. In the process, they joined the media fraternity. Muslim newspapers, newsletters, and magazines sprung up, to help in giving the other side of Islam. In the 1980s, the Islamic Information Centre (IIC) was founded and published the *Weekly Focus*. The *Shariat* newspaper, *Ekitangala* (the Light) newsletter, *the Vicegerent*, the *Weekly Message*, *the Yaqeen*, the *MUMSA Vision*, and the *Torch*, all joined the race with the same agenda. [562] Noteworthy, however, is that unlike, the broadcasting and social media, the print media industry managed to a larger extent address the biased coverage of misrepresentation of the largest minority religious group in the country. Even though their publication was below the press standards in the country, they were able to voice out the discontent of Muslims in the country. In fact, in some instances, the state responded by shutting down these media outlets and arresting their editors like in the case of Haji Harona Kanaabi the founder and editor of The Shariat Newspaper. [563] This is not the same with broadcasting and social media platforms that arrived after the liberalization of airwaves.

The liberalization of the airwaves period opened up doors to broadcasting and internet-aided media. The same period witnessed a significant number of Muslim groups, business personnel, and organizations joining the broadcasting industry starting with radio, and later in 2015, television stations. Before the broadcasting sector, they had been active in both audio and video cassette activities but at a small scale. By the early 1990s, sermons by Muslims prominent preachers and entertainers (*Matali groups*) had been recorded and were being sold by hawkers and entertainment shops/stores. Then came the advent of access to the internet and easy smartphones and personal computers. This new technology has opened doors to social media and revolutionized Islamic mass media communication in the country. Today a significant number of Muslim organisations and groups operate at least one social media network. Preaching and seminars are uploaded on these networks making Islam more visible than it was before. Some provide live sessions leading in an effort the virtualise the *Minbar* and bypass the special and physical boundaries.

Arriving in the context of changing Islam, the new Muslim media do not only engage in efforts of representation and branding of Islam and Muslims. It is equally a platform for contestations and intra-theological engagements. As discussed in chapter four, the doors to the outside world saw an increase in religious competition and challenge to the dominant theological orientation. The *Hadhram*i Islam that had dominated the "Islamic sphere" [564] of the country is no longer enjoying that monopoly. [565] It is now very difficult to picture a monolithic Islam in Uganda as it used to be three decades ago. The country is now endowed with diverse Islamic groups as seen in other parts of the world. These groups include what I call 'traditionists', 'modernists', and the 'reformists' among others. There are also political parties with Islamic platforms such as the Umma Party and Justice Forum (JEEMA). [566] Thus, one must be mindful of the diversity of interpretations, aspirations, and trajectories that Ugandan Muslims have set to understand their religion. Resultantly, whilst the agenda of defending Islam especially, via national media is still pursued, the private Muslim media is now another space with a certain amount of competition and sectarianism. [567]

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[562] The Shariati in particular. See Bernard Tabaire, "The Press and Political Repression in Uganda: Back to the Future," J*ournal of East African Studies* 1, no.2 (2007).

[563] Ibid., interview with Haji Harona Kanabi, Kampala

[564] Launey and Soares took from Jurgen Habermans' concept of the "Public Sphere" (1989) and coined what they called led "Islamic Sphere." They defined it as a pace conceptually from affiliations but also the colonial and later post-colonial states. See Robert Launay and Benjamin Soares, "The Formation of an "Islamic Sphere" in French Colonial West Africa,' *Economy and Society* 28, no. 4 (1999), 483.

A close reading of Joseph Kasule's recent book, *Islam in Uganda* reveals this diversity of Ugandan Islam. [568] We can see a division between reformists and traditionalists with a variety of groups even within these two major groups. Among them are those who were convinced that the only solution to problems affecting Uganda and the Muslim community -in particular- was the implementation of Sharia. They did not only demand its application but also endorsed some form of violence to eradicate whatever they considered impermissible. Their public appearance is currently low, especially after the closing of Usafi mosque (Kampala) in 2018. They are, however, very active on social media including WhatsApp groups, YouTube, and Facebook. Sheikh Ismail Kalule and his followers to a certain extent, as well as the ADF members and their support are some of the examples of this category. YouTube '*Manya Obusilamu'* is one of their platforms for propagating their position.

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[565] See Anne K. Bang, "Hadramis in Africa," *Oxford Research Encyclopedia of Asian History*. 26 Mar. 2019; Suzan Beckerleg, "From Oceans to Lakes: Cultural Transformations of Yemenis in Kenya and Uganda," *African and Asia Studies* 8, no. 3 (2009); Francoise Le Guennec-Coppens, "Social and Cultural Integration: A Case Study of East African Hadhrami. *Journal International African Institute* 59, no. 2 (1989).

[566] Umma Party was established by the late Sheikh Muhammad Zziwa, a controversial preacher known for his sharp criticism of his opponents. He is also the founder of SPIDIQA (Society for Preaching Islam and Denunciation of Innovation and Qadianism). See: "Sheikh who wants 25 years for Presidency." *The Newvision*, December 1, 2004. Accessed from https://www.newvision.co.ug/news/1092031/sheikh-presidency on 1 April 2023. JEEMA is currently headed by Haji Asumani Basalilwa, a lawyer by profession and legislator since 2019 in the Ugandan parliament. He is known on the international scene for drafting an anti-gay bill which was unanimously supported by all legislators in the house and seconded by the president. See: See: Peter Sserugo, "JEEMA Rallies MPs to Pass Anti-Homosexuality Bill." March 23, 2023. Accessed from https://www.monitor.co.ug/uganda/news/national/jeema-rallies-mps-to-pass-anti-homosexuality-bill-4157848 on 1 April 2023.

[567] See: We see similar trends in southern Africa, see Tayob, "Media and Muslims between Recognition and Representation."

[568] See Kasule, *Islam in Uganda: The Muslim Minority, Nationalism, and Political Power*, (Especially Chapter 6-Islamic Reform an Intra-Muslim Violence, and Chapter 7-NRM Statecraft and Muslim Subjects).

The second category is one whose concern is spirituality, self-purification, and proselytization (dawa). Participants are both urban and from diaspora communities around the globe. Puritan Salafis such as Sheikh Quraish Mazinga and his 'purist-Salafi' followers can be put in this category. However, in their bid for self-purification and the purification of religion, they engage in continuous contestations against the perceived 'heretics' as well as other opposing Salafis. They have access to both mosque audiences and the mass media (both social and traditional).

Lastly is that category with members who try to reinvigorate Islamic thought through the interpretation and contextualisation of Islam. This category reinforces the need for Muslims to be active in the community, participate in national and local politics, and educate their children to fit in the changing and competitive world. Justice Forum (JEEMA) Muslim members are part of this category. Their call is to ensure that Muslims become part of the mainstream historical and political process in the country. [569] Thus, any media engagement sends such makes.

Muslim Media Profiles and Programming

The Ugandan New Muslim media fraternity is diverse. It is comprised of both traditional (mainstream) and social media. To understand how media shapes the identity of Muslims in the country, let's look at three radio stations both broadcasting from Kampala and one social media platform. The radio stations are (1) Voice of Africa (VOA), (2) Bilal FM, and (3) Pearl FM. These radio stations follow similar partners in their program schedules and themes.

Media Programming

All three radio stations dedicate their programs to the service of the audiences in a holistic way. According to their program schedules, the radio stations run 140 programs per week, with an average of 20 programs per day. In general, five languages are used in their broadcasting activities. These languages are Luganda, primarily used in social, human promotion, and welfare programs; Arabic used in all Qur'an-related programs and prayers. In addition, English, Kiswahili, Lunyankole, and Ki-Nubi are used in specific programs are used in

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[569] See Yahaya Seremba, "America and the Production of Islamic Truth in Uganda." Routledge: New York, 2023.

Islamic programs. Some are recorded from the preaching of international scholars, while others are presented live with the specific targeted audience.

All programs presented in Arabic are translated concurrently into Luganda (the widely spoken language in central, east, and western Uganda). This enables the message to reach the audiences with clear meaning since Arabic is not accessible to an average Muslim in Uganda. Also, 90% of programs are produced in the radio stations' studios. These include prayers, news bulletins, human promotion programs, *da'wa* programs, and talk shows. In *da'wa* programs, Muslim clerics are invited to the studio to discuss different issues on Islam. Some of these programs are recorded and sometimes later repeated as recorded programs. There is also some recorded preaching from prominent scholars in the country that is broadcasted during *da'wa* programs. The recorded program includes a translation of the Qur'an, which is recited in Arabic and translated into English.

The analysis of the program schedules indicates four significant categories of programs. These include Socioeconomic development and welfare, Islamic spirituality and knowledge, Entrainment, and News and Information. Islamic spirituality and knowledge account for 50%, Socioeconomic development, welfare, and entertainment 20%, and 30% for News and information. Also, the programs are clustered into six portions. Early morning programs (4:00 am to 7:00 am), special morning programs (7:00 am to 10 am), before noon programs (from 10 am to 1 pm), afternoon programs (1 pm to 5 pm), evening drive programs (5 pm to 11 pm), and lastly programs under night Qur'an recitation (11 pm to 4 am). This grouping is intended to provide programming conveniences for the program manager. Programs that fall in the socio-economic development and welfare category address issues related to finance, health, and formal education. Others include Uganda's politics and social and cultural spheres, targeting mainly Muslims. Before detailing how these stations engage in identity contestations, a brief overview of each station is provided below.

Voice of Africa (VOA)

The *Voice of Africa* Radio, 91.3 FM MHz, was established by the Union of Muslim Councils (UMC) for East, Central, and Southern Africa. UMC was officially inaugurated on May 15, 1986, in Bujumbura, Burundi as a voluntary regional association. The organization brings together over 27 countries from East, Central, and Southern Africa to advance Islamic propagation

(Dawa) among member states through the education of the masses. In Uganda it is done through its two media sections, the Voice of Africa FM radio, and the weekly newspaper, *The Weekly Message* (or *Al-Risaara*). UMC also owns Voice of Africa in Rwanda and the Democratic Republic of Congo. Also, since 2010, UMC has patterned with Radio Islam of Mozambique, IQRQ FM of Kenya, and Radio 786 of Cape Town South Africa. The former leader of Libya, Col. Muammar Ghaddafi was very instrumental in its establishment and funded most of its annual meetings and day-to-day activities. Further, the organization engages in finding solutions to global issues that affect Muslims through dialogue and open discussion. For example, during the Lebanon-Israel War of 2006, the organization convened a meeting to discuss the matter and its implications for Muslims in which over 500 participants across Africa were involved.

Currently, the organization is headed by its Secretary General, Sheikh Haruna Kasangaki, a graduate of Islamic Call University located in Tripoli, Libya. Sheikh Kasangaki took over the leadership of UMC in October 2014, from Sheikh Ibrahim Sali a lecturer at Makerere University, following a dispute that threatened the survival of the regional body. However, he has managed to govern the organization even after the decline of Libyan finances that used to feed the regional organization. UMC's headquarters are in Kololo hills of Kampala suburb on the same premises that houses the radio stations. Previously, it was the same building that housed the World Islamic Call Society head offices in Uganda, before moving to old Kampala, after the construction of the national mosque.

Voice of Africa radio station is the mother of all Muslim broadcasting media industry in Uganda. It is the first radio station to be managed by Muslims in the country. The radio station was established in 2000. Its slogan is "*Eddoboozi ly'omuntu wabulijjo*" (common person's Voice). According to Sheikh Twaha Katungulu one of the board members, the function of VOA is to unite the fragmented Ugandan Muslim community. This is seen in the variety of scholars hosted by the station during *da'wa* programs. However, although scholars hosted on VOA are of diverse Islamic inclinations, Libyan-trained clerics are given precedence. For example, Sheikh Kasozi, the head of *da'wa* programs at the station, graduated from Islamic Call University in Tripoli.

The station is quite strict on topics that are divisive in Uganda. [570] However, this may mean that issues in support of traditional Islam are encouraged and despise reformists' rhetoric. This may include topics in support of *mawlid* celebrations, communal remembrance of God (*dhikr*), and topics that often receive criticism from the Salafi audience. It is taboo for a Salafi host to make public criticism of these rituals via VOA. This is termed as divisive speech and not allowed on the airwaves of VOA. Also, under this banner of 'unit' and avoiding 'disunity,' during the intense years of political turmoil within Muslim communities, VOA balanced its reporting and avoided taking sides, unlike Bilal FM.[571]

The radio's transmission studio is located on John Babiha Avenue, in Kololo, in the same premises that houses UMC. It transmits on 92.3 MHz FM Central region, 102.7 FM Masaka region, and 90.6 MHz FM in the western region. The radio is equally accessible online through its website; voiceofafricamuganda.com, as well as on Facebook. VOA implements the broader mission of UMC of bringing humanity out of darkness into the light. Dedicated to this mission, according to the general manager, Haji Najib Kivumbi, VOA programs inform, educate, and entertain every African within its area of coverage on air and anyone with online access. These programs are conducted in English, Arabic, Luganda, Lunyankole, and Ki-Nubbi to overcome the language barrier problem in the region and the globe.

In the due process of its operations, Haji Najib affirms that the radio aims at empowering the population, especially in the rural areas to boldly face the challenges of development by encouraging work and self-reliance. The radio also aspires to be a forum for sharing ideas and opinions on social, economic, sports, politics, and religion by all. As a commercial radio station, VOA also wants to be a bridge between consumers and producers of reputable products and services available on both local and international markets. While the target is the Ugandan community, Haji Najib stresses that VOA serves mostly Muslim communities of diverse religious orientations with no favouritism regarding different theological backgrounds. Through its 2KW Transmitter which is strategically located on the National Mast in Kololo, VOA covers almost the central, western, and southern regions of the country. The radio also has news reporters in different localities in Uganda who are also responsible for the promotion and marketing of the radio station.

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[570] Interview with program manager, Haji Najib Kivumbi, Kampala.

[571] Informal conversation with Dr. Shuaib Kaggwa a researcher at Islamic University in Uganda, Mass Communication department, Kampala, 20 November 2020.

Regarding programs, VOA dedicates its programming agenda to serving the audience holistically. Luganda language is mostly used in programs that promote social, human, welfare, and economic development. It is also the language used in most of the programs of VOA. Arabic is used in all Qur'an-related programs and prayers. English, Ki-Nubbi, Kiswahili, and Runyankole are used in programs that promote Islamic knowledge and values especially those produced targeting non-Luganda speakers. About 90% of the programs of VOA are produced from the studio out of the daily 24-hour broadcast. These programs include news bulletins, roundtable discussions, human promotion, Islamic knowledge, and prayers. In the round table discussion programs, Muslim scholars, politicians, sheikhs, Imams, as well as other people of great concern are hosted to discuss different topics. this can be on health, politics, religion, development, among others.

Additionally, most of the programs are locally produced besides the Qur'an recitation in which recording reciters from Saudi Arabia such as Sheikh Abdul-Rahman Al-Sudais, Sheikh Saud Al-Shuraim, the late Sheikh Abdullah al-Matrood, and the late Sheikh Abdulbasit Abdussamad from Egypt among others. There are still no local reciters who are given great attention in comparison to their foreign counterparts. Moreover, reciters such as Sheikh Abdulbasit Abdussamad apart from their religious and spiritual values, present the best way the Qur'an should recited, known in Islamic scholarship as *Tajweed*. Thus, due to their ability to bring out the correct recitation of the Muslim's holy book, this series of recorded Qur'an is used to improve Qur'an recitation of VOA's Muslim audience.

On some occasions, a recorded Qur'an in both English and Arabic is also broadcast, and speeches of the famous international motivational speaker from Zimbabwe, *Mufti* Ismail Menk. This happens mostly in the holy month of Ramadan in which the number of spiritual uplifting programs overtake the daily broadcasting schedule of the VOA daily program line-up for the entire 30 days of the fasting month. VOA also airs prayers and events taking place in different mosques on Friday around the country, especially in Kampala, turning the radio into another *Minbar* in a technologically mediated format. Additionally, recorded religious teachings (*Okubulilira*) as well as *Khutbar* (sermons given by an Imam or an Islamic scholar on Friday) on matters of faith and Islamic values are aired by VOA.

Bilal FM

Bilal FM 94.5 MHz which is affiliated to the Uganda Muslim Supreme Council (UMSC) is another radio which is identical to Voice of Africa radio. It was established in 2005, the radio acts as a mouthpiece for UMSC the officially recognized organization that represents Muslims in Uganda. It was established in 1972 by then-president Idi Amin with the aim of 'uniting' different factions of Muslims in the country. Preachers from the traditional cleric circles conduct the Islamic lesson. Like VOA, Bilal FM does not entertain what the program producer, Sheikh Ssali, calls 'divisive' preaching. In other words, a type of preaching that does not support traditional Islamic rituals, including mawlid celebrations. There are also recorded sermons from Egyptian-trained scholars such as well as Libya, and Yemen, locally trained ones. All guests must be supportive of UMSC and its initiatives. It is common for a host to ask their guests to comment on any ongoing activity the governing body (i.e., UMSC) might be carrying out at the time stage. The radio's slogan is *"Bila FM Omukowoozewo"* (*your caller...*)

Pearl FM

The third radio station is Pearl FM Radio 107.5FM. It is owned by businessperson Kin Kariisa[572], a close ally to the president of Uganda. However, the radio operates 'independently', and threats of suspension by the Uganda Communication Commission (UCC) have been issued to the station occasionally for airing out issues that are critical to the government. [573] Kariisa is also the CEO of Next Media a multimedia company that owns NBS TV, Salaam TV, and Sanyuka TV as well as other radio stations. Salam TV and Pearl FM are the only media outlets dedicated to Islamic issues and the advancement of Islam according to Kin Kariisa. [574] The head of the Dawa program is a Madina University graduate Sheikh Sulaiman Kyeyune whose name has become popular in the country.

Like the other private radio stations, they depend on commercial advertisements and donations from individual groups. They also carry out annual fundraising concerts with listeners clubs and other well-wishers. All Pearl FM programs have a religious nuance. Due to the live streaming facility, it has gained wide coverage and can be accessed throughout the world. Importantly all three radio stations address the Ugandan Muslim population both through conventional approaches to Islamic knowledge (such as Friday sermons) and through a more interactive informal approach. They blend news from and about Muslims in the country and in the Muslim world, religious (Islamic) entertainment, children's Islamic programs, and various services, all of which provide interaction directly with clerics or their presenters. Interestingly, besides the Islamic programs, the radio is accused of having programs that are hostile to the ruling regime. In 2017 for example, the Uganda Communication Commission (UCC) ordered the suspension of then-station Sulaiman Kalule for allegedly causing public insecurity and violence in his political program that discusses current affairs in the country, the 'inside story'.[575]

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[572] See his website, https://kinkariisa.com/

[573] see: UCC Threatens to Close down Pearl FM, wants Station Manager Fired." *The NewzPosti*, October 23, 2017. Accessed from https://newz.ug/ucc-threatens-to-close-down-pearl-fm-wants-station-manager-fired/, and "UCC orders for suspension of Pearl FM Station Manager." *The Observer*, October 23, 2017. Accessed from https://observer.ug/news/headlines/55578-ucc-orders-for-suspension-of-pearl-fm-station-manager on 30 June 2022.

