

# Learning Morality, Inequalities, and Faith

*Christian and Muslim Schools in Tanzania*

Hansjörg Dilger

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Christian and Muslim schools have become important targets in families' and pupils' quests for new study opportunities and for securing a 'good life' in Tanzania. These schools combine secular education with the moral (self-)formation of young people, triggering new realignments of the field of education with interreligious coexistence and class formation in the country's urban centres. Hansjörg Dilger explores the emerging entanglements of faith, morality, and the educational market in Dar es Salaam, thereby shedding light on processes of religious institutionalisation and their individual and collective embodiment. By contextualising these dynamics through an analysis of the politics of Christian–Muslim relations in postcolonial Tanzania, this book shows how the field of education has shaped the positions of these highly diverse religious communities in diverging ways. In doing so, Dilger suggests that students' and teachers' religious experience and practice in faith-oriented schools are shaped by the search for socio-moral belonging as well as by the power relations and inequalities of an interconnected world.

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**Hansjörg Dilger**

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International African Institute, London  
*and*



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# 1 Introduction

## The Quest for a Good Life in Faith-Oriented Schools

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At the turn of the twenty-first century, families in rural and urban Tanzania began looking for new educational opportunities in faith-oriented schools. From 1969<sup>1</sup> until the (partial) privatisation of the educational sector in the mid-1990s, attending a government school had been perceived as foundational for securing a ‘good life’ (*maisha mazuri*), and potentially a job, in the East African country. But by the early 2000s, Christian private schools in particular had become a new destination in the quest for ‘good education’ and a means to the good life, for both individuals and the collective.

Tanzanian families’ quest for a good life through faith-oriented education coincided with the emergence of a new market for Christian and Muslim<sup>2</sup> schools in the country’s urban centres from the mid-1990s onwards. Thus, as in other parts of Africa, the number of often very expensive private (especially Christian) schools grew quickly, and these schools became increasingly opposed to the even larger number of ‘poor-quality free schools’ (Hunter 2019: 199) provided by the state.

In Tanzania, the newly established Christian schools became especially attractive for the growing urban middle classes from both Christian and Muslim backgrounds, as these groups increasingly turned their backs on government schooling in times of mass education and due to the widely perceived ‘failure’ of public schools. The Muslim schools, in contrast, most of which were weaker performing, catered to families from mainly poorer socio-economic – and exclusively Muslim – backgrounds. For these people, Muslim schools were often the only chance

<sup>1</sup> Tanzania’s socialist Ujamaa period lasted from the late 1960s to the mid-1980s and included the nationalisation of all private and faith-oriented schools in 1969.

<sup>2</sup> I use the term ‘Muslim schools’ due to my analytical focus on students’ and teachers’ lived experiences and practices of their faith in educational settings. The terms ‘Islamic schools’ and ‘Islamic seminaries’ are used when I focus on the theological-normative frameworks of these schools. The Muslim schools of my study have a Sunni orientation and are different from the Shi’a- or Gülen-oriented schools in Dar es Salaam (see Dohrn 2014; 2017).

for their children to get a higher education. *All* these groups sought a moral and ethical orientation for their children in the changing urban economy, which they perceived as ambiguous and risky. Many families also invested significant amounts of money to secure a good life for their children through the best possible education (Phillips and Stambach 2008: 157ff.; for South Africa, see Hunter 2019: 13).

How have these transformations in Tanzania's educational sector, and in students' and teachers' quests for a good life, affected their school and professional trajectories? *Learning Morality, Inequalities, and Faith* sheds light on how 'new'<sup>3</sup> Christian and Muslim schools – established in the wake of privatisation – are sought by families and students due to their promise to combine high-quality education with the moral (self-) formation of young people. It also shows that the deregulation of Tanzania's educational sector in the early 1990s and the impact of transnational reform programmes addressing access to primary and secondary education since the early 2000s led to a realignment of faith-oriented schooling,<sup>4</sup> the embodiment of values, and social stratification in the neoliberal market economy. While these processes extend far beyond Tanzania's urban centres, cities such as Dar es Salaam have become a stage for a particular kind of 'assemblage' (cf. Ong and Collier 2004) in which postcolonial articulations of faith, class formation, the market, transnational educational policies, changing urban infrastructure, bodies, moralities, and subjectivities are being configured and reconfigured in relation to each other in unprecedented ways.

Dar es Salaam is a particularly compelling place for exploring all these dynamics. After the partial privatisation of the education sector in 1995, a wide range of Christian and Muslim actors became reinvolved in education in the city, and their schools reflect Dar es Salaam's enormous religious diversity and its multiple entanglements with historical and global processes. These schools include newly established educational

<sup>3</sup> In Tanzania, and in other parts of Africa, religious organisations have a long history of providing social services (Quarles van Ufford and Schoffeleers 1988; Comaroff and Comaroff 1991; 1997; Kaiser 1996; Hunt 1999), often in close collaboration with colonial governments (on the field of schooling, see Leurs et al. 2011: 14; Dilger 2013a: 460). Thus, the more recent engagements of Christian and Muslim actors with education have to be understood against the background of these historical precursors (see Chapter 2).

<sup>4</sup> I use the term 'faith-oriented' in order to emphasise the fact that the schools in my study often have only an implicit grounding in religious and/or denominational values and practices. Furthermore, the designation sets these schools apart from the field of 'faith-based development', to which most of them are only loosely linked beyond wider processes of urbanisation, privatisation, and class formation. At the same time, 'faith' is a distinguishing feature of these schools and plays an important role in the learning and teaching of values in their students' and teachers' everyday lives.



institutions of the former Catholic and Protestant mission churches, as well as former mission schools that were returned to the churches by the government in the wake of privatisation. They also comprise the educational projects of mosques and individuals from revivalist and/or trans-nationally promoted strands of Sunni Islam, whose position has been affected in the wake of 9/11 and the terrorist attacks in Tanzania and Kenya in 1998 (Dilger 2013a; 2017), and recently by the shifting power relations in Turkey (Dohrn 2014; 2017). Finally, some schools were established by individuals from the Evangelical spectrum, partly with connections to North America and Europe (see Stambach 2010a); these are often run like businesses, without an immediately recognisable denominational orientation. However, while some of these individually owned Christian schools were open to students from all religious backgrounds, their symbolism was often related to the neo-Pentecostal spectrum. One of the schools where I conducted research was run by a well-known Pentecostal leader and offered little religious content in its teaching. At the same time, the school used the pastor's religious title in its advertising and its slogan was widely recognised as a Pentecostal message of delivery and hope: *Acha kuteseka, K. High School ni jibu lako* (Stop suffering, K. High School is your answer). In an increasingly competitive urban educational landscape of public and private institutions, how faith-oriented schools categorised themselves was a matter of strategic self-positioning to attract new clients.

My analysis of students' and teachers' quests for a good life in this diverse landscape of Christian and Muslim schools in Dar es Salaam is shaped by three interrelated arguments. First, quests for a good life in faith-oriented schools include the search for 'moral meanings' (Fischer 2014: 5) with regard to strong academic performance and material success, but also as they relate to all other aspects of life involving questions 'about value, worth, virtue, what is