[574] See Pat Robert Larubi, "First Islamic Television Launched in Uganda." *Cheimpreports*, June 11, 2015. Accessed from https://chimpreports.com/first-islamic-television-launched-in-uganda/ on 23 May 2021.

Thuraya Islam Media (Facebook Page)

One of the most popular Salafi Facebook pages is *Thurayya Islam Media- Uganda* (TIM-Ug). TIM-Ug mastered the use of social media to disseminate Islamic knowledge. Its motto is "*Let's take Islam to the next level in media*."[576] In August 2021, TIM's Facebook channel had over 120, 600 followers with over 76,700 likes. [577] Its YouTube channel has over 221,000 subscribers with 1.8 million viewers since 2014. [578] Besides uploaded lectures, TIM-Ug hosts also live sessions which allow live interaction between scholars and their audiences. Generally, posts on the TIM-UG Facebook page are updated regularly by the TIM admin. Thus, we can deduce that all posts are official content by the TIM-UG owners and operators. Facebook users other than the admin have no option of posting directly onto the page. They are only allowed to comment, and the admin has a right to delete any message that contradicts the taste of the TIM-UG agenda. In addition to social media presence, TIM-Ug organizes a variety of public religious events, such as annual Ramadan conventions, and monthly seminars, among others. These events always attract a significant number of Salafi preachers and their followers.

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[575] See: "UCC orders for suspension of Pearl FM Station Manager." *The Observer*, October 23, 2017. Accessed from https://observer.ug/news/headlines/55578-ucc-orders-for-suspension-of-pearl-fm-station-manager on 30 June 2022.

[576] See TIM's Facebook page: https://www.facebook.com/thurayyaIslamMediacompany/.

[577] See TIM Facebook under @thurayyaIslamMediacompany.

[578] See TIM YouTube channel: other https://youtube.com/c/THURAYYAISLAMMEDIA

Noteworthy, Facebook and YouTube are some of the most popular social media platforms in Uganda. By 2020 about 7.3% of Ugandans were using social media. [579] Facebook takes the third position (after Google and YouTube) among the most frequently visited sites in the country. [580] Increased access to an internet connection has eased the use of social media. Over 12 million Ugandans (26%) used the Internet in 2020 with 98% of them accessing it via mobile phones. [581] Accordingly, the Facebook post has the potential to reach over 11.6% of 26.7 million Ugandans (the total population aged 13 and above). [582] This number is quite commendable, given the economic standards of an average Ugandan in addition to political restrictions (in terms of daily operating tax) imposed on all social media users in Uganda during the period between 2018 and 2021. [583] These figures should be put in the global context of over 3 billion people with active Facebook accounts every month. [584] According to the report, 97.3% of social media users (7.3%) access it via mobile phones an indication that accessibility is not limited by specific locations.

Manya Obusilamu (YouTube Channel)

YouTube[585] is also very popular in the country. In fact, by 2021, YouTube ranked second after Google as the most widely visited website in Uganda.[586] While the available data do not refer to any specific religion, findings show that Islamic content on YouTube is steadily growing with increased user engagement.[587] The three identified categories that form the Ugandan Muslim population use this type of platform holistically, enabling both the production and consumption of Islamic content from diverse orientations. The three categories seen above upload preaching of their scholars and activities to spread knowledge and sometimes to 'clarify' the miss conceptions. My focus is on one YouTube channel *Manya Obusilamu*.[588] It is selected purposively since it represents a theological position that contradicts the TIM-UG position. While all aspire for the propagation Islamic faith, their approach and interpretations vary from one case to another. They also have a substantive number of subscribers and viewers. The YouTube channel '*Manya Obusilamu*', was established in 2018 by the Allied Democratic Forces-ADF or Islamic State Central Africa – ISCAP. This group claims to be followers of Salafism. By December 2022 it had over 130 videos, 129,000 subscribers, and 121,990 views.

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[579] By February 2021, the total population of Uganda was standing at 46.43 million people. See https://datareportal.com/reports/digital-2021-uganda, last updated on February 12, 2021.

[580] See the full 2021 report on internet use in Uganda by DataReportal.com, via https://datareportal.com/reports/digital-2021-uganda. Last updated on February 12, 2021.

[581] Ibid.

[582] ibid.

[583] The government of Uganda imposed a social media tax in 2016 in a bid to curb what President Museveni called "time-wasting". The tax had to be directly paid by all social media who would wish to access sites such as Facebook, Twitter, and WhatsApp. See Patience Akumu, 2018., "Uganda introduces Social Media Tax despite Criticism.", *Aljazeera*, July 1, 2018. Accessed on August 20, 2021, via https://www.aljazeera.com/economy/2018/7/1/uganda-introduces-social-media-tax-despite-criticism. In June 2021, after elections and swearing in of the incumbent, the tax was recalled but instead, the heavy tax was put on all internet users. See for more: David Vosh Ajuna, "Uganda substitutes OTT with 12% tax on data, airtime." *The Daily Monitor*, June 11. Accessed on September 6, 2021, from https://www.monitor.co.ug/uganda/news/national/govt-substitutes-ott-with-12-tax-on-data-airtime--3432728. More details on how governments in Africa are restricting the use of social media see Karombo, Tawanda. 2020. "More African Governments are Quietly Tightening Rules and Laws on Social Media", *Quartz Africa*, Oct 12.

[584] See for more information: Facebook 2021 website, accessed on 20 August 2021, via https://about.facebook.com/company-info/

[585] YouTube is a free video-sharing social media website that makes it easy to watch online videos. It allows registered users to upload their videos and share them with others. See; Trishu and Shruti Sharma, "A Study of YouTube as an Effective Educational Tool." *Journal of Contemporary Issues in Business and Government,* 27, no. 1 (2021).

[586] See: https://datareportal.com/reports/digital-2021-uganda

It is important to note that the content producers of the Islamic programs on both radio stations and online platforms are still dominated by former preachers/Imams in mosques and teachers of madrasahh/Islamic schools in the country. In Uganda and elsewhere, mosques, madrasahhs, and formal Islamic schools have a long history in the production and dissemination of Islamic knowledge. These institutions have long been rooted in Muslim societies and have played a critical role in dawa activities and the study of Islamic traditions. Through media, individual scholars who used to utilize traditional spaces (such as *Minbar* and Islamic schools) have now become household names in the Ugandan Muslim community. The fact that most of the Muslim media are linked to conventional mosque Imams and madrasahh teachers, demonstrates and confirms the argument that Muslim media to a greater extent is an extension of these institutions. Thus, new media, despite being modern is a continuation of older Islamic institutions.

Filling Muslim Media with Islamic Discourse

How do the above five cases shape the identity of Muslims in the country? I approach the answer to this question by focusing on two major themes that were extensively discussed via the selected media platforms during fieldwork. It is important to note that Islamic discourses via these media platforms revolve around various themes. These themes reflect not only the ideologies, religious identities, and aspirations of each media outlet but also the broader societal conversations. Thus, to understand how Islamic identity is enacted and shaped, it is categorically important to approach the question by considering some of these themes.

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[587] Ibid.

[588] Manya Obusilamu, see: https://www.youtube.com/channel/UCE7WERejkLfbWJH7t29AqsQ, last accessed on June 20, 2022.

The permissibility of music in Islam was a central theme on radio stations. Various groups found it wrong for radio stations to play music yet, they brand themselves as Muslim radio stations. Thus, for that reason, my focus on radio stations will explore music themes, and how each radio station navigated the discussion. On social media, the focus was on the permissibility of voting. It was the presidential and parliamentary election period and discussions covered the conversations on the different media platforms. Thus, I will explore the voting/election theme and present how was used to shape a particular narrative via social media.

Radio and Islamic Music Discourse

As for Muslim radio stations in Uganda, the permissibility of music is a recurring theme on-air and within the Muslim audience. The debate is informed by the general historical discussion about the legal status of music in the first century of Islam which continues to be a subject of scholarly controversy to date.[589] On one side are those who argue that music is permissible (*halal*). For them, Islam can't prohibit music since it is a natural physiological process that is delightful to human nature.[590] On the other side are those who completely deny the permissibility of music in Islam, arguing that it is a useless and passive activity similar to gambling. [591] The debate has attracted contributions from Muslim jurists of the past and present, including Imam Abu Hamid al-Ghazali of the 12th century and Yusuf al-Qaradawi.[592] Moreover, when the Taliban first took power in 1996, the French daily newspaper *Le Monde* (12 October 1996) reported that the new rulers had called upon the Afghan people to open their cages. The intention, the paper argues, was to free the birds which could prevent them from listening to their singing because Islamic law prohibits listening to Music.[593] While there are unavoidable doubts about the accuracy of the report due to the exaggerated reporting on the Taliban government by Western media, it points to the vigorous and enduring discussion going around on the legal status of music in Islam.

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[589] For a detailed discussion of these debates, see Amnon Shiloah, "Music and Religion in Islam," *Acta Musicologica*, 69, no. 2 (1997).

[590] See Muhammad Al-Atawneh, "Leisure and Entertainment (*malahi*) in Contemporary Islamic Legal Thought: Music and the Audio-Visual Media," *Islamic Law and Society* 19, no. 4 (2012).

[591] Ibid.

[592] Yusuf al Qaradawi is one of the contemporary Muslim jurists and author of an authoritative text in Islamic jurisprudence, *The Lawful and the Prohibited in Islam* (al-*Halal* wal Haram Fil Islam), (Trans), Illinois: American Trust, 1999.

Like elsewhere, the Ugandan Muslim community has laboured similar controversies as long as the history of Islam in the country. While little research has been done on the subject of Islam and music in Uganda, historical findings show that over the past 50 years, there has been significant discussion on music.[594] Important to mention, however, is that all the three radio stations under study play varying types of music from both local and international musicians, despite differences in their Islamic orientations. This is partly because music in the Ugandan Muslim community is instrumental in establishing their identity. Contrary to their Christian counterpart, the Ugandan Muslim community has traditionally been united in shunning Western instruments and *engoma* (local drums). They associate the former with Western moral laxity, and the latter with the pre-Islamic polytheistic past.[595] The *mataali* have been more acceptable to Islamic culture for entertainment in Uganda. Introduced by early Muslim groups from the East African coast, *Mataali* are round frame drums with a membrane at one side. It is accepted as the main musical instrument used by Muslims in Uganda and East Africa, even with those who denounce their permissibility in Islam. *Mataali* has served to distinguish between Muslim and non-Muslim functions, especially weddings.[596]

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[593] See: Amnon Shiloah, "Music and Religion in Islam, *Acta Musicologica*, 69, no. 2 (1997), 143.

[594] See one of the few studies on the subject; Abasi Kiyimba, "Music and Islam in Uganda: Diverse Opinions and Practices," in Sylvia Nanyonga-Tamusuza and Thomas Solomon, "*Ethnomusicology in East Africa: Perspectives from Uganda and Beyond*," Kampala: Fountain Publishers, 2012, pp.93-109.

[595] On Western instruments, the majority of Muslims in the country have rejected using them in their functions especially those that carry religious connotations, like mawlid cerebrations. However, the tide is changing, and it seem especially with new media and exposure to Muslim musicians from the Arab world that have incorporated the instruments in their songs, Ugandans too are starting to join. This however remains in the corridors of entertainment and leisure places not during mawlid or religious ceremonies. Abasi Kiyimba's article on Music and Islam in Uganda, highlight on this matter extensively. See: Abasi Kiyimba, "Music and Islam in Uganda: Diverse Opinions and Practices," 99-101. As for the *Engoma* the local drums in (especially) in the Buganda region are used in *kusamira* (traditional worship of Buganda gods). To distance themselves in similar acts, may Muslims have adopted Swahili-Oman type of drums as replacement for the local *Ngoma*. See "Dancing to the Sounds of *Mataali*," *the Daily Monitor*, August 24, 2013 (updated on January 09, 2021. Accessed from https://www.monitor.co.ug/uganda/magazines/life/dancing-to-the-sounds-of-mataali-1551170 on 2, January 2022.

[596] This however does not mean that blanket acceptance. *Mataali* have also been rejected by some groups that do not accept association of Islam with any form of music and it was central in the intra-community sectarian divisions that rocked the Ugandan Muslims between 1940s and 1970s. Some groups insisted that it was permissible to play the *mataali* at social or/and religious gatherings while others refuted the idea. Even though

Pearl FM's Strict Salafi Position

The majority of self-proclaimed Salafis do not allow any form of music on their media outlets and at their functions besides the cappella songs. They insist that the use of musical instruments is impermissible (*haram*) *mataali*. They also do not listen to or attend the functions of others who choose to play any form of music with instruments. "Anyone who intends to invite me to their functions, must adhere to my principle of Capella music" said the leader of Salafi community, Sheikh Muhammad Yunus Kamoga.[597] Pearl FM maintains the Salafi position on music in the country. Sheikh Ahmad Kyeyune a medina graduate and head of the dawa programs at the station believes that it is impermissible (*haram*) for a Muslim radio station to play music with musical instruments.[598]

Sheikh Kyeyune of Pearl FM explained to me the station's rejection of songs with musical instruments is based on the Qur'an and Sunna (i.e., teachings of Prophet Muhammad). He said the hadith, which is found in the book of Bukhari, alludes to such a category. In it, the prophet is believed to have said that among my *umma* (community) will be a category of people who regard adultery, wine, and stringed instruments (*al-ma'azif*) as lawful. Kyeyune uses this hadith to disregard every musical instrument.[599]

The station's programming reflects this ideology, with all programs opening either with Qur'an recitation or non-instrumental Islamic nasheeds. This media practice is consistent with Salafi theological discourses that prioritize spiritual purity and condemn music as a distraction from religious obligations, as reflected in the works of scholars such as Mustafa Sabri. Pearl FM, through its rejection of instrumental music, constructs a specific Salafi identity that appeals to its reformist audience.

Bilal FM's Balance: "Islamic Songs and Matali

Bilal FM takes a more moderate stance, allowing the broadcast of what it defines as "Islamic music," which includes songs that praise Allah, the Prophet Muhammad, and Islamic

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it was the case, they all unanimously recognized it as a Muslim musical instrument. Details of these controversies are discussed by Abasi Kiyimba, "Muslim Community in Uganda Through One Hundred and Forty Years: The Trials and Tribulations of a Muslim Minority," *Journal of African Religion and Philosophy* 1, no. 2 (1990), 90.

[597] Interview with Sheikh Kamoga, Kampala, 11 September 2021

[598] Interview with Sheikh Ahmed Kyeyune, Kampala, June 2018.

[599] Interview with Sheikh Suleiman Kyeyune, Kampala, June 2018

practices."[600] The station also plays local mataali music, considered integral to Ugandan Muslim culture. Sheikh Imran Ssali, head of *da'wa* programming, contends that while some hadiths discourage music, the context is essential. He cites an example of the Prophet permitting Aisha to watch Abyssinian dancers in the mosque, arguing that music with Islamic themes and local instruments should be permissible.

As for Bilal, the head of *dawah* programs, Sheikh Imran Ssali, believes that they should entertain their listeners with Islamic-related songs from Muslims. Ssali believes that it is permitted to sing with local musical instruments (*mataali*). However, for him even with Western musical instruments but with Islamic messages, it is still okay. That is why Bilal has been the leading promoter of Ugandan Muslim singers with Islamic songs on subjects such as the importance of prayers (salat) by Haruna Mubiru, *Mwebale Okusiiba* (congratulations from Fasting Ramadan) by *Omulagila Suuna*, *Amiina* by *Swahaba Kasumba*, among others. Ssali believes that the message resonates with Islamic teaching and can be played to their station. As for the hadith that rejects music, for him it is contextual. He refers to the hadith by Aisha in which the prophet allowed her to watch the Abyssinians who were singing and dancing in the prophet's mosque. He asks if it was *haram*, why did the prophet leave them to sing and dance with instruments? If the songs have Islamic content, it should not be a problem.

Bilal FM's balance between tradition and reform reflects the broader theological diversity within Uganda's Muslim community. The station's integration of Islamic songs and mataali serves to reinforce a distinct Muslim identity that bridges both historical practices and contemporary religious thought.

Voice of Africa: A Liberal Approach to Music

Voice of Africa (VOA) adopts a liberal approach, allowing a wide range of musical genres, including those by non-Muslim artists, as long as they do not contain vulgarity. Sheikh Kasasa Wakiku, head of VOA's *da'wa* programming, emphasizes that music should be judged by its message rather than its origins. For example, VOA frequently plays traditional Kadongo-Kamu songs, such as those by Paul Kafeero, because of their moral and reflective content. This liberal approach contrasts with the rigid Salafi positions, illustrating the diversity of Islamic interpretation within Uganda.[601]

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[600] On Islamic music see; Michael Frishkof, "Music," in *The Islamic World*, ed. Andrew Rippin (London: Routledge, 2008).

Sheikh Kasasa Wakiku, - the head of dawah programs at VOA, on the other hand-, has no problem with musical instruments, local and international. He said,

> They have sent us emails and SMS, and some approached us that we should stop praying to non-Islamic music. First, this is not a new thing. Great scholars have debated it, and no single position has been taken. Thus, at VOA, we are driven by the demands of our listeners and our knowledge of Islam. However, if you are not comfortable with the demands of our majority audience, the door is open (*omulyango muggule*), find other channels that fit your aspirations. We play music as long it does not contradict the values of Islam. We do not play songs that promote obscenity, nor do we play songs that promote the consumption of animals. However, if a song, even if not Islamic but with important content that carries Islamic values, comes onboard, we shall play. For example, the songs of Paul Kafeero and other *kadongo-kamu* songs.[602]

This statement reveals the context and importance of the discussion of music. The context was criticism from listeners opposed to musical instruments but sympathetic to VOA. It also proves that VOA is ready to tolerate certain categories of people. It also shows a broad understanding of Islamic values which transcends nomenclature technology. For VOA any song that carries important messages is "Islamic." They do not need to come from only Muslims and the example of a Christian Paul Kafeero who is known for his witty and reflective messages is enough to underscore, VOA's position. [603]

Kasozi is also critical of those who accept songs with traditional or local 'Muslim' musical instruments and reject the so-called Western instruments. He asks, "What is the difference? To him, songs with music are the same, and there is no difference. You either listen to all songs as long other they do not compromise the values of Islam or not." To Kasozi such kind of distinction is misplaced and should not be tolerated. Therefore, Wakiku's response to critics of the station's music policy encapsulates VOA's inclusive philosophy: they are driven by audience demands and their understanding of Islam. his highlights how VOA's broad definition of what constitutes "Islamic" music shapes a liberal and pluralistic Muslim identity, attracting a diverse audience that appreciates the station's openness to various forms of expression.

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[601] See Michael Frishkof, "Islamic Music in Africa as a Tool for African Studies," *Canadian Journal of African Studies* 42, no. 2 (2013), 645.

[602] Interview with Sheikh Kasasa Wakiku, Kampala June 2018.

[603] Paul Kafeero was a popular Kadongo-Kamu singer who died in 2007. He is known for his music which won international awards. He is loved by many Ugandans due to his songs that were critical to social and cultural norms. Muslims who still listen to his songs say that they didact, reflective, inspirational, and educative. For more about Paul Kafeero, see Kathryn Barrett-Gaines, *One Little Guitar: The Words of Paul Job Kafeero* (Kampala: Fountain Publishers, 2012).

Constructing Muslim Identities Through Radio

Radio, as a medium, plays a pivotal role in shaping Muslim identity by promoting particular theological positions. Each station in this study caters to a distinct segment of Uganda's Muslim population: traditionalists prefer Bilal FM's "Islamic music," reformists lean toward Pearl FM's a cappella approach, while liberal Muslims find resonance with VOA's more open music policy. These preferences underscore how media outlets not only reflect but actively shape religious identities, creating spaces where theological interpretations are mediated through musical discourse.

In conclusion, the discourse on music across these radio stations serves as a lens through which Ugandan Muslims negotiate their religious identity. Pearl FM's rejection of music with instruments constructs a reformist, Salafi identity, while Bilal FM's inclusion of Islamic songs nurtures a more traditionalist identity. VOA's liberal approach accommodates a broader audience, reflecting the diversity of Muslim thought in Uganda. That is the reason why the traditionalists in Uganda would prefer listening to Bilal FM due to its inclination to the perceived Islamic songs position. Salafis and other reformists would choose to listen to Perl Fm because it does not play music with instruments, and thus promotes their theological positions. As for the Muslims from the liberal camp listen to Voice of Africa radio, due it its liberal approach to understanding Islam. To them, the station embodies the ideal type of Muslim media. Thus, radio becomes a powerful tool for constructing and expressing Muslim identities, rooted in varying interpretations of Islamic principles.

Social Media and Permissibility of Voting

The use of social media platforms such as Facebook and Thuraya Islam Media-Uganda (TIM-UG) brings into focus the tensions within Ugandan Salafi communities over the issue of voting in secular states. The online debate during the election period reveals two opposing camps: one supporting political participation, led by mainstream Salafi voices, and the other rejecting it, championed by Salafi-Jihadist figures from the Allied Democratic Forces (ADF), now linked to the Islamic State Central Africa Province (ISCAP). These divergent positions reflect broader contestations within the global Salafi movement regarding engagement with secular political systems.

Generally, posts on the TIM-UG Facebook page are updated regularly by the TIM admin. Thus, we can deduce that all posts are official content by the TIM-UG owners and operators. Facebook users other than the admin have no option of posting directly onto the page. They are only allowed to comment, and the admin has a right to delete any message that contradicts the taste of the TIM-UG agenda. However, as I was following the debate, I did not witness any deleted comments. This could probably confirm comments posted by Facebook users in response to each post are allowed without censorship of any kind. For example, there are a few comments that criticize the TIM-UG admin but were left in the comment section without being deleted.

The second video under investigation was posted in comments, by anti-voting users. The video is from a YouTube channel, *Manya Obusilamu*, operated by members of self-claimed Salafi-Jihadists, the Allied Democratic Forces-ADF (now Islamic State Central Africa Province-ISCAP). While the video contradicted the position, TIM-UG, however, did not delete it but was left in the comment section under the officially posted pro-voting video. [604]

“Yes, to Vote”

The video that supports voting in a secular setting was posted in May 2020. This was the period when presidential general elections were at the pick. The election was to be conducted on January 18, 2021. The narrator of the video is Sheikh MS (initials used). He is introduced as an Islamic University of Medina graduate and a scholar of Islamic Jurisprudence. [605] The video, titled; “Is voting *Haram* (impermissible)?”[606] Sheikh MS discusses extensively the issue of voting. In the video, Sheikh MS makes it explicitly clear that voting is permissible with no objection. He draws the audience’s attention to the Islamic legal principle of socio-context or *fiqh al waqi’* (knowing and understanding the context of the topic). This principle is integral in a *mufti*, or judge's verdict because the judge must first understand the socio-context before the verdict is issued. Ibn al-Qayyim (d. 1350) considered it to be one of the prerequisites of the *mufti* alongside *fiqh al-mas'alah* (possessing a proper perception of the issue at hand and its related rulings). Sheikh MS argues further any fatwa (legal ruling) needs to first understand the prevailing situation and the context of Uganda's political environment.

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[604] It is important to note that both videos by the time of writing had been removed from the Facebook page.
[605] Note: The majority of Ugandan Salafi Scholars are graduates of the Islamic University in Medina. For more information about this university see: https://www.iu.edu.sa/.
[606] Field Data, May 2020

To further prove the principle of contextualization, Sheikh MS invites his contenders to consider a scenario of a ruler who gives his Muslim subjects a choice between a sharia court, or one that will rule based on secular laws. "Should this person declare that he [or she] refuses to choose, since voting which in turn is part of democracy, is [a] system of *kufr* [disbelief]?", [607] asks Sheikh MS. For him, in such a scenario it is incumbent on all eligible Muslims to vote in favour of sharia courts. Should they fail to participate in such events, it proves the failure to contextualize and conceptualize the issue at hand. He argues further that it is important to all those who reject democracy to understand that "democracy was originally coined to mean 'the rule of the people', however, these days it has various connotations where it can be used to merely mean a selection mechanism". In secular countries like Uganda, Sheikh MS contends, abstinence from voting will not realistically lead to change, and "…any sane person would say that abstaining from selecting the least evil option would only leave room for the eviler option to win".[608]

Here we see the position of TIM-UG. They by simply allowing the proponents for the permissibility of voting and participation in active politics, shape the Salafi identity of their audience.

"Say No to Voting"

Manya Obusilamu channel on the other hand promotes theological positions that defy politics and participation in voting. I first encountered this video in the comment section of the TIM-UG Facebook page. This prompted me to further check its source, and I found it ADF/ISCAP YouTube channel Manya Obusilamu. [609] In response to Sheikh MS's video, another video from anti-voting was posted in the comments. It was posted by a section of Salafis who are against voting in a secular state and are opposed to the so-called ‘secular democracy’. The YouTube channel *Manya Obusilamu* is known for posting videos by prominent Ugandan jihadi-Salafi scholars such as Sheikh Jamilu Mukulu, Sheikh Musa Baruku, and Sheikh Abdurahman Faiswal, among others. [610] By August 2021, the channel had over 130 videos with 520 subscribers.

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[607] Field Data, July 2020

[608] Field Data, July 2020

[609] See: Abdurahuma Faiswali, "Akalulu Kali Haram" (Election is impermissible), retrieved on 20 May 2020, https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=XButBizseRE

The video, titled “*Akalulu kali haram*” (Voting is Impermissible), is not a direct response to Sheikh MS’s position, since it was published on the ADF’s YouTube channel early before the election period (i.e., April 21, 2019). But the one who posited it is opposed to Sheikh MS’s view that calls upon Muslims to vote in Uganda’s secular elections. In this second video, the narrator starts by preparing his audience for the topic. He tells them that we are in an election period (possibly the 2016 general elections that saw President Museveni being elected for the fourth term in office). Thus, he sees it as the right time to speak about voting and its Islamic legal ruling.

To make his position clear, he starts by condemning all Ugandan scholars who have made voting permissible saying that “it has never been written anywhere in the two Islamic sources.”[611] Thus “any Muslim who participates in voting, according to the evidence which I’m going to present in this lecture is *kafir* (excommunicated) from the fold of Islam whose blood is free to shade. This person is *kafir* and can only be allowed into Islam if he/she repents, otherwise, if s/he dies before *tawbah* (repenting), is judged as a non-Muslim.”[612] Moreover, he affirms that this issue is not only impermissible, in legal terms, or an act of polytheism, rather, it is an act that makes someone a *Kafir* (non-Muslim) according to the book of Allah and his prophet”.

These kinds of statements are threats that are directed to all listeners to open their minds to his message. Any Muslim listening to such talk will need to know more about the reason why s/he is excommunicated due to being involved in voting. Another threat is the shade of blood, which speaks well in the language of most radical Islamist movements like ISIS, and al-Shabab among others. This gives them a broader space to expand their violence, not only to the initial enemy, the non-Muslim rulers but also to those Muslims who oppose their theological positions.

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[610] Jamilu Mukulu, the founder of ADF was replaced by Musa Baluku as the new leader after his arrest in 2015. Refer to chapter four for details about ADF and Salafis in general.

[611] Meaning such permission is not in either the Qur’an or Hadith (the two main sources of Islamic law).

[612] Original: “Omusilamu yenna eyetaba mukalulu aba mukafiri, akirizibwa okutibwa. Omuntu oyo mukafiiri obukafiri obunnene. Akirizibwa okudda mu busila singa aba yenenyezza. Bwekitaba ekyo bwafa nga takoze tawbah tumulamuko nti si musilamu.” Source: Filed Data, August 2020.

The narrator refutes all the claims made by Sheikh MS. According to him anything that contradicts the Qur'an, or the Sunna is equivalent to *kufr* (disbelief). He cites a verse from the Qur'an that states "And whoever does not judge by what Allah has revealed, such are the *Kāfirūna* (disbelievers)."[613] Sheikh MS's interpretation of this verse is that it addresses those who have the choice to rule by Sharia but choose secular laws. However, the narrator believes the verse applies to all those who choose to follow democracy and secular laws that advocate for elections instead of God. To the narrator, selecting a party or a leader who will in turn advocate secular laws, is tantamount to endorsing these laws. Thus, Muslims who commit such an action of disbelief are considered non-believers whose blood is permissible to shed.

He argues further that if Muslims involve themselves in voting, it is the same as involvement in a political system. This is a step towards integration which ultimately leads to the loss of Muslim identity whilst living in secular states. For him, Muslim identity should be preserved under all circumstances. Thus, integration leads to the loss of Muslim distinctiveness. He believes that integration is the "hidden agenda by the enemies of Islam to deceive Muslims so that they lose their identity."[614] This rhetoric is also common in militant movements such as the Somali al-Shabab and Boko *Haram* in Nigeria and the Lake Chad basin. They all consider integration to be akin to disbelief, which all Muslims should avoid. If Muslims in Uganda participate in any type of voting, he argues, it is a choice that goes against the dictates of their religious beliefs. [615]

Sheikh MS, however, provides an alternative via the TIM-UG Facebook page. He argues that political participation and voting in general have no link to social integration. People vote for leaders with whom they feel comfortable, which has no connection to cultural or social integration. Thus, Muslims can and will remain firm in their faith and morals.

Identity Formation Through Social Media

The competing narratives on voting across TIM-UG and Manya Obusilamu reveal the fragmentation of Salafi identity in Uganda. TIM-UG's Facebook page promotes a position that views voting and active participation in politics as a permissible act in Islam. In contrast, Manya Obusilamu reinforces a jihadist identity that rejects any engagement with secular political systems, framing it as a betrayal of Islam. The comment sections of these platforms further illustrate how digital media facilitates the construction of these distinct identities, allowing users to engage in theological debates and align themselves with either the moderate or radical Salafi positions.

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[613] Qur'an 5:44.

[614] Field Data, May 2020.

[615] Field Data, May 2020.

Conclusion

This chapter has demonstrated how both radio and social media in Uganda act as powerful vehicles for constructing Muslim identity, extending the traditional *minbar* into the digital space. The case of the music debate on radio stations shows how different Islamic orientations—Salafi, traditionalist, and liberal—use media to shape distinct Muslim identities. Similarly, the debate on voting, framed through Facebook and YouTube, reveals the ongoing contestations within the Salafi community, as different factions vie to define what it means to be a true Salafi in the Ugandan context. In the next chapter, we will explore how audiences engage with these media, examining how comments, shares, and reactions contribute to the formation of religious identities in the digital age.

CHAPTER EIGHT

LISTENING TO MUSLIM MEDIA: STORIES FROM THE FIELD

Introduction

This chapter examines how Muslims in Uganda engage with Muslim owned media, particularly focusing on the usage and impact of radio stations, Pearl FM, Bilal FM, and Voice of Africa. (VOA). These stations share a common mission to propagate Islam, yet their approaches differ significantly. VOA and Bilal FM focus on promoting Sunni Islam, accommodating local traditions and customs in its *da'wa* strategies. In contrast, Pearl FM emphasizes a return to the authentic teachings of the Qur'an and Sunna, aiming to shape a devout Islamic community or *Khair Ummah*. These distinct approaches define each station's method and goals in propagating Islamic teachings in Uganda.

Radio, as one of the most accessible forms of media in Uganda and Africa in general, plays a significant role in overcoming barriers such as low literacy levels and socioeconomic disparities. Unlike newspapers, web pages, or television, radio requires minimal resources—just a few battery cells—making it accessible to rural audiences who may not have electricity. For Ugandan Muslims, particularly in rural areas, radio serves as a critical medium for acquiring Islamic knowledge and enhancing their religiosity without the need for physical attendance at mosques or madrassahs. It liberates them from the temporal and spatial constraints associated with traditional religious learning centre.

The growing influence of radio highlights how media challenges traditional religious authority. Historically, religious knowledge in Islam was imparted directly by teachers and scholars in person, as seen in Rudolph Ware's *The Walking Qur'an*, which illustrates how Islamic knowledge was embodied in individuals who transmitted it through text and practice.[616] However, with the advent of radio, students or listeners gain more independence in acquiring knowledge, allowing for personal reflection and meaning making. Media has also created spaces for marginalized groups, particularly women and youth, to express their views and engage with Islamic teachings without direct contact with religious scholars.

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[616] See, Rudolph T. Ware III, *The Walking Qur'an: Islamic Education, Embodied Knowledge, and the History of West Africa* (North Carolina: University of North Carolina Press, 2014).

Programs like *Weyigirize Okusoma Qur'an* (Teach Yourself Qur'an) and *Manya Olulimi Oluwarabu* (Learn Arabic Language) on these stations empower listeners to educate themselves within an autonomous space, reflecting the democratization of religious learning through media. The "invisible" nature of radio, as discussed by Lewis and Booth, gives it a strategic advantage over more visual media like television and the internet, allowing audiences to listen while engaged in other activities, creating moments for reflection and action.[617]

The Role of Muslim media in the Daily Life

Muslim-owned media has become embedded in the daily lives of many Ugandans, shaping their religious identity and practices. The following sections address key questions about the audience: Who are the consumers of Muslim-owned media products? Where and when do they access these products? How do they listen to or consume these products? What motivates their listening? How do they engage with what they hear? And what do they get from the Muslim-owned media? Response to these questions prepares the ground for understanding the role of Muslim-owned media in Uganda in shaping the Islamic identity. From the fieldwork, members of the Muslim community in general irrespective of age, gender, and level of education are the main consumers of Muslim-owned media products. However, given the diverse nature of Ugandan Muslims in terms of theological and political orientation, the uncovered diverse variety of audiences is discussed below.

Affiliated and Active Listeners: This group consists of dedicated, loyal audience, the active, engaged, and heaviest listeners of Muslim radio stations. Firstly, this group does not listen to any other type besides the locally known Muslim radio stations. They virtually use it for everything and at almost every time and place. For news/information, entertainment, and education especially in acquiring Islamic knowledge. Muslim radio stations are part of their lives, as it is always with them. At work, on their mobile phones, or portable 'Walkman', on their beds, among other many places. Listeners of this type are also attentive when it comes to Islamic programs especially if the preacher/speaker/presenter is affiliated to the theological orientation of that particular person. In such a case, Salafis would follow *da'wa* programs to which a Salafi scholar is hosted. The motive for listenership is mostly to attain information and knowledge, and not mere access to companionship as it might be with other types of audiences. Thus, the audience of this kind can also be referred to as the affiliated category due to its affiliation to the sources of that specific media product being consumed.

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[617] See Peter M. Lewis and Jerry Booth, *The Invisible Medium: Public, Commercial, and Community Radio* (Washington DC: Howard University Press, 1990).

Sympathetic but non-affiliated Listeners: This group of listeners engage with Islamic programs out of sympathy for the speaker or presenter, even if they do not fully align with their theological orientation of the media product. This type of audience listens to or watch the Islamic program as a result of their previous sympathetic opinions and views about the speaker or presenter. For instance, non-Salafi listeners may follow Salafi programs on sympathetic grounds due to empathy for the speaker, though they remain non-affiliated. In such a situation, their attraction is just due to empathy, not affiliation as the case with the first category. However, their sympathy can perhaps lead them to become part of that particular group depending on the degree of attractiveness. However, the degree of sympathy can evolve, leading to deeper alignment over time This group shows how media can influence religious sympathies, even across theological divides.

General Islam Knowledge Seekers: This category comprises listeners who tune in to Islamic media without strong affiliations or sympathise toward any particular school of thought. These are primarily listeners who benefit from following any Islamic program on the radio television or any other Muslim-owned media outlets. Sometimes the aim is to just learn something about Islam or as part of reflection and meditation. They have no personal connection to the preacher, presenter, or consumer as far as theological or political orientation is concerned. They are just Muslims who would love to learn their religion via media from any speaker or teacher. However, also, depending on the degree of attractiveness, this category of the audience can turn into the affiliated audience or sympathizers in the feature. On this note, Daniel Gross rightly argues that listening entails not only comprehension. But, depending on the speaker it can lead to obedience and action.[618] It is in this type of audience that we find those who watch and listen critically to evaluate and analyse. They will listen comprehensively not to gain understanding but to scrutinize what is being said.[619]

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[618] Daniel M. Gross, *Being-Moved: rhetoric as the Art of Listening* (Oakland: University of California Press, 2020).

[619] On critical listening see Carolyn G. Coakley, Kelby K. Halone, and Andrew D. Wolvin, “Perceptions of Listening Ability Across the Lifespan: Implications for Understanding Listening Competence.” *International Journal of Listening* 10, no. 1 (1996).

Incidental or Habitual Listeners: Another group of listeners that I found interesting during the fieldwork is the audience that ends up listening to Muslim radios by accident or after finding themselves with limited available options. They are habitual and less engaged. It is also common with them to listen to the Muslim radio just in the background. This category includes those who visit Muslim restaurants, markets, shops, and stores that tune into Muslim radio stations. It is also common to find a public taxi or long-distance buses that tune in to Muslim radio or play recordings of the favourable preacher of the driver. The reaction to the message by people of this category is diverse. This category also includes non-Muslims who have had incidental contact with Muslim-owned media.[620]

Media Ritual and Private Listening

Whilst some scholars such as Daniel Gross argue that listening is explicitly public, and not private act,[621] field observations in Ugandan context proves otherwise. From the field, I observed that most of it is characterized by a private type of listening. It is important to note that Gross's assertion fails to acknowledge the intimate relationship between radio (specifically) and listeners. Created by invisible sound, it opens up doors of listening by oneself. Normally, listeners have the choice of either listening or not to listen. The intimate nature allows the three categories of the audience to listen attentively no matter the aim of listening, concentrate on what he or she hears, and the other has the freedom to filter and refuse what is to be heard. The private nature of listening is further enhanced by the widespread use of portable radio receivers which have enabled people to listen to their preferred programs in domestic environments and the use of ear/headphones is so common. This mirrors aspect of Media Ritual Theory, whew media consumption becomes a ritualistic practice embedded in daily routines, shaping identity and belief systems in both public and private spheres.

Accessibility and Impact of Muslim media

Furthermore, access to mobile phone technology with radio facility channels as well as computers with radio card that grants access to radio channels even with no internet has also made access to Islamic radio programs easy in the country. This is especially common in cities with easy access to phones and computers. In rural areas, portable radio sets are common, and it is very usual to find local farmers in the garden with their radio receivers listening to Islamic programs while attending to their produce or ploughing their land. It is also common to find Muslim-owned public spaces such as supermarkets/stores, and restaurants, among others tuned to Muslim radio or television stations. This underscores the relevance and instrumental role that Muslim-owned media plays in the social life of Muslims in Uganda. Home, working places, markets, shops, and restaurants, are among the places where we spot Muslims listening to Muslim radio stations or watching Muslim television stations. Moreover, it reflects the mediatisation theory where media transforms religious practices by enabling the consumption of religious content outside traditional settings like mosques or schools.

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[620] Field data, Kampala. Luweero and Mukono, Oct 2019.

[621] Here Daniel Gross, refutes the claim that listening is a private act. He argues that even with a devout who listens to the word of God, the prayers can be a private part of it can be private but the listening side of it is a public act which might include even a passive listener with "public function' beyond indoctrination." See for more: Gross, "Listening Culture," 69 - 70.

Personal Testimonies and Social Impact

Interviews with listens reveal the significant impact of Muslim-owned media on their religious and social lives. For many, radio has been a key source of Islamic knowledge, particularly in rural areas where access to mosques and Islamic schools is limited. While that is the case, home was identified as the most common place where most people spend most of their time listening to the radios under study. This is confirmed by the interviews and personal experience. The two famous programs on VOA are *Zukuka* (Wake-up) and *Dawa ku Sunday* (Sunday *Da'wa*). These are the pick hours and the best time for advertisements. An advert that runs during these programs costs more money than if it is in another program slot.[622] Haji Najib Kivumbi the program presenter and the sheikhs he hosts including Sheikh Idris Luswabi are now household names among Muslims in Uganda within VOA coverage. That is the same with Pearl FM morning programs as well those programs aired on Sunday when most people are at home. 90% of the interviewed listeners confirmed to listen to these programs at least five times a week.[623] It is used as the criteria to know the time for early morning prayers. Others do miss it because of prayer session in it that requires their presence.

Besides home, is the workplace. On my visit for an interview with Muzamir Lubega, I found him in his office tuned to Pearl FM through personal computer speakers in a low tone.[624] I was struck that he was listening attentively while taking notes and confessed to me that most of his leisure time is spent listening to Pearl FM's Islamic programs especially those presented by Imam Ahmed Kyeyune. This is done both at home and at work. This was not different to Seruwaji Burhan whom I found in his shop located in Kampala city. For him listening to VOA is a hobby that he loves to do. He has a radio in his auto spare shop. He also told me that "voice (i.e., VOA) is my favourite station which I listen to all the time, at home and work."[625]

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[622] Haji Najibu Kivunbi told me that adverts are billed depending on the popularity of the program. Interview with Najibu Kivumbi, Kampala, 1 Dec 2020.

[623] Field Data, see the Appendix for details.

[624] Field Observation at Muzamir Lubega's office, Kampala 22 Nov 2020.

During fieldwork, I visited a restaurant owned and operated by Hajat Fatuma Nalubega. It is located not far from the Nakasero mosque, one of the Salafi-owned mosques in Kampala. The restaurants are mostly serving Muslims who work in the nearby shops and stalls. Also, visitors of the mosque during lunch eat from the restaurant. As a means of entertainment, Hajat Fatuma entertains her customers with sounds from Pearl FM. Fatuma argues "that while other restaurants entertain their customers with non-Islamic content, I love to change this with Muslim radio sounds such as Pearl FM. I like the radio due to its Islamic programs which benefit our spiritual life."[626] Thus, here we see the restaurant as another working domestic place where Ugandan Muslims consume Muslim-owned media products.

It is also important to note that listeners to these radio stations are both young and old. School and university students are some of ardent listeners. Preference varies, as some prefer sports and Islamic songs played mostly on VOA, while others enjoy listening to Islamic sermons from famous preachers such as Sheikh Nuhu Muzata. They confirmed to me that listening to these radio stations improves their Islamic knowledge and increases their religiosity. Kayizi Hakim a final-year high school student told me that he has benefited from listening to the two radio stations. He said, that while he does not own one at his boarding school, he is always eager to go back home during the holiday to listen to these radio stations. His parents are ardent listeners of Voice of Africa radio, a trait he also inherited.[627] The old folks such as Jajja Goddo of Kibuli Kampala, are not only the listeners but also members of the Voice of Africa radio's listeners club. He has been listening to Muslim radio stations and contributes through telephone calls to most of the topics under discussion. He also attests to me how he has learned a lot from the teachings and sermons aired on these radio stations.[628]

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[625] Interview with Seruwaji Burhan, Kampala 23 Nov 2020

[626] Interview with Hajat Fatuma Nalubega, Kampala, 13 Jan 2020

[627] Interview with Kayizi Hakim, Kanyanda-Luweero, 1 Dec 2020.

[628] Interview with Jajja Goddo, Kampala, 14 Dec 2020

The impact of these radio stations, many attest to be far beyond normal attendance of Friday Mosque. Lukanga Rashid a resident of Buyenga in Butambala District narrated to me how his life changed from listening to the morning preaching and other da'wa program aired on VOA. He said,

> Being in the village, religion was more of name and affiliation. We rarely performed daily prayers besides Juma (the Friday noon congregational prayer). Even though it was more of a show-off, for the Imam to see our presence and to avoid being branded non-Muslims. We had no access to places of learning Islamic knowledge. Schools were in cities and our parents could not afford to send us there. It was not until the birth of Voice of Africa radio that we began learning about our religion. We started receiving daily preaching, especially in the morning, and daily *Da'wa* programs at 9 pm. These programs have changed my life and my family. My spirituality and that of my wife has improved. We pray five times, and we are even on more good terms than we used to be before our current spiritual state...[629]

Such testimony brings out the impact of Muslim-owned media not only on religiosity but also on social life such as improving marital relations which Lukanga attributes to his religiosity that has improved due to listening to Islamic programs from Muslim-owned media. In other words, the social impact of these stations goes beyond individual religiosity, extending into family life, marriage, and even community relations. As highlighted by Lukanga's testimony, increased religiosity through radio has improved family dynamic. With media fostering ethical self-discipline that positively influences relationship. Interestingly, Lukanga, being in the village, has never attended any Islamic institution of learning. Even the mosque he used to go there at pass of time, and the sermons never impacted his social or religious life.

Musoke Zubair a resident of Sonde Mukono, is one of the listeners who previously practiced both traditional beliefs (ATR) and Islamic faith. He believed in the power of ancestral beliefs and had inherited his grandfather's artifacts whom he believed to protect him from bad fortunes and evils. While he regularly performed *Jumma* and occasionally attended to daily prayers, he was confident that ancestors needed their portion of reverence and annoying them “can cause serious harm.”[630] Musoke testified that when he started listening to the radio, especially programs presented by Ahmad Kyeyune of Pearl FM together with the Salafi preachers such as the late Sheikh Abdulkarim Sentamu, Sheikh Ndawula, Quraish Mazinga, his life changed. He not only abandoned the artefacts but also requested Sheikh Adam Senjala to come and destroy them. Musoke has also changed his affiliation to Salafism. By the time of the interview, he had become a member of the Salafi group in his village that often travelled to attend some of their Salafi gathering in the town.[631]

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[629] Formal conversation with Lukanga Rashid, Buyenga-Butambala, 15 Feb 2019.

In contrast, there are listeners who find the preaching of some scholars unbearable. While they recognise the role of media in amplifying Muslim concerns in the country, they critical of the speakers, feeling that these preachers “act as if that they are the only true Muslims.” They admit that their engagement with Muslim radio programs is sporadic, primarily tuning in for news and information to stay connected with the broader Muslim community and global Muslim affairs. Additionally, they are drawn to Islamic music shows for entertainment when other radio stations fail to offer content that interests them. For these listeners, Islamic programs with local preachers serve more as background noise than a focal point of attention.

In sum, Muslim-owned media particularly radio, plays a pivotal role in shaping Islamic identity in Uganda by providing accessible religious content that transcends traditional barriers. Through radio, Muslims can engage with their faith in personal and transformative ways, contributing to the construction of a mediated religious community. The ongoing influence of Muslim radio stations like Pearl FM, Bilal FM and VOA demonstrates the power of media to sustain and nurture religious life in both urban and rural Uganda.

Public Rationalisation of Islam

Abdulkader Tayob argues that new media, have facilitated the emergence of ‘Public Islam’ by empowering actors from divergent backgrounds (such as *Ulama* – i.e., religious scholars), self-ascribed religious authorities, secular intellectuals, ordinary men and women, students or workers, and many others) to compete in defining Islam for changing political spaces. By pointing to the concept of ‘Public Islam’ Tayob denotes a space where views and gestures are expressed and concretized in individuals and society.[632] This perspective aligns with my observations at Nakasero Mosque in Kampala. This place functions not only for worshiping but also a bustling marketplace with stalls mosque veranda that sell Islamic products such as Muslim clothes as abayas and kufis, cassette tapes for preachers, and Islamic VCDs, among others. It is common, in East Africa to find such kinds of markets.

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[630] Interview with Musoke Zubair, Sonde-Mukono, 20 Aug 2019
[631] Ibid.
[632] Abdulkader Tayob, “Muslim Publics: Content and Discontent.”

What I found particularly intriguing was the interaction of between traders and Muslim-owned media. While busy waiting for customers, many traders also listen to one of the Muslim radio stations especially with Salafi preachers and engage in vibrant discussions about the content. Interestingly, the discussion is so diverse that while most of them are affiliated with Salafism, the debates that follow reflect diversity of opinions, illustrating they dynamic nature of Public Islam. Here present below an ethnographic example of how it transpires.

An ethnographic example from December 2020 highlights this interaction. As Uganda prepared for presidential elections, the topic of bribery dominated discussions, both in mosque and on Muslim-owned media. During a visit to the Nakasero mosque vending market, I listened to a live radio call-in show. The topic was bribery which extended during the call-in session. One caller wanted to know whether it is permissible to accept a politician's money during an election period while knowing that it is intended to 'bribe' to vote for him or her. The Sheikh answered in affirmative but with advice that it is upon you to decide if that person deserves a vote. In other words, they should vote according to their conscience. Interestingly, this sparked an immediate debate among listeners in the market. Some agreed with the Sheikh, while others rejected the verdict saying that it is ethically wrong to take such money. In the discussion, one of them called it a gift (*ekirabo*) that must be taken from a politician while the one interpreted it as theft because if taken "knowing that you won't vote for him."[633] Other discussions of that kind arose from the different themes that were broadcasted on media. Listeners receive radio messages and make sense of them differently, forming public reasoning and rationalization from the media.

Moreover, such debates illustrate how media not only sets the agenda for public discussions (as per Agenda Setting Theory-AST), but also fosters a space for Muslims to engage in public reasoning and the rationalisation of Islamic principles. By mediating these discussions, media contributes to the formation of Muslim public sphere, where even lay Muslims can express their opinions, reshaping Islamic discourses within their local context. This aligns with Mediatisation theory, which highlights the role of media in transforming religious practices and public engagement. The media sets the agenda for these discussions, enabling religious topics to be debated in new, more public, and socially interactives spaces. At the same time, by controlling the flow of information and topics of conversation, media influences not just what people think about, but how they form their religious and moral judgment an illustration of mediatisation theory.

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[633] Fieldwork data, 2 December 2020.

Media and the Changing Islamic Identity

In the fieldwork, I observed the great impact that Muslim-owned media has on the social structure of Ugandan Muslims. Earlier on, Brian Larkin correctly argued that mass media have become one of the important infrastructures of modern society. By infrastructure he meant both "cultural and technical systems that create institutionalized structures whereby goods [and services] of all sorts circulate, connecting and binding people into collectiveness."[634] In Uganda, Muslim-owned media is vital in shaping Islamic identity in the country. Through media platforms, Muslims are exposed to teachings that influence their piety, moral compartment, and ethics.

Muslim-owned media especially Islamic radio programs have been instrumental in creating new Islamic subjects. This aligns with Talal Asad's concept of religion as a discussive tradition, where media facilitates the transmission and adaptation of religious knowledge. The discourse that religious knowledge and practices are transmitted and shaped through discourse, which includes not just texts and rituals, but also the broader social-political content. Through media platform, Islamic teachings are not only disseminated but also debated and contested. Various actors, such as Muslim clerics, Salafi preachers, and even lay Muslims, engage in this discursive process. These actors draw from Islamic texts, historical precedents, and religious norms to assert their interpretations, while media provide the space for these discourses to be heard, debated, and reinterpreted by a broader audience. In fact, the examples of Nakasero mosque marketplace fits illustrates how Islamic tradition is not a fixed set of rules, but rather a discourse that is continually interpreted and reinterpreted in response to contemporary issues. The callers to the radio station, the Sheikh's response, and the subsequent discussions among the venders all form part of the discursive tradition. The media plays a pivotal role in this process by facilitating these debates and making them accessible to a wider public, thus contributing to the ongoing formation of Islamic practice in Uganda. Through these Islamic programs, Ugandan Muslims can self-educate, often independent of traditional religious authorities, allowing them to interpret Islam in ways that resonate with their lived experiences.

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[634] Brian Larkin, *Signal and Noise: Media, Infrastructure and Urban Culture in Nigeria* (Durham NC: Duke University Press, 2008), 6.

Testimonies of former non-Muslims who converted to Islam after listening to Islamic programs illustrates the media's role in reshaping religious identities. Many subscribe their conversion as discovering a new religious family, facilitated by narratives they encountered through radio programs. Through these processes, Muslim-owned media in Ugandan not only disseminates religious teachings but also creates spaces for reinterpretation and contestation, contributing to the ongoing transformation of Islamic identity in the country. In the following section, I discuss the two categories in brief detail. Others are "born-again Muslims" can be heard especially listeners whose Salafi preaching had affected their conviction and led them to Salafism. Also in the same category are former non-practising Muslims who turned religious with the advent of Muslim-owned media.

Becoming Muslims

The conversion of non-Muslim to Islam through media demonstrates the powerful role that Muslim radio stations play in shaping religious identity in Uganda. This transformation is deeply linked to the mediatisation Theory. Media has become an integral part of religious life, influencing beliefs and practices. For many listeners, their initial exposure to Islamic teachings through radio is often unintentional, yet they find themselves drawn to the programs and presenters, which eventually led them to embrace Muslim beliefs.

Jamil Sekyondwa, (formally James Sekyondwa) is a resident of rural Semuto in Nakaseke district. Despite having Muslim extended family members and close friends, he had never thought of converting until he accidentally started listening to VOA FM during the 2003 U.S-Iraq war. Sekyondwa recalls how he became captivated by Haji Najib Kivumbi's narrations of battlefield events. He narrates:

> My journey to Islam was through radio voice. I started listening to it during the USA-Iraq war in 2003. Precisely speaking enjoyed Haji Najib Kivumbi's narrations

> on what was going on in the battled field (*enayumirwa nnyo engeri Haji Najibu Kivumbi gyenyumyangamu ebyali bifa muddwaniro*). It was at this point that I started following Voice and its daily program.[635]

As seen the quotation above, over time, Sekyondwa's casual listening turned into commitment to follow the station's Islamic programs, highlighting the agenda setting role where media not only informs but also shapes how people prioritise issues – in this case war coverage led him to explored Islamic teachings.

Sekyondwa particularly resonated with the *Da'wa* programs especially the one hosted on Friday evening called *Manya Katonda wo* (Understand your God). Conducted by Sheikh Twaha Segujja a popular scholar in matters of inter-religious debates (*enjiri*), this program has been instrumental in highlighting the "truthfulness of Islam in the Bible."[636] He uses this program to discredit some of the fundamental beliefs in Christianity using the bible and the Qur'an. Senkyoda loves this program. He said to me "*Eno pulogramu yeyamba okumanya obuliba n'okuzula amazima' (*this program helped me to know the falsehood and discover the truth)."[637] Sekyondwa's gradual shift towards Islam underscores Talat Asad's Religion as a Discursive Tradition (RDT). Where religious practices are continuously interpreted and re-interpreted through discourse, with media serving as key platform for these discourses to unfold. In this media introduced Sekyondwa to interpretations that discredit Christianity and make Islam resonate with his personal experiences leading him to adopt a new religious identity.

Similarly, Rehema Nabatanzi, a listener from Kigogwa, Wakiso District shared a parallel experience. In her early 50s, with no husband, she had been a Catholic since childhood and an active member of the Women's Guild at her local parish in Kigogwa, Wakiso District for more than 30 years. She told me that while she had no problem with Islam and Muslims, conversion had never been a priority. "I used to know and hear about Islam, but I never took it so seriously," said Nabatanzi. "I was comfortable in Catholicism and had no reason to convert." However, she confessed that all this changed when she started listening to Pearl FM for over two years. It was here that when she decided to join Islam. "I owe my Islam to radio

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[635] Interview, Jamil Sekyondwa, Semuto-Nakaseke, Jan 2022.
[636] Interview with Sheikh Twaha Segujja, Kampala, at VOA offices, Dec 4, 2020.
[637] Ibid.

Pearl and Imam Kyeyune in particular," said Ms Nabatanzi. "B*wenatandika akuwuliza pulogulamu ze omutima gwagonda nzenna era okukkakana nga nsilamuse* (Listening to his program my heart melted and finally ended up becoming a Muslim."[638] Nabatanzi's testimony reflects how repeated engagement with media content can transform personal identity and worldview, especially when the content speaks to deep-seated values and emotions, as seen with Media Ritual Theory. Mediated interactions become part of her daily life. Her act of listening to radio programs became a ritualised process, shaping her religious identity. Through repetitive exposure to Islamic teachings via Pearl FM, Nabatanzi begun to negotiate her belief, values, and practices, leading her religious transformation.

Nabatanzi now practices Islam with her two grandchildren, despite their parents being devout Catholics. Her commitment is evident in her notetaking during religious program on Pearl FM's program *Buuza Imam wo* (ask your Imam), which demonstrates how media has become an essential tool for her continued religious learning. Her experiences highlight the role media play in fostering new religious identities which also aligns with Asad's concept of religious tradition as evolving through constant engagement and reinterpretation.

Becoming Born-Again Muslims

Media in Uganda also play a significant role in re-engaging lapsed Muslims, who through exposure to Islamic radio programs, begin to observe religious rituals and practices more diligently. This section looks at non-practicing Muslims who by virtual listening to Islamic *da'wa* programs broadcasted on Muslim radio stations begun observing religious rituals and practices. These individuals often describe themselves as born-again Muslims. The new Muslim-owned media re-initiated them into Islamic doctrine. The term 'born-again' itself suggest a revival of their religious identity, facilitated by new media. This phenomenon can be understood through mediatisation theory, which demonstrates how media reshapes religious practices by offering an accessible platform for Da'wa program and religious teachings.

One such example is Saida Nakabiri, a woman in her early 40s. She told me how she became an active practising Muslim after listening to Muslim radio stations. Although born into a Muslim family, she had never been religious. Her husband too, had little to do with religion except when he visited his practicing parents in the village. They both live in Kampala and run together a small business in the city centre. She said her family and surroundings were so ingrained in traditional beliefs even though they were all Muslims. However, when she started listening to Islamic programs on the radio station, all this changed. She is convinced that she has found '*hidaya'* (guidance) through listening to the radio. She is now eager to learn even more and once saved enough will also go for hajji (pilgrimage) "n*sobole okwenenya ebyo byonna byennakola*" (to seek complete forgiveness from my past).[639] Here we see a non-practicing individual turned religious as a result of dawa programs from Muslim radio stations. Her transformation mirrors the process of religious renewal described by Media Ritual Theory, where repeated engagement with media rituals (such as listening to Islamic sermons) lead to a profound internal transformation.[640]

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[638] Interview with Rehema Nabatanzi, Kigogwa, Wakiso District,

Nakabiri's case is just one of the many examples of how Muslim-owned media has led to a resurgence of religious observance among previously non-practicing Muslims. They could be heard on numerous call-in programs narrating their past life and how radio stations have changed their religious life. Interestingly, among the born-again are Muslims with a close inclination to Sufi Islam the most popular type of Islam in the country before the advent of Salafism. Sufism had occupied most of the religious life of Ugandans. Religious communal festivals such as *Mawlid* celebrations (celebration for the birth of Prophet Muhammad), among others, were prominently practised in the country with a significant number of participants. However, this has changed, in the last two decades with fewer people attending these festivals. Moreover, the vibe these festivals had has also changed. The majority of my interviewees acknowledged the role of media in shaping their religious views on some religious practices.[641]

Interestingly, Imam Kyeyune, the Salafi preacher, the head of *da'wa* programs, and the presenter on Pearl FM were their reference. Imam Kyeyune is now a household name, especially within the Salafi community and their sympathizers. In his programs, he rejects many of the traditional 'Islamic' customers in the country. He usually cautions his listeners to avoid seemingly religious rituals until they receive certainty with textual evidence from the two Islamic sources and has always told his listeners to seek evidence from those sources.[642]

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[639] Interview with Saida Nakabiri, Kampala

[640] Nick Couldry, *Media Rituals: A Critical Approach*. Routledge, Londan, 2003.

[641] Field Data, Kampala, January 2021

[642] Ahmad Kyeyune, Program Dawa, Pearl FM, Jan 22, 2021, 9:30 pm.

His style of preaching has received great reception from many Pearl FM audiences. These programs have been instrumental in changing and shaping their Islamic identity in the country. Kyeyunes' rejection of traditional Ugandan Islamic practices resonates with these born-again Muslim, who see themselves as returning to the "true" and "correct" teachings of Islam.

For example, Majidu Musaasizi (60yrs), a resident of Koome Mukono, recounted to me his early life.

> *Twakula tulya amawuledi, era nga tugamanyi ng' Eddini. Nga buli mwezi Omubaka (SAW) bweyazalibwa gutuuka, nga gubeera mugano. Tetwankimanyako nti teyali nkola ntuufu, yadde n'okugezaanko okubuuza obujulizi, okutuusa lwetwafuna ladiyo eno Pearl*. (Meaning: We grew up participating in *Mawlid* celebrations, thinking that it was correct religious ritual. We never knew that it had nothing to do with the true teachings of Islam until the advent of Pearl FM).[643]

Majidu's assertion is instructive in understanding the role of media in shaping and changing the Islamic identity. Similar to Berger and Ezzy's finding among young witches in the UK,[644] we can see how Pearl fostered his change from the popular traditional local practices to a reformed type as taught by Salafi preachers on Pearl FM. For Musasizi it was until he began listening to Imam Kyeyune's teaching, that transformation started. It is here that he found what he considers to be true Islam. His realisation reflects the process of re-interpreting religious tradition that Asad's RDT emphasises. Through media, Musaasizi found an alternative understanding of Islam that rejected long-held traditional practices in favour of a more textually grounded interpretation.

This shift in religious identify and practice is also echoed by Farhan Mukasa, from Kampala a listener to Pearl FM. While Mukaksa had never actively participated in the festival, he felt reassured by the Salafi messages he encountered through media. His resolve to continue learning about Islam to avoid what he calls "blind following"[645] highlights how media acts as a catalyst for religious self-education and critical engagement with tradition. This self-driven quest for religious authenticity through media engagement aligns with both Agenda Setting Theory (AST) – where media highlights particular religious issues, promoting individual exploration – and mediatisation theory which underscores how media becomes a primary mode of engaging with religious practice in contemporary society.

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[643] Interview with Abdulmajidu Musaasizi, Koome, Mukono District, June 2021.

[644] See Helen Berger and Ezzy, "Mass Media and Religious Identity: A Case Study of Young Witches."

[645] Formal conversation with Farhan Mukasa, Kibuli-Kampala, June 2020.

Defending the Correct Creed: Media, Religious Identity, and Contested Practices

The rise of Salafi preachers in discrediting some traditional Islamic practices has triggered a segment from the Muslim society commonly known as the *traditionist Muslims* (*Abasilamu Bankola nkadde*) *to* use the radio in defence of their practices. While traditionalists once s formed the majority of Muslims in Uganda, the growing influence of Salafi-inclined schools in the country and a wave of Salafi scholars in media has altered the religious landscape. This shift reflects the broader processes of religious transformation and identity negotiation, where media plays a pivotal role in mediating contested discourses.

Mediatisation of religion theory helps frame this phenomenon by explaining how religious practices and authority are increasingly shaped by the media environment. Historically, traditionalists had been physically insulted and their mosques had on some occasions been forcibly occupied by Salafi youths tempting government intervention to prevent blood-shade between the worrying parties. However, the advent of radio, television, and social media has shifted these confrontations from physical spaces to digital platforms. Both camps use media to claim their space. In this context, media does more than communicate religious messages; it reshapes bow religious authority is asserted, contested, and experienced by adherents.

Bilal FM and VOA for example are some of the platforms used in this case by the traditionists to defend their practices. Although VOA claims neutrality among Muslims sects, traditionalists use it to defend their actions and respond to Salafi criticisms. Bilal FM which is run by the Uganda Muslim Supreme Council (UMSC) the national body that governs the affairs of Muslims in the country never shies away from giving a platform to countercriticism especially if the traditionalists do it. Both parties have also established different social media pages mostly Facebook, and YouTube Channels. In some instances, debates between the two parties are organized by the 'neutral' concerned Muslims for a face-to-face exchange of opinions. In this situation, a more respectful approach is seen through the moderator. Also, these debates are arranged to host more advanced scholars in matters of Islamic practices in the country.

A key point of contention between the two camps is the legitimacy of certain local practices such as *okwabya enyimbe* (last funeral rites). This is a Buganda local custom that marks the end of the mourning period. It is crowned off by placing the heir in a position to resume the responsibilities of the deceased both in the family and society. It involves traditional dances, and the consumption of local alcoholic drinks, and its main aim is to cast the spirit of the dead and repel the bad omen that killed a deceased person.[646] It is at this point that Salafis stage their criticism. On one of his weekly programs, *Manya Enzikirizayo* (learn your correct belief) aired by Pearl FM, Sheikh Quraish Mazinga from the Salafi wing addressed this topic. For him besides a bid'ah act, the activities done throughout the whole ceremony are Islamic, and "any participant cannot claim any place in the Islamic faith."[647]

Many listeners to this program are also his ardent followers on other social media networks like Aqedah Awalan's Facebook and YouTube pages. They take his teaching seriously and continuously challenge the traditional sheikhs and their sympathizers. On the other hand, it undermines the long-established authority of the sheikhs in communities who not only endorse but attend these gatherings. It should be noted that traditionalist Muslim scholars do not indulge in some of the acts such as the consumption of alcoholic drinks, and local dances among others. However, they turn this ceremony into a communal prayer (e*dduwa y'omufu*) for the deceased. Here still, the Salafis find it impermissible since according to them, it is not supported by any authentic prophetic teaching or any Qur'anic verse.[648]

Another criticism directed to scholars from the 'Puritan' Salafist camp is the authority accorded to their sheikhs, both the dead and those that are living. They are accused of venerating them to the level of the messenger of Allah (*omubaka wa Allah*). For their critics, Islam should be understood solely based on the Qur'an and the teaching of the Prophet Muhammad (PBUH) and not on the opinions of the *bawalimu* ne *bamaseeka* (literary; Islamic scholars). In the wards of Quraish Mazinga, understanding Islam should not be through "*bakayungilizi"* (brokers or intermediaries). This accusation automatically undermines the authority of the *bawalimu* in favour of direct reference to the two Islamic sources (Qur'an and Hadith). Such accusations, among others, triggered responses from the traditionists to restore the dignity affiliated with the traditionists camp. To get more active in the public sphere, they have media both broadcasting and social media, and all of them are used to defend their beliefs from the 'puritan.' One of the YouTube, titled al-Hidaya Islam Media hosts lectures from the traditionalist camp defending their practice in response to the Salafi claims.[649]

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[646] See, Sir Apolo Kagwa, *The Customs of the Baganda* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1934).

[647] Quraish Mazinga, program Manya Enzikilizayo on Pearl FM, July 29, 2020, 22:30.

[648] Nuuhu Uthuman Kibuuka, *Ebifa Ku Mizimu*, (Kampala: AK Islamic Book Centre 2015),19. (Issues related to ghosts).

One example in this regard is from Shiekh Ali Zikusoka and Ashiraf Bazanyanengo who have become household names among the traditionists especially due to their stunning response to Puritan claims. They have used both radio and social media to challenge Salafi claims and accusations while defending traditionalist religious activities and practices. In one of their media sessions, they explained the legal position of Muslim involvement in maintaining the local cultural practices and customs. Here they contradicted Salafi stand and argued that participation is lawful as long acts that jeopardise the teaching of Islam are avoided. These sheikhs went on to show the textual bases of these practices and affirmed to their audience that their practices were not *bid'ah* (reprehensible innovation).

These scholars frame their defence by emphasising the historical success of early Muslim proselytizers from Swahili coast who incorporated local customs to facilitate the spread of Islam in Uganda, as the argument of post-colonial theory of hybridity.[650] They argue that the success of their proselytization in spreading into the interior was because they used local customs in their da'wah to attract converts to Islam. This blending of Islamic and local cultural practices is presented as authentic approach to Islamic da'wah (missionary work), which enabled the early spread of Islam. The scholars, point to the example of the Prophet Muhammad's (PBUH) accommodation of certain pre-Islamic Arab customs as evidence that local culture can coexist with Islamic monotheism.

By offering this historical evidence, these sheikhs presented not only the past examples of the practices but also the reason why the traditionalist approach of proselytization was successful. Importantly, we can also see how the Islamic identity of traditionalists was constructed. This identity construction was rendered through traditionalist affiliated media outlets including radio Bilal, VOA FM, and social media such as al-Hidaya Islam Media.[651] In line with Anthony

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[649] Most of their lectures are uploaded on Al-Hidaya Islam Media YouTube channel. See for Example: Ashraf Bazanyanengo and Ali Zikusooka "Okweddira *Emiziro Mubusilaamu* (Clan System in Islam)" https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=CRSbUau_vJw

[650] On Post colonial theory of Hybridity, see Stuart Hall, "New Ethnicities" in *Race, Culture, and Difference* edited by James Donald and Ali Rattansi Sage: London, 1992, pp. 252-259.

[651] Some of their lectures are uploaded on Al-Hidaya Islam Media YouTube channel. See for Example: Ashraf Bazanyanengo and Ali Zikusooka, "Okweddira *Emiziro Mubusilaamu* (Clan System in Islam)" https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=CRSbUau_vJw

Gidden’s concept of structuration which explores how agency and structure interact, these scholars invoke the past as a structural framework, showing that early Muslim approaches accommodated local practices, thus offering continuity and stability in the mist of modern critiques by Salafi scholar.[652] Through media they can exercise agency by reasserting this narrative, constructing an Islamic identity that is not only rooted in local customs but also framed as consistent with the authentic *sunnah* of the Prophet.

Another popular scholar Sheikh Juma Waiswa Kinyiri from the same camp in defence of the ’traditional’ Islam during the *mawlid* of 2021, started a series of lectures on the true nature of Salafism. He titled his lecture with a question, *Abasalafu/Abawahabi bebaani? Ddala abeyita abasala basalafu* (Who are the Salafis/Wahabi? Is it true that Salafis are Salafis? In these lectures, he contested the true nature of his opponents using textual evidence in response to Puritan Salafi claims and accusations.[653] Kiniyiri’s lectures use textual authority[654] to refute Salafi claims, challenging the authenticity of their teachings. These debates are critical in shaping public opinion and religious identity, as they engage both religious texts and media narratives to construct competing interpretations of Islam.

The impact of these debates is felt with testimonies from the audience. a few examples will suffice to help us understand the impact of these debates on their daily religious life. I start with Musa Songolo (35yrs), a resident of rural Kawumu, in Nakaseke District. Being a peasant farmer with little time for *madrasah* education (if it happens to be available), Songolo grew up listening to Muslim radio stations. Muslim radio is his source of Islamic knowledge. He has the radio turned on all day long. He is an active listener of VOA and a member of the listeners club from Nakaseke district in central Uganda. although he listens to other radio stations like Bilal and Pearl FM, his favourite station is VOA. He told me that “VOA is irreplaceable, it provides everything I need including news, entertainment, and Islamic knowledge.”[655] Songolo acknowledges that he had a poor Islamic background since in the village they had no Islamic school or Madrasahh to learn the basics of Islam. However, by listening to the radio, he and his family could learn about Islam. Like *Minbar* or madrasahh, VOA radio provided with him knowledge about Islamic practices "required to be performed by true believing Muslim man and women."[656] Songolo also confessed to me that since he was small, the Islam taught to her by his parents was from *bazenyi* (i.e., 'traditionalists'). Thus, he has never had any interest in following another type of Islam besides traditional Islam.

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[652] On the concept of structuration, see Ira Chatterjee, Jagat Kunwar, and F. Den Hind, eds. “Anthony Giddens and Structuration Theory” *Journal of Management, Organisation and Contemporary*

[653] Sheikh Waiswa lecture series are also available on al-Hidaya Islam Media’s social media channels. See: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=JbB2lGB1sNY

[654] Catherine Shelley, “Authority and Religious Texts. In Ethical Exploration in a Multifaith Society. Palgrave Macmillan, Cham, 2017. https://doi.org/10.1007/978-3-319-46711-5_6

[655] Interview with Musa Songolo, Kawumu, Nakase District, 26 December 2021.

Another example is from Ahmad Kasekende (50 years) a resident of Kawempe in Kampala. He is originally from Kitebere, in Luweero district, central Uganda. His education was interrupted by the 1980-86 civil war that brought the current government into power.[657] So, he could not finish the primary level when he and his family moved to Kampala streets in search of safety. In need to survive in the city environment, he had to do a lot of hard labour which did not allow him to attend madrasah or mosques to learn about Islam. Like Musa Songolo, his source of knowledge is radio. He testified to be an ardent listener of VOA radio, even though he also listened to Bilal FM and Pearl FM before it started hosting Salafi preachers with controversial topics. One thing he hates about Pearl is their preachers who discredit the practices of traditionalists. For him, such people do not deserve to be given media attention since they confuse lay people like him. "We grew up knowing different things, and then these people return with new things. I do not need to hear about another Islam. I do not care." He is very familiar with all the Islamic programs on the radio station which is his favourite program in comparison to other programs that broadcast sports, health, and news.

These examples, illustrates how media has become a battleground for the construction and defence of religious identity in Uganda. Traditionist Muslims, once dominated in the religious landscape, now use media platforms to defend their practices and counter the growing influence of Salaf preachers. Through radio and social media, traditionalists like Songolo and Kasekende are able to maintain their belief in what they consider to be the "true" Islam, while rejecting alternative interpretations offered by the Salafi movement. This dynamic reflects broader trends in the mediation of religion, where media serves as both a space for religious debate and a tool for shaping and defending religious identities.

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[656] Ibid.

[657] For more about this war, see Abdul Kasozi, "*Social Origin of Violence in Uganda, 1964-1985* (Montreal: McGill-Queen's Press, 1994).

Conclusion

In conclusion, this chapter has explored the integration of Muslim-owned media into the religious life of Ugandan Muslims, illustrating how it serves as a key for religious discourse, identity formation, and community engagement. The audience of this media includes diverse Muslim groups, ranging from sympathisers to critics, who access it not in private settings such as home but also in public and workspaces, including markets, offices and even in the field of rural peasant farmers. This broad accessibility and penetration into everyday life highlights the role of media in shaping religious practices and beliefs, leading to significant changes in Uganda's socio-religious landscape, and influencing religious identities.

The impact of Muslim-owned media extends beyond individual religious engagement, triggering larger shifts in socio-religious structures. Non-Muslims have converted to Islam, and previously non-practicing Muslims have become more observant, highlighting the transformative power of media. This aligns closely with mediatisation theory, which posits that the media is not simply a tool for communication but actively transforms social institutions, including religion. In the case of Uganda, media has redefined how religious authority is disseminated and how religious practices are observed, contributing to a more public and visible form of religiosity.

However, the widespread influence has also led to significant intra-religious debates, particularly around issues such as bribery in elections and the quest for "true Islam." These debates reflect broader struggles over religious authority and legitimacy, as various Muslim groups use media to assert their interpretations of Islam. The tension between Salafi reformists and traditionalists is an example of this dynamic. On one side, the Salafis seek to purify Islam from what they consider to be non-Islamic local traditions and innovations (*bid'ah*), while the traditionalists strive to preserve the Islam that was introduced to Uganda by earlier generations. This divide reflects Talal Asad's notion of religion as a discursive tradition, where religious authority is continually negotiated and contested within historical and cultural contexts. Muslim-owned media act as a platform where these discursive battles are played out, each side using media to assert its vision of Islamic authenticity.

The chapter also underscores the role of agenda setting, where Muslim-owned media is not merely a passive reflection of religious debates but actively shapes the topics and issues that become central to the religious discourse in Uganda. The media, by focusing on particular topics such as *bid'ah* or local customs, prioritise certain religious concern over others, thereby guiding the audience's perception of what constitutes true Islamic practice. This is especially evident in the way media has amplified the debates between Salafis and traditionalists, making these theological disputes a focal point of Muslim public life.

Moreover, media ritual theory is relevant here, as media consumption itself has become a form of religious ritual. For many Ugandan Muslims, listening to or watching Islamic media programs is not just a passive activity but an integral part of their religious practice. Whether at home or in the fields, tuning in to religious programming fosters a collective sense of religious identity and belonging, reinforcing the idea that media is not only a tool for religious instruction but also a sacred space where religious community and authority are continually negotiated.

In conclusion, Muslim-owned media in Uganda serves as both a transformative force and a contested space, shaping religious identity, authority and practice. It is a site where debates about the authenticity of religious practices, such as those between Salafis and traditionalists, are played out, and where individuals negotiate their relationship to Islam in the modern world. This dynamic interplay between media, religion and identity highlights the central role that Muslim-owned media plays in contemporary Ugandan Muslim life.

CHAPTER NINE

MEDIATISED SERMONS: IDENTITY, LANGUAGE, AND AUTHORITY

Introduction

In October 2022, a public controversy erupted in Uganda after a video sermon by Sheikh Adam Isa Senjala circulated on YouTube. Senjala, a controversial Salafi preacher, made provocative remarks, asserting that attending the *Nyege-Nyege* festivals was preferred to participating in *mawlid* cerebrations.[658] Senjala warned his audience the dangers posed by those who celebrate mawlid, suggesting that these groups threated the existence of "true followers" of *ahl al-sunna wa-l-jama'ah*. Although he did not explicitly name any group, it was clear that his target was the 'traditionists' who organize and participate in *mawlid* celebrations, which Salafi clerics like Senjala view as reprehensible innovation (*bid'ah)*.

Senjala's comments drew sharp reactions from Uganda's Muslim community, particularly from traditionists. Sheikh Elias Kigozi, a prominent traditionalist, publicly condemned Senjala, equating his words to those of Satan. Kigozi defended *mawled* as a practice of love of the prophet Muhammad and questioned how someone could compare its participation to those engaging in morally questionable activities at Nyege-Nyege.[659] Similarly, Sheikh Muhammad Galabuzi, the Supreme *Mufti* of Uganda's Kibuli faction demanded that Senjala retract his statement publicly, accusing him of misusing social media to spread harmful ideas[660]

Despite these strong responses, Senjala remained firm, defending his earlier position in subsequent sermons and referencing Islamic scholars to support his claim that *bidi'ah* is more dangerous that sinful actions, as it goes unrepented[661] This escalated the debate, drawing responses from a wide range of voices within the Ugandan Muslim community. Some called for calm and reflection, Dr. Abdulhafiz Walusimbi, an Islamic Studies professor, who proposed the formation of a Ugandan Muslim scholarly think tank to issue domestic fatwas on contentious issues.[662] However, Walusimbi's suggestion sparked further controversy, with Senjala and other Salafi accusing him of apostasy for allegedly advocating the modification of Islamic ruling to suit local contexts.[663]

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[658] Adam Senjala,"Eyabadde Mu Nyege Nyege ali wadde yaddeko n'eyabadde mu Mauledi" *Shukuran Dawa Centre*, October 21, 2022. Accessed from https://www.google.com/search?q=adam+senjala+on+nyege+nyege&rlz=1C1GCEB_enZA869ZA869&oq=adam+senjala+on+nyege+nyege&gs_lcrp=EgZjaHJvbWUyBggAEEUYOTIHCAEQIRigATIHCAIQIRigAdIBCDcxNjlqMGo3qAIAsAIA&sourceid=chrome&ie=UTF-8#fpstate=ive&vld=cid:2f52862d,vid:_SgZw-CCpyw on Nov 30, 2022.

[659] Sheik. Elias, "Reply to Nyege Nyege Mawledi." *Umoja Media Uganda*, October 24, 2022. Accessed from https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=U1axYqgxDUk

[660] "Sheikh Muhammad Galabuzi Mauledi ne Nyege Nyege." *Imaam Media Uganda*, October 27, 2023. Accessed from https://www.facebook.com/ImaamMediaUg/videos/video-sheikh-muhammad-ggalabuzinyege-nyege-ne-mauledi/1084046172312417/

[661] "Okutangaza wakati wa Nyege Nyege ne Mauledi Shk Adam Senjala." *SK Muslim Dawa Official*, October 18, 2022. Accessed from https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=uWt9uH37pd4.

This controversy, centred on mediated sermons and public discourse, offers a crucial entry point into the subject of this chapter, the relationship between Muslim-owned media, language, identity, and authority. The examples above reveal how mediated sermons, particularly those shared through social media platforms like YouTube and WhatsApp, shape religious identities and challenge traditional sources of religious authority. These sermons, framed through the ideological lenses of reformist Salafis and traditionalists, highlight the broader contestation over Islamic interpretation in Uganda. Salafis interprets *bid'ah* in a much broader sense than traditionalists, leading to significant differences in their understanding of Islamic practice and authority.

This chapter examine the language of Muslim-owned media sermons in Uganda, focusing on how preachers use language to construct religious identity and assert authority. Both Salafi and traditionalist preachers employ powerful rhetorical strategies in their sermons, using language to appeal to emotions and build credibility among their audiences. Through carefully chosen words, metaphors, analogies, and even humour, they construct compelling narratives that support of their positions. This chapter analyses how these language choices influence the reception of sermons, shape audience perceptions, and reinforce the authority of the preachers.

Before delving into the detailed analysis of sermon language, the chapter starts with a brief historical overview of the role of sermons in Islam and the current media environment in which these sermons and preachers thrive. By situating the discussion within this broader context, the chapter shades light on how contemporary preachers navigate the complexities of media, language and religious authority in Uganda today.

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[662] See: "Full Speech: Islam and Think Tank." Muslim Channel Uganda. Accessed from https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=uQMF-Yr_tqA

[663] See: Adam Senjala, "Okwawula Allah and Think Tank at Masjid Alidina." Taubah Dawah Uganda. Retrieved from https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=1TT_tc_xOIU on explicitly attacked the examples he brought, see: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=FIQ-OpOunXo

Sermons in Islam: A Brief Historical Overview

Sermons play multiple roles and convey diverse messages and meanings. Particularly, in a diverse community with different religious groups like Uganda, sermons are not only seen as a hegemonic ritual that authorizes space, time, and congregation but are also prone to competition.[664] In his analysis of the history of sermons in the three Abrahamic religions, Abdulkader Tayob identified two dimensions sermons -as religious rituals- took in the history of Islam. The first dimension was the recitation of the Qur'an by Prophet Muhammad specifically, to a small group of listeners. This was followed by moving words in a clear language understood by the audience that calls for contemplation and reflection on the recited portions of the Qur'an.

At this stage, we see a close relationship between religious sermons and the word of God (the Qur'an). The language used was meant to remind the faithful of their religious obligations, motivate them towards being good, or encourage them to participate in a specific religious or political cause available. Islamic jurisprudence makes it clear that sermons (especially the Friday ones) were solely made by the Prophet. This role was later taken over by his successors, the caliphs, and imams. Like the prophets, they were also expected to motivate, advise, inspire, and inform the faithful or appoint others on their behalf. This dimension speaks to the political nature of sermons as they acted as platforms for Muslim politicians in mosques and beyond. It is also free from competition as is the case in the second dimension.[665]

The second dimension that sermons took was the emergency of story-telling preachers known in the Islamic history books as *Qusas* (storytellers).[666] As the community of Muslims expanded, sermons were no longer attached to the political class. It expanded to such people who were known for their emotional and rhetorical moving sermons extending the work of the Prophet. Preachers here used their emotional and rhetorical deliveries to move their audience on diverse topics such as death, the torments in grave and hell (*'athab al qabr wa-alnar*) and the continuous pleasures of heaven (*nae'm al-Jannah*). However, their fame did not go unnoticed. Another section of Muslims who preferred a different style of delivering the Prophet's message denounced them. In favour of the transmission of knowledge through books and student-teacher relations, they accused them of using ‘untrustworthy’ narrations. They also blamed them for the excessive emotions that lack established support from authentic Islamic sources.[667]

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[664] Abdulkader Tayob, "Sermons as Practical and Linguistic Performance: Insights from Theory and History." *Journal of Religion in Africa* 47, (2017).

[665] See Tayob, "Sermons as Practical and Linguistic Performances,"137. Also see Tahera Qutbddin, "Khutuba: The Evolution of Early Arabic Oration," in *Classical Arab Humanities in Their Own Terms: Festschrift for Wolfhart Heinrichs* ed. Beatrice Gruendler and Michael Cooperson (Leiden: Brill, 2008).

[666] Tayob, "Sermons as Practical and Linguistic Performances," 138.

This history of sermons reveals the dual nature of sermons in Islam: they serve as both vehicles for religious education and platforms for theological and political contestation. Sermons have historically acted as tools for constructing religious identity and asserting authority, but they have also been vulnerable to challenges. As new media has emerged, this dynamic has only intensified. Sermons now reach larger audiences in a fraction of the time, allowing for immediate responses and critique from detractors. This chapter examines how sermons, through new media, continue to play critical role in shaping identity and religious authority, focusing particularly on the commodification of Islam in Uganda over the past two decades and its implication for Islamic identity.

Current Preaching Environment

New media has changed the preaching environment in contemporary Uganda. At the same time, it is also inseparably linked to the increasing religious commodification and the return of religion to public life. In his study of Pentecostal broadcasting in Uganda, Fred Jenga and Paul Isiko demonstrated how new media use changed the religion from an individual, personal experience to a public good where Christianity was advertised on city billboards next to brands such as MTN and Coca-Cola as well as television networks and radio. Resulting from vigorous competition for followers cum consumers or ‘religious seekers’[668], new media became avenues for the commodification of Christianity as pastors race for more ‘souls’ between churches.[669]

Similarly, while analysing the relationship between spirituality and commerce in the Indonesian context, Greg Fealy defined the commodification of Islam as “the turning of faith and its symbols into a commodity capable of being bought and sold for profit"[670]. This phenomenon according to Fealy is marked by the increase in consumption of Islamic products and increasing religiosity. In this part of the Islamic world, commodification started with the infusion of commodities that bear Islamic meaning which was later followed by the expression of that meaning in the material form.[671]

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[667] Jons Pedersen, “The Criticism of the Islamic Preachers.” *Die Welt des Islams* 2, no. 4 (1955).

[668] borrowing from Wade Clark Roof, *Spiritual Market: Bary Boomers and Remaking of American Religion* (Princeton University Press: Princeton NJ, 1999).

[669] See Fred Jenga, “Pentecostal Broadcasting in Uganda”; Paul A. Isiko, “Religious Conflict among Pentecostal Churches in Uganda: A struggle for Power and Supremacy,” *Technium Social Science Journal* 14, (2020), 624

No doubt new media especially Muslim broadcasting media (Television and radio stations) and social media networks (Facebook, WhatsApp, and YouTube) has played a significant role in the spreading of Islamic sermons and public recognition of Muslim preachers. In Uganda, this phenomenon can be traced back to the liberalization of airwaves when private radio and television began hosting Muslim preachers. During that period, motivational preachers such as Sheikh Nuh Muzaata (d. 2021) became household names and celebrities in both Muslim and non-Muslim circles. One recalls the recorded sermon on topics such as the birth and death of the prophet (o*kuzalibwa n'okufa kwa nnabi*), taking care of parents (*okuyisa obulungi abakadde*), benefits of fasting (*obulungi bw'okusiiba*), among others. At the same time recorded sermons of different preachers on CDs (Compact Discs), and VCDs (Video Compact Discs), became popular, allowing religious seekers access to knowledge in the comfort of their homes.

While CDs, VCDs and cassette tapes remain common in Ugandan today, the rise of social media networks has transformed the distribution of Islamic sermons. They are commercially sold on major mosque verandas and kiosks as well as various stores in the country. They are important tools for recording Islamic events like public preaching and Muslim festivals. Weekly Sunday seminars of Salafi groups such as *Jamu'yat al-Dawa Al-Salafiya* were recorded by a team of Thurayya Islam media. It was through these recordings that sermons by preachers such as Abdulkarim Sentamu, Ramadan Mwanje, *Amir* Kamoga, and Sheikh Kawenda could reach the broader Salafi and non-Salafi audience. Religious seekers could access these recordings through Salafi kiosks and during religious gatherings. This was the case with non-Salafi preachers and entertainment.

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[670] Fealy Greg, "Consuming Islam: Commodified Religion and Aspirational Pietism in Contemporary Indonesia," in Greg Fealy and Sally White eds. *Expressing Islam: Religious Life and Politics in Indonesia* (Singapore: Institute of Southeast Asia Studies, 2008).

[671] See Ronald Lukens-Bull, "Commodification of Religion and Religification of Commodities: Youth Culture and Identity" in *Religious Commodification in Asia: Marketing gods*, (London: Routledge, 2008).

The current preaching environment has gone beyond mere recording for CD or VCD purposes. Live sessions of sermons are now very popular. Renowned preachers have their social media accounts. Some have special media groups to make sure that their sermons are enjoyed beyond the walls of the mosque or lecture rooms. Preachers such as Sheikh Muhammad Sekade whose famous Sunday morning *darasa* (lecture) at Makerere University Mosque is an example of this new preaching environment. Since 1998, he has been conducting weekly preaching every Sunday from 8:00-10:00 am which has attracted a sizable number of followers from the university community. For some reason, he had earlier refused the recording of his sermons. However, the coming social media and smartphones changed the fate.

The current media landscape in Uganda, there represents a blend of traditional and new media. Muslim sermon content is now accessible not only through conventional outlets like radio and television but also through a vast array of digital platforms. Media groups such as Al-Hidaya Islam Media, Al-Dawa Media Group, Thurayya Islam Media, Sunna Islam Media have played a critical role in revolutionising access to Islamic sermons, bringing religious content to an unprecedented level of accessibility. this chapter will explore the implication for this new preaching environment for Islamic identity construction and competition over religious authority in contemporary Uganda.

Mediated Sermons and Identity Construction

Mediated Islamic sermons can be categorized into 'On-Air' live sermons or 'On-Air' recorded ones. These categories can further be divided into; 'studio' or 'external' sermons depending on the location where the sermon is taking place. On-air live studio sermons are the sermons that are carried out inside the studio. Typically, a preacher is invited to a radio or television station studio and delivers a live-broadcasted sermon. Both producer and presenter are available to help with studio technical work for a smooth delivery of the sermons. This also happens with online media platforms such as Thuraya Islam Media-Uganda. They invite preachers to present live broadcasted sermons in their stationed studios. Other Muslim online media with studios include Umoja Media Uganda, and Al-Hidaaya Islam Media, among others.

Among the On-Air recorded studio sermons, are those that are recorded during live studio delivery. These kinds of sermons are especially important during the fasting month of Ramadan. In this month, most Muslim radio and television stations replace the night Qur'an programs with preaching. Here, sermons that had been presented live in the studio are always replayed at night to help the faithful catch up with what had been missed. Others re-play sermons of popular preachers who might have passed away in remembrance of their contribution to the preaching fraternity.[672] For example, Salam Television, Pearl FM, and Voice of Africa during Ramadan studio-live-recorded sermons of two popular Sheikhs Anas Kalisa and Nuh Muzaata who passed in the year 2020 are continuously broadcasted. Before their death, two preachers had been hosted in the studios of these stations on numerous occasions. Sheikh Abdulkarim Sentamu, a Salafi preacher assassinated by unknown assailants in 2012, whose sermons still appear on Pearl FM. Before his death, Sentamu had been continuously hosted by Pearl FM to discuss topics related to prayers (salah) and theology (Aqedah). Due to his fame in Salafi circles and beyond, his sermons are still attracting the attention of the audience making it feasible for mainstream and social media to re-play them.[673]

On the other hand, the external-On-Air live sermons comprise all preaching that occurs outside the studios. Such sermons include live broadcasted Friday *Jumma* sermons. During fieldwork, I noticed the three surveyed radio stations and two television stations broadcasted this type of mediated sermons. While Bilal radio and Television broadcasted sermons delivered at the Gadhafi National Mosque, Salam television, Pearl FM and Voice of Africa radio stations had no specific mosque for their Friday *Jumma* external live on-air sessions. Their choice of selecting which mosque was determined by proximity to the studio, relevance of the topic, prominence of the preacher, and ideology which must conform with the ideological orientation of the media.[674]

Thus, being the national body that officially represents all Muslims in the country, the external studio sermons of Bilal FM that focus on only those delivered at the national mosque have the role of sermons of early Islam. They deliver the weekly official message of the Muslim leadership but also avoid giving a platform to sermons that might contravene the ideological stand of the national body. Other external-on-air live sermons that are broadcast on both mainstream and social media are mauled festivals, seminars (especially with Salafis), opening ceremonies for mosques, Islamic schools, and funeral sessions of prominent Muslim persons, among other Muslim festivals. Still choice of selection is very important for all the broadcasting stations.

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[672] Interview with Haji Abdulsalam Ali Kinobe, program manager, Pearl Fm radio, Kampala, Dec 2021
[673] Interview with Sheikh Keyune Ahmed, Cape Town, June 2022
[674] Participant observation, and interview with the admin of stations under survey, Kampala, Dec 2021.

This move by religious leaders from physical spaces like mosques into mediated ones, their authority is shaped by new media contexts, as envisaged in mediatisation theory. Live sermons reflect a more controlled environment, where preachers are bound by studio decorum, while external live sermons offer greater flexibility for interaction with audiences. Media ritual theory emphasises importance of these mediated religious practices in constructing a shared Muslim identity with sermons broadcast during festivals or Jumu'ah prayers serving as common rituals that engage listeners in a collective religious experience.

The competitive nature of religious Identity construction is especially evident in the externally sermons. Sheikh Senjala's case is a prime example of how a preacher uses participatory technic to engage his audience in shaping Salafi identity. The *Nyenge Nyenge* statement that led to the controversy within the Muslim community in the country was uttered during his weekly preaching at Alidina Mosque. His usual audience is mostly members (though not all) Ugandan Salafi community. During his sessions, he uses a participatory kind of preaching to allow not only listening to the sermon but to engage the audience. In some instances, he starts a sentence and leaves the audience to complete it. His audience is usually the major contributor to the character assassination innuendos.

Being an unscripted sermon, the audience makes part of the preaching, and they may guide his choice of word and audience. Such an environment allows the preacher to make use of statements that might be controversial but with the idea of the audience present. It also at the same time points to the danger of the camps as an avenue preventing his group from falling into their trap. This dynamic highlights Talal Asad's concept of religion as a discursive tradition, where religious identity is continuously constructed and contested through discourse. Senjala's use of humour, satire, and mimicry in his sermons illustrates how mediated sermons serve as platforms for constructing religious identity wile discrediting rival groups.

In contrast to studio-mediated sermons in which preachers tend to be more serious, sermons recorded or broadcasted live from external sources other than the studio give room for the preacher to interact directly and freely with the audience. It is in the external-mediated sermons that Sheikh Senjala can freely use his analogies, jokes, satire, metaphors, and mimicry of his opponents, the traditionists' in a bid to shape the Salafi-Muslim identity in Uganda. Using '*Nyenge-Nyenge*' analogy and metaphor – for example- about his opponents did not only intend to degrade them but it was fully integrated into his theological goal of constructing the identity of Salafism in moral terms. Equating the mauled events to a secular festival despised by the faithful, was a satisfying confirmation to his Salafi audience and a mockery of his traditionist counterpart.

Furthermore, Senjala's sermon while presenting a distinction between his followers and the opponents also comes with a negative judgment of the other with serious implications. The exclusive approach evidenced in Senjala's sermon restricts him to a form of circular reasoning which does not let him out of the box of exclusivism since his discourse is controlled by judging others as different. In such instances, there is no possible avenue to compromise unless others follow his path. Moreover, even in his dialogical approach, we see that interest in engaging with the opponents is limited with no affection or appreciation of the other. This is evident in the attitudinal expression that appears in his mediated sermons while referring to preachers from other camps as unworthy of scholarly debate "We do not have time to respond to ball-boys and spectators (t*etulina budde bwanukula baball-boys nabali muki-rasha*) ...we just have to teach them; Allah will guide who He loves."[675]

Similarly, relating mediated sermons to language use, one cannot fail to find a hegemonic sentiment leaning towards the shaping of religious authority. Whilst referring to the language, it is important to note here that the dominant language for most studio live sermons is Luganda in central Uganda and Kiswahili in the West Nile. However, external sermons are delivered in multiple settings. This includes Friday *Jumma* (noon) prayers, Islamic festivals, public lectures, and other Muslim events. In central Uganda, especially Kampala and its neighbouring districts, Luganda and English are dominant. Arabic is in some instances used alongside either Luganda, Kiswahili, or English. The issue of language is very important as it is used as a measure of creditability in terms of Islamic knowledge. Also, 'the studio-external dichotomy is instructive to explain the different contexts.

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[675] See Adam Senjala-Think Tank and English Language."

Michael Silverstein defined language ideology as a set of beliefs and perceptions users have about language.[676] Thus, the selection of language to be used in a sermon by a preacher reflects different ideologies. The beliefs and perceptions regarding language play an important role in the rationalization or justification for language use. This is so important in examining why certain language is used more dominantly than others. As noted earlier, Muslim-owned media outlets in Uganda emerged from specific Muslim groups that were bound to their Islamic orientations. Thus, the choice of language is also a product of how such a group values that particular language in both local and religious contexts.

Locally, Uganda is a country with various ethnic groups. However, as noted earlier, Luganda speakers are the most dominant ethic, though it is only represented approximately 16% of Uganda's population.[677] Nonetheless, it is the popular language spoken in central Uganda as well as in major cities of the country. English is the colonial language that was adopted after independence as the official language of the country. Later in 2005, less known Kiswahili was added. However, few Ugandans can freely express themselves in the Kiswahili.[678] English is used as an 'elite' language. Due to historical exclusive policies that prevented Muslims from accessing secular education, it was very rare to find a Muslim speaking English. Until today, it is seen as a prestigious language in Muslim circles especially within *ulama*. Most people prefer and are comfortable using Luganda. There are still those who have negative sentiments about English and refer to it as the language of Satan (*lughat al-shaitan*).[679]

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[676] Michael Silverstein, "Language Structure and Linguistic Ideology," in *The Elements: A Parasession on Linguistic Units and Levels* ed. Paul R. Clyne, William F. Hanks, Carol L. Hoffbauer (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1979), 193.

[677] "Uganda: The World Factbook." *Central Intelligence Agency*, June 13, 2023. Accessed from https://www.cia.gov/the-world-factbook/countries/uganda/

[678] There is a saying that goes, "Kiswahili was born in Tanzania, grew up in Kenya and died in Uganda." This is about the level of Kiswahili development in the three original East African Community (EAC) countries. To solve the issue, the government of Uganda has recently passed a bill that makes it compulsory for all learners in both primary and secondary schools to take it as a second language. See Hellen Githaiga, "Ugandan Finally Adopts Kiswahili as Official Language." July 05, 2022. Accessed from https://www.theeastafrican.co.ke/tea/news/east-africa/uganda-finally-adopts-kiswahili-as-official-language-3869770

[679] Informal conversation with Sh. Muhammad Magulu, Imam Masid Salaf, Wakiso, December 20, 2021. However, it should be noted this is a minor issue with few Salafis. Most Salafi encourage people to learn English and to use it in their preaching. They look at it as one of the best languages for dawah (proselytization) since you can reach a wider audience than limiting to the local language. However, they criticize the revere and value put on those who use it in preaching to the detriment of another local and Arabic language. In this regard, Sheikh Salih al-Uthaymin said in one interview that it is fardh Kifayah. See: https://dusunnah.com/video/the-ruling-on-learning-the-english-language-shaykh-muhammad-ibn-salih-al-uthaymin/

In the religious context, the Arabic language occupies the highest position. This is not only in Uganda but in most of the Muslim world. It is also sacred in the sense of the word, and historically, the language of Islamic intellectualism.[680] In principle, knowledge of the Arabic language is a pre-requisite for an Islamic scholar (alim). In other words, to claim Islamic scholarship is often knowledge of Arabic is very important. This is so true because most of the Muslim sources of Islamic knowledge are written in the Arabic language. It is the controversy on who speaks for Muslims in Uganda starts. Senjala blames people whose expertise is in secular science (he calls it English) but medals in the affairs of Sheiks.

> You find teachers teaching Islam to Muslims, yet they know nothing about Islam, but only teach because they can speak English. Some go even ahead to be on mosque committees and sometimes expel *Imams* and *Amirs*…. *ya akhi*, this is not your field, can a butcher-man teach a surgeon how to operate a patient in the hospital theatre.[681]

While it is not a compulsory requirement for Islamic knowledge, the evaluation of a sermon is often predicated on a command in the Arabic language. This can be seen in Senjala's criticism and many other Salafis. Senjala criticizes which he extends to those who studied secular education but also to all preachers in English. He blames them for a lack of credible knowledge that can be relied upon in interpreting Islam. He sometimes uses a distinction between football players on the pitch as well as the ball boys who retrieve and supply balls to players during a football match. "These ball-boys cannot even make a single sentence in Arabic, yet they are quick to speak for Islam."[682] In other words, such categories of people should keep quiet on Islamic-related matters and rather concentrate on sending the balls to us the professional players in the field.

similarly, Hamza Kasule, a graduate of Islamic University Medina and currently one of the Imams at Masjid Hidaya in Kampala, derogatively commented on the poor use of Arabic by one of his fellow Salafi preachers, Sheikh Abdulrahman Buyondo in our conversation. He said, "Sheikh Buyondo is good until he starts to recite Arabic verses…his Arabic is so poor that you would be tempted to ask him to keep quiet."[683] Here he was referring to Sheikh Abdulrahman Buyondo, a self-made Islamic preacher with little (or no) acknowledged background in Islamic scholarship. He is known for motivational and emotional preaching with limited use of Arabic sources. Critics say that he does not recite the Arabic verse in the correct style.[684] Thus, the religious context in Uganda, like elsewhere the level of Arabic knowledge. It is part of the displaying authority in Islamic scholarship and lack of it is tantamount to limited knowledge of Islam and Islamic sciences in general.

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[680] See, Salina Ahmad, "Language in the Islamic Intellectual Tradition." *Journal of Arabic Studies & Islamic Civilization* 2, (2015).

[681] Dr. Adam Senjala, "Think Tank & English Language" *MK Islam Media*. Accessed from https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=EQZ_kBQfhdI

[682] Ibid.

It is important to note that while that is the case in the ulama circles, it looks to be irrelevant in the general Muslim public, especially in non-scholarly circles. In Uganda and other non-Arabic speaking countries, competency in Arabic although desirable, must be accompanied by emotional and moving messages. This is exactly what Aisha Namugga told me about the sermons of Sheikh Nuh Muzaata. "I like his sermons because they speak to our everyday life, and they are motivational as they help me to be a better Muslim."[685] Here we see that Namugga is not interested in the knowledge of the preacher, but in the message that preachers are delivering. In this regard, Dorothea E. Schulz noted that the quality of sermons is often evaluated based on practices and understanding of "common", non-erudite Muslim believers and they frame their engagement with sermons in terms borrowed from conventional, not necessarily Islamic, notions of the emotive, transformative potential listening. [686] Such practices, according to Hirschkind – while analyzing Islamic cassette sermons in Egypt, noted that they enabled people to live as devout Muslims.[687]

Nevertheless, the role of language plays an important role in shaping religious authority. As we can see knowledge and mastering of the Arabic language by those in the field of Islamic scholarship in Uganda and elsewhere is generally perceived as the demonstration of the high level of scholarship by the preacher. Sermons with clear articulation of Arabic phrases play a significant role in situating the hierarchical position of the preacher. It is one of the tools Salafis like Senjala use to downgrade his opponents. Similarly, the traditionists use the same language

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[683] Informal conversation with Sheik Hamza Kateregga, at Masjid Noor in Kampala, January 20, 2021.

[684] Informal conversations with Salafi audience, Kampala, January 2021.

[685] Interview with Aisha Namugga, Matugga, Wakiso, 20 May 2021.

[686] Dorothea E. Schulz, "*Muslim and New-Media in West Africa*, Indianapolis: Indiana University Press, 2012, p. 213-214.

[687] See Charles Hirschkind, "The Ethics of Listening: Cassette-Sermon Audition in Contemporary Egypt, *American Ethnologist*, 28/3, 2001, p. 623-649.

to appeal to their audience their credibility as carriers of the prophetic message in a bid to counter their Salafi detractors. Additionally, the English language is now being used by some other preachers who might have no affiliation with the competing camps. English has become their identity and a form that represents a non-partisan kind of Islam that welcomes all Muslims. They organize seminars, and lectures and are always accommodative to all parties. Their ability to master both Arabic and English gives them a superior status within a segment of Muslims in the country. However, it has also not vindicated them from attacks, especially from the Salafi community, such as Sheikh Senjala. He has continuously warned his audience about preachers in English whom he blames for disorganizing things they have no authority.

> *abantu bolunzungu bano balina engeri gyebazze bayingilira ensonga ezitali zabwe nebazigolongotanya nnyo. Banange Okusoma oluzungu tekikufula ssekamwa wobusilamu*. (These people of English have ways of infiltrating fields that do not belong to them. They have disorganized lots of things. Please, learning English does not make you the spokesperson of Islam).[688]

While the reference is general, the message was targeting preachers such as Dr. Walusimbi since it came in his refutation of the 'think tank' idea that had been suggested by Dr. Walusimbi.

Conclusion

This chapter has examined the role of language in shaping identity and maintaining religious authority in *mediatised* Muslim sermons in Uganda. By tracing the historical evolution of sermon delivery—from traditional mosque-based preaching to the commodification of sermons through recording technologies like cassettes, CDs, and VCD/DVDs—it highlighted how media has transformed the ways in which religious discourse is produced and consumed. These recorded sermons not only served to enrich the spiritual lives of religious seekers but also became economic commodities, benefiting preachers and vendors alike. With the advent of social media and digital platforms such as Thurayya Islam Media, the chapter illustrated how Ugandan Muslim media has adopted new technologies to reach wider audiences, relying on donations and online streams to sustain their activities.

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[688] Dr. Adam Senjala, "Think Tank & English Language" *MK Islam Media*. Accessed from https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=EQZ_kBQfhdI

One of the central arguments presented is that language plays a crucial role in how mediated sermons convey religious authority and shape Islamic identities. The competition among preachers is not just about theology but is also expressed through their language choices and modes of delivery. The chapter highlighted how Arabic, as a language, is often viewed as a marker of religious knowledge and authenticity, whereas English in Uganda signifies both social status and access to secular education. These linguistic choices create layers of authority and influence, with audiences interpreting language as a signal of the preacher's religious credibility, educational background, and social standing. Thus, language becomes more than a medium of communication; it acts as a signifier of religious and social hierarchies.

Reflecting on Talal Asad's concept of Religion as a Discursive Tradition, the chapter demonstrated how sermons, whether recorded or live-streamed, are spaces where religious authority is constructed and contested. In line with Asad's framework, sermons are not static religious proclamations, but dynamic discourses shaped by historical and social contexts. The language, style, and content of the sermons reflect ongoing theological and social negotiations within Ugandan Muslim communities, as different preachers assert their interpretations of Islam while responding to the broader socio-political environment.

Additionally, Mediatisation Theory, provides a useful lens to understand how media technologies have transformed religious communication. Mediated sermons have transcended the mosque and now exist within a broader media ecosystem, where their reach and influence are amplified through digital platforms. This transformation has expanded the audience and opened new avenues for religious competition, as preachers with different theological orientations can access and engage with the same audience, creating a more pluralistic religious landscape.

In conclusion, mediated sermons in Uganda are powerful tools for religious expression, identity construction, and theological competition. Language, in particular, is a key factor in how these sermons assert religious authority and shape perceptions of Islamic identity. The examples explored in this chapter reveal how sermons, far from being simple religious discourses, serve as arenas for negotiating power, identity, and belief. Through the interaction of language, preacher charisma, and audience engagement, sermons become sites where religious and social boundaries are contested and reaffirmed, reflecting the broader dynamics of religious authority and identity in Uganda's Muslim media landscape.

CHAPTER TEN

CONCLUSION

Introduction

This thesis has explored the relationship between Muslim-owned and operated media platforms and the shaping of Islamic identities in Uganda. Grounded in Mediatisation Theory, Media Ritual Theory, Agenda Setting Theory, Media Framing Theory, and Talal Asad's concept of Religion as a Discursive Tradition, the research has analysed how the rise of Muslim-owned media—radio stations and social media—has redefined the production and contestation of religious authority and identity. The central argument of the thesis is that these media platforms, owned and operated by different Muslim factions, have created a polycentric and contested religious environment in Uganda, offering new spaces for religious discourse, identity construction, and theological debates. Through a blend of archival research, digital ethnography, and content analysis, the thesis has demonstrated that media technologies in Uganda serve as powerful tools for both shaping Islamic identity and contesting religious authority. This concluding chapter presents the general conclusion of the thesis reflecting on the central idea utilised and evidence used. The chapter begin with summary and outline of main sections in the thesis before diving into the overall conclusion and recommendations for future studies.

Summary and Purpose

The liberalization of the airwaves in the early 1990s marked a pivotal moment in Uganda, leading to a dramatic increase in religiously oriented mass media. Religious groups, including Muslims, seized the opportunity to deliver sermons and religious content more freely and extensively, using radio, television, and later the internet. Before this liberalization, access to state-controlled broadcasting was highly restricted, both in terms of airtime and the scope of topics covered. With the new media landscape, Muslims in Uganda, like in other parts of the world, began utilizing these platforms to reach a broader audience, both Muslim and non-Muslim. Media became a tool not only for proselytizing but also for shaping Muslim identity in the public sphere. This new media, comprising radio, television, and social media, emerged as a new form of *minbar*—a platform for debates, deliberations, and contestations, much like the traditional mosque *minbar* before it.

Prior to the rise of new media, Ugandan Muslims used mosque *minbars* and religious festivals as their primary spaces for communication, where debates over spiritual, social, and political issues unfolded. These *minbars* allowed for a range of voices to be heard, though at times, divergent opinions led to violent confrontations, particularly in Salafi mosques with young, radicalized followers. National radio and television, under the pretext of national unity, typically provided airtime only to Sunni 'traditionalist' Muslim clerics, silencing other interpretations of Islam. However, the advent of liberalized media changed this, opening the doors to diverse theological views and bringing Muslims into the broader public sphere.

This study has sought to document and analyse the emergence of Muslim-owned media in Uganda, exploring how it is used by various Islamic groups and individuals. It has examined the institutions behind these media outlets, the nature of their content, and the reception by both Muslim and non-Muslim audiences. The study posed three primary questions: (1) *Who owns and operates Muslim-owned media in Uganda*? (2) *What are the objectives behind their use*? (2) *How do Ugandan Muslims engage with and consume this media*? By answering these questions, the study not only mapped the Muslim-owned media landscape but also delved into the theological debates and social dynamics that have shaped the Muslim-owned media space in Uganda.

Literature, Theory, and Method

To contextualize the study within existing scholarship, the research reviewed three decades of literature on the relationship between religion and media. The goal was to provide insight into how new media technologies intersect with religious practices on both global and regional levels. The review revealed a significant gap in the study of Muslim-owned media, especially in the context of East Africa. Most of the research has focused on Pentecostalism in West Africa, with little attention paid to Islam in Uganda. The only notable earlier study was Abasi Kiyimba's 1990 article on Islam and Mass Media in Uganda. This study sought to fill that gap by focusing on the intersection of Islam and media in a Muslim-minority context in Uganda.

The study engaged with five key theories to ground its analysis of new Muslim-owned media in Uganda: Mediatisation Theory, media framing theory, uses and gratification theory, media ritual theory, and Talal Asad's concept of media framing. At the same time, the study employed a mixed-method approach, using triangulation to ensure a comprehensive understanding of the subject. The research included surveys to identify the number of

Muslim-owned media outlets, interviews with content producers and consumers, participant observations, and focus group discussions. his multi-layered approach allowed for a nuanced analysis of the new Muslim-owned media landscape in Uganda, capturing the complex ways in which media has become integrated into the religious and social lives of Ugandan Muslim.

The central Argument

The central argument of the thesis is that Muslim-owned media in Uganda has become a new *Minbar*, a platform where religious leaders, scholars, and ordinary Muslims engage in discourses that were once confined to mosques and madrasahs. The proliferation of Muslim-owned media—such as Bilal FM, Voice of Africa FM, Pearl FM, and social media platforms like Thurayya Islam Media and Manya Obusilamu—has shattered the traditional monopoly on religious authority. Whereas in the past, traditional clerics dominated religious discourse, the advent of these media platforms has created spaces where competing interpretations of Islam, from traditionalist to reformist and Salafi, can emerge and challenge established religious norms.

The concept of the *Mediated Minbar* encapsulates how these platforms serve as modern-day equivalents of the mosque's pulpit, where religious messages are broadcast to a wider, more diverse audience. The rise of these platforms reflects the growing influence of media technologies in shaping the religious and social identities of Ugandan Muslims. These platforms have not only expanded the reach of religious leaders but have also democratized religious discourse, enabling a multiplicity of voices to contest and redefine what it means to be Muslim in Uganda.

Evidence in Support of the Argument

Throughout the thesis, various case studies illustrate how different factions within the Ugandan Muslim community use media to assert their religious authority and promote Islamic identities. The ownership of these media platforms is a crucial factor in understanding the nature of the religious messages being disseminated. For instance, Bilal FM and Voice of Africa FM are owned by traditionalist institutions such as the Uganda Muslim Supreme Council (UMSC) and the Union of Muslim Councils (UMC). These stations focus on upholding traditionalist interpretations of Islam, promoting religious practices that have long been entrenched in Ugandan Muslim communities. Their programming serves to legitimize the authority of established religious institutions and maintain continuity with the past.

On the other hand, platforms like Pearl FM and Thurayya Islam Media offer alternative narratives that challenge traditionalist views. Pearl FM, influenced by private individuals with Salafi leanings, promotes a more reformist interpretation of Islam, one that is critical of what it sees as innovations (*bid'ah*) in traditional practices. Thurayya Islam Media, also Salafi in orientation, serves as a hub for debates on contemporary Islamic issues, offering space for reformist clerics to engage with topics ranging from political engagement to theological purity. These platforms have transformed the nature of religious authority in Uganda, allowing for more open competition between traditionalist and reformist voices.

The case of Manya Obusilamu, a YouTube channel linked to the ADF jihadist movement, underscores the diversity of voices within Ugandan Muslim-owned media. his platform presents itself as the defender of Muslim interests, advocating for militant action against both the Ugandan government and traditional Muslim scholars who oppose their jihadist agenda. The existence of such a platform highlights the extent to which Muslim-owned media in Uganda has become a contested space, where even radical voices find a place to propagate their views.

The research findings support the argument that the polycentric nature of the new Muslim-owned media landscape allows for both competition and collaboration. While these media platforms frequently engage in theological disputes, particularly on matters such as Salafi purity or the permissibility of local traditions, they also unite when faced with external challenges from non-Muslims or the state. This reflects a complex dynamic where new media technologies serve as both a battleground for internal Muslim disagreements and a shield against external threats.

In addition to traditional media like radio, social media has become an influential tool for shaping Islamic identity. The interactive nature of platforms like Facebook and YouTube enables users to not only consume religious content but to actively participate in shaping, creating and contesting the narratives. Social media interactions, such as those seen in the debates on voting within the Salafi community or critiques of traditionalist practices, show that Muslim-owned media is not a one-way street but a space for dialogue, contestation, and identity formation. The thesis has documented how Muslims in Uganda use social media platforms to engage in religious debates, challenge established authority and negotiate their own Islamic identities.

Theoretical Reflections

The thesis drew on several theoretical frameworks to make sense of these dynamics. Mediatisation Theory was pivotal in understanding how the proliferation of media technologies has changed religious communication. The *Mediated Minbar* is a product of mediatisation, where religious authority is no longer confined to the physical spaces of mosques but is disseminated through mass media and digital platforms. These media technologies have fundamentally altered the ways in which religious messages are produced, circulated, and consumed, allowing for the emergence of new religious actors and identities. Moreover, the thesis demonstrated that new media technologies are not merely passive conduits for religious messages but are actively shaping the way religious ideas are produced, disseminated, and consumed. The transformation of religious authority in Uganda, from being centralized to being contested and fragmented, is a direct result of the mediatisation of religious discourse.

Media Ritual Theory was particularly useful in analysing how Muslim-owned media platforms serve as spaces or modern-day *Minbars* for the performance of religious rituals. Just as the mosque *Minbar* once served as a central place where religious authority is asserted, these media platforms have become new sites for the broadcast of religious rituals, sermons, debates, and authority. Whether through radio sermons, YouTube lectures, or Facebook debates, these platforms enable ritualisation of religious discourse that reaffirm or contest their religious identities in ways that transcend physical spaces, reaching Muslims across Uganda and beyond.

Agenda Setting and Media Framing theories were useful in analysing how different media platforms set the terms of theological debates and shape the public perception of Islam in Uganda. The thesis revealed that traditionalist outlets like Bilal FM and Voice of Africa FM frame Islamic discourse in ways that align with their institutional interests, promoting traditional practices and hierarchical religious authority. Conversely, reformist platforms like Pearl FM and Thurayya Islam Media use media framing to challenge traditionalist interpretations, advocating for a more reformist or Salafi approach to Islamic practice. Media framing, in particular plays a key role in shaping how Ugandan Muslims interpret theological disputes, social and political agendas within the Muslim community.

Finally, Talal Asad's concept of Religion as a Discursive Tradition provided the foundation for understanding how religious authority is continually constructed and contested within the Muslim-owned media landscape. The study confirmed that religious discourse in Uganda is not static but is constantly being reshaped through media interactions. Asad’s concept helped to frame the analysis of how different factions within the Ugandan Muslim community use media to assert their version of Islam as the most authentic, thereby engaging in a continuous struggle over religious legitimacy.

Overall Conclusion

In sum, this thesis has demonstrated that Muslim-owned and operated media platforms in Uganda have transformed the landscape of religious discourse. These platforms have shattered the monopoly of traditional religious authority, creating a polycentric and contested media environment where multiple voices, often in competition, shape the future of Islam in the country. The rise of these media technologies has not only democratized religious discourse but has also allowed for the emergence of new Islamic identities that challenge the status quo. Through the interplay of radio, social media, and other digital platforms, Ugandan Muslims are actively engaging in the construction of their religious identities, participating in global Islamic debates, and negotiating their place in the modern world.

Ultimately, the thesis concludes that the *Mediated Minbar*—the new media platforms owned and operated by Muslims—has redefined the contours of religious authority and identity in Uganda, reflecting the broader global trends of mediatisation and the decentralization of religious power.

Recommendation for Future Studies

This research has broken new ground by exploring the relationship between media and Islam in Uganda, yet several areas remain ripe for further investigation:

Geographic Diversity: This study primarily focused on Luganda-speaking Muslims in central Uganda, where most Muslims are concentrated. Future research should extend to other regions such as Mbale, Arua, and Yumbe, which also have significant Muslim populations. These areas are home to radio stations like IUIU, Masaba, Ummah, and Ribat FM, and further study of how these stations operate and influence rural communities would provide valuable insights into the regional dynamics of Muslim-owned media in Uganda.

Non-Sunni Muslim-owned media: While this study concentrated on Sunni Muslim-owned media, Uganda has a growing number of Shia and Ahmadiyya communities, both of which are active in print and social media. Examining their media outlets and how they are received by both Sunni Muslims and non-Muslims would offer a more comprehensive understanding of the diverse Islamic media landscape in Uganda.

Comparative Studies on Religious Media: This study has touched upon the increasing presence of religious media in Uganda, including outlets owned by Christian and traditional African religious (ATR) groups. Comparative research on the packaging, framing, and content of programs across different religious media outlets could reveal important insights into the role of religion in the Ugandan public sphere. Future studies should examine how these media outlets contribute to socio-religious discourse and what kinds of meanings their audiences construct from their engagement with these platforms.

Appendix I

Consent From for Respondents

INFORMATION SHEET/CONSENT FORM FOR RESPONDENTS

Department for the Study of Religions, University of Cape Town

Title of research project: Mediated *Minbar*: Muslim Mass Media in Contemporary Uganda

Details of Researcher: Abdulhakim Nsobya (abdalla.hakim@gmail.com)

Details of thesis supervisor: Prof. Andrea Brigaglia (andrea.Brigaglia@uct.ac.za)

Information for the participants

I am a student at the University of Cape Town in the Department for the Study of Religions. I am conducting interviews towards PhD dissertation entitled; *Mediated Minbar in East Africa: Muslim Broadcasting Media in Contemporary Uganda*. You are free to pose any questions regarding this study. This study seeks to explore the relationship between media, Islam, and Muslim identities, focusing specifically on the Ugandan Muslim community in East Africa. Your responses during the interviews will be recorded, and it is strictly going to be used for educational and academic purposes only. Therefore, it will be handled with utmost confidentiality. The interview is expected to last for about an hour, during which, you will be asked some questions relating to your experiences with Muslim broadcasting media in Uganda. Your honest and sincere responses will help answer the key questions on the Muslims' responses to the broadcasting media in Uganda, in their religious engagements. The study moreover will fill the gap in the literature on religion and media with Islam in focus. Before the submission of this thesis, you are entitled to withdraw any of the information revealed during this interview. However, once the study is completed, this thesis will publicly be available at the University of Cape Town and may be used for further research and/ or publication purposes.

Participant involvement

1. I agree to participate in this research project.
2. I have read and fully understand the content of this consent form.
3. I agree that my responses may be used for educational and academic purposes on the condition that my privacy is respected.
4. I accept that I am not under any compulsion to partake in this project.
5. No financial compensation has been offered for this interview.

Name of Participant……………………………………Sign & Date………………………….. Name of Researcher……………………………………………Sign & Date…………………………………………….

Questionnaires

Working Title: Mediated *Minbar*: Role of Muslim Media in Shaping the Muslim Identity in Contemporary Uganda

Religious Radio Broadcast – Consumption Questionnaire

Dear Respondent,

I am Abdulhakim Nsobya, a doctoral student at the University of Cape Town (South Africa), researching the role of Muslim media in shaping Muslim identity of Muslims in Uganda. This study focuses on Radio Bilal FM, Voice of Africa FM, Pearl of Africa FM, and selected social media networks, particularly in Kampala and neighbouring districts. This academic project is intended for my PhD award, and all information provided will be treated confidentially. Please do not include your name, address, or phone number on the questionnaire paper.

Instructions: (a) Tick the box that best represents your opinion. (b) Where the question requires a written answer, please respond accordingly.

Section A: Personal Information

1. **Sex**
   (a) Male [ ]
   (b) Female [ ]
2. **Age**
   15-20 [ ]
   21-25 [ ]
   26-30 [ ]
   31-35 [ ]
   36-40 [ ]
   41-45 [ ]
   46-50 [ ]
   51 and above [ ]
3. **Highest Level of Education**
   Primary [ ]
   Secondary [ ]
   Diploma / Adv. Diploma [ ]
   B.Sc./B.A./PGD Diploma [ ]
   M.Sc./MA [ ]
   Ph.D [ ]
4. **Religious Affiliation**
   Muslim

    1. Sunni [ ]

    2. Ahmadiyya [ ]

3. Shia [ ]

Christian

4. Catholic [ ]

5. Lutheran [ ]

6. Anglican [ ]

7. Protestant [ ]

8. Traditional Religion [ ]

9. None [ ]

5. **Occupation**
(a) Civil servant [ ]
(b) Lawyer [ ]
(c) Medical practitioner [ ]
(d) Lecturer [ ]
(e) Teacher [ ]
(f) Self-employed [ ]
(g) Student [ ]
(h) Unemployed [ ]
(i) Other (Specify) …………………………………………………..

6. **Monthly Income Range**
UGX 5,000,000.00 and above [ ]
UGX 2,500,000.00 – 5,000,000.00 [ ]
UGX 1,500,000.00 – 2,000,000.00 [ ]
UGX 1,000,000.00 – 1,400,000.00 [ ]
UGX 500,000.00 – 700,000.00 [ ]
UGX 100,000.00 – 400,000.00 [ ]

Section B: Media Consumption

7. **Do you listen to radio broadcasts?**
Yes [ ]
No [ ] (If no, please go to question 23)

8. **If yes, what type of radio station interests you most?**
(a) Religious radio stations [ ]
(b) Government radio stations [ ]
(c) Private/commercial radio stations [ ]

9. **Why do you choose to listen to this type of radio station?**
(a) It provides good entertainment [ ]
(b) I trust their news and information [ ]
(c) It helps in my spiritual growth [ ]

(d) To seek religious knowledge, values, and truth [ ]
(e) Out of curiosity and habit [ ]
(f) Recommended by my religious leaders [ ]
(g) It is an escape from boredom [ ]
(h) My friends listen to this station too [ ]
(i) Others, specify………………………………………………………………………..

10. **How often do you listen to the type of radio station you have chosen in question 9?**
    (a) Every day [ ]
    (b) Occasionally [ ]
    (c) Rarely [ ]

11. **How many hours do you spend listening to these programmes each day?**

---

12. **Where do you typically listen to radio programmes?**
    (a) At home [ ]
    (b) At a commercial center [ ]
    (c) At a friend's house [ ]
    (d) In your car [ ]
    (e) Other (Specify) …………………………………………………..

Section C: Religious Programmes

13. **Do you listen to religious programmes on the radio?**
    Yes [ ]
    No [ ] (If no, please go to question 23)

14. **Which Muslim-owned radio stations do you listen to?**
    (a) Radio Bilal FM [ ]
    (b) Voice of Africa FM [ ]
    (c) Pearl of Africa FM [ ]

15. **If you listen to religious programmes, where do you usually listen to them?**
    (a) At home [ ]
    (b) At a friend’s house [ ]
    (c) In a commercial center [ ]
    (d) In your car [ ]
    (e) Other (Specify) …………………………………………………..

16. **If you listen to religious programmes but not on Radio Bilal FM, Voice of Africa FM, or Pearl of Africa FM, specify which other Muslim media outlets you use:**

---

17. **What values do religious programmes provide for you?**
    (a) Entertainment [ ]
    (b) To pass time [ ]

(c) To deepen my faith [ ]
(d) Peace and order [ ]
(e) Prevents bad influence [ ]
(f) No value [ ]
(g) Others, specify…………………………………………………………………

18. **Do you participate in call-in programmes or donation vouchers aired by religious radio stations?**
Yes [ ]
No [ ]

19. **If yes, how much money do you typically spend on call-in or voucher programmes?**
(a) UGX 500 – 1,000 [ ]
(b) UGX 1,500 – 2,000 [ ]
(c) UGX 2,500 – 3,000 [ ]
(d) UGX 3,500 – 4,000 [ ]
(e) UGX 4,500 – 5,000 [ ]
(f) UGX 5,500 and above [ ]

20. **If you do not spend money on call-in or voucher programmes, why?**
(a) Cannot afford the money [ ]
(b) It is a waste of money [ ]
(c) Others, specify…………………………………………………………………

21. **To what extent has listening to religious programmes positively influenced your religious life?**
(a) Great extent [ ]
(b) Little extent [ ]
(c) Very little extent [ ]
(d) No extent [ ]
(e) Cannot say [ ]

22. **How often do you participate in para-religious activities such as Islamic festivals, charitable activities, etc.?**
Very often [ ]
Often [ ]
Sometimes [ ]
Rarely [ ]
Not at all [ ]

23. **How often do you read/watch/use/listen to the following?**

Statements	**Very Often**	**Often**	**Sometimes**	**Rarely**	**Not at all**
Religious music	[ ]	[ ]	[ ]	[ ]	[ ]
Religious home videos	[ ]	[ ]	[ ]	[ ]	[ ]

Statements	**Very Often**	**Often**	**Sometimes**	**Rarely**	**Not at all**
Religious dramas	[ ]	[ ]	[ ]	[ ]	[ ]
Religious books	[ ]	[ ]	[ ]	[ ]	[ ]
Religious bulletins	[ ]	[ ]	[ ]	[ ]	[ ]
Religious programmes on TV/Radio	[ ]	[ ]	[ ]	[ ]	[ ]
Other religious programmes	[ ]	[ ]	[ ]	[ ]	[ ]
Leaflets	[ ]	[ ]	[ ]	[ ]	[ ]
Religious magazines/newspapers	[ ]	[ ]	[ ]	[ ]	[ ]

Appendix II

Interview Guide

Interviewee Introductions

Questions:

1. What is your full name and place of birth?
2. Can you describe your ethnicity and religious affiliation?
3. What languages do you speak, and what is your level of education in both Islamic and secular contexts?
4. What religious duties do you perform, if any (e.g., imam, teacher, preacher, or other roles)?

Section 1: Owners (Media Ownership)

Questions:

1. What is the name of your media house?
2. What type of media outlet do you operate? (Is it radio, television, or both?)
3. Can you share the history of your media house? When and why was it established?
4. What are the mission, vision, and primary objectives of your media house?
5. What challenges and successes have you encountered since starting the media outlet?
6. How long has your media outlet been operating?
7. Is there any additional relevant information you'd like to provide about your media house?

Section 2: Journalists (Religious Program Production)

Questions:

1. How do you package and present religious programs on your media outlet?
2. How many religious programs do you currently run on your platform?
3. What are the primary themes or content of these religious programs?
4. Can you describe the process and pattern of producing these programs?
5. What are the key challenges and successes you face when producing religious content?
6. Are there any other important details about the media production process that you'd like to share?

Section 3: Clerics and Public Intellectuals (Religious Influencers and New Media)

Questions:

1. Who is the main audience for your religious programs? Can you describe their demographics (age, gender, socio-economic status)?
2. What do you think motivates this audience to engage with religious media content?
3. In your opinion, how has the integration of new media (e.g., social media, digital platforms) affected religious practices in Uganda?
4. How do you believe Muslim media has influenced religious diversity and life for Muslims in Uganda?
5. Have you noticed any significant changes in religious practices due to the availability of religious media?

Section 4: Media Consumers (Audience and User Experience)

Questions:

1. What motivates you to listen to or watch religious media content?
2. How has religious media impacted your daily life and your religious practices?
3. What type of religious media do you prefer? (E.g., radio, social media, YouTube, etc.)
4. How do you compare the impact of mediated religious media to traditional mosque-based practices?
5. Are there any additional thoughts you have on how religious media affects your identity as a Muslim in Uganda?

Appendix III

List of Interviewees

1. Interview Abu Abdurrahman. *
2. Interview with Abu Bashir. *
3. Interview Abu Najah. *
4. Interview Abu Rahma. *
5. Interview with Ahmad Kyeyune, Program Dawa, Pearl FM, Jan 22, 2021, 9:30 pm.
6. Interview with Dr Khalid Lubega and Sawuya Lubega, Kampala April 2020.
7. Interview with Dr. Shuaib Kaggwa, Kampala, 20 November 2020.
8. Interview with Farhma Mukasa, Kibuli-Kampla, June 2020. *
9. Interview with Ibrahim Semuju, Kampala June 2020.
10. Interview with Lukanga Rashid, Buyenga-Butambala, 15 Feb 2019. *
11. Interview with Muzamir Lubega's office, Kampala 22 Nov 2020.
12. Interview with Shaykh Sulaiman Kakeeto, interview 20 February 2017, Kampala. *
13. Interview with Sheik Hamza Kakembo, at Masjid Noor in Kampala, January 20, 2021.
14. Interview with Abdukarim Kalisa, Kampala Aug 2019.
15. Interview with Abdulmajidu Musaasizi, Koome, Mukono District, June 2021. *
16. Interview with Aisha Namugga, Matugga, Wakiso, 20 May 2021. *
17. Interview with alhaji Nereko Mutumba, December 2019, Kampala.
18. Interview with Hajat Fatuma Nalubega, Kampala, 13 Jan 2020. *
19. Interview with Haji Abdulsalam Ali Kinobe, Kampala, Dec 2021.
20. Interview with Haji Harona Kanabi, Kampala.
21. Interview with Haji Haruna Sengoba, June 2019, Kampala.
22. Interview with Jajja Goddo, Kampala.
23. Interview with Kayizi Hakim, Kanyanda-Luweero, 1 Dec 2020. *
24. Interview with Musa Songolo, Kawumu, Nakase District, 26 December 2021. *
25. Interview with Musoke Zubair, Sonde-Mukono, 20 Aug 2019.
26. Interview with Abasi Kiyimba, Dec 2020, Kampala.
27. Interview with Rehema Nabatanzi, Kigogwa, Wakiso District,
28. Interview with Saida Nakabiri, Kampala. *
29. Interview with Salman Faris, December 2017.
30. Interview with Seruwaji Burhan, Kampala 23 Nov 2022.

31. Interview with Sh. Muhammad Magulu, Wakiso, December 20, 2021.
32. Interview with Sheikh Abdulkadir Mbogo, December 2019, Kampala.
33. Interview with Sheikh Ahmed Kyeyune, Kampala, June 2018.
34. Interview with Sheikh Kamoga, Kampala, 11 September 2021.
35. Interview with Sheikh Kasasa Wakiku, Kampala June 2018.
36. Interview with Sheikh Keyune Ahmed, Cape Town, June 2022.
37. Interview with Sheikh Musa Khalil, December 15, 2019, Gulu-Uganda.
38. Interview with Sheikh Suleiman Kyeyune, Kampala, June 2018.
39. Interview with Sheikh Twaha Segujja, Kampala, at VOA offices, Dec 4, 2020.
40. Interview, Haji Najib Kivumbi, Kampala.
41. Interview, Jamilu Sekyondwa, Semuot-Nakaseke, Jan 2022. *

NB: * In the interest of confidentiality, the names are fictious.

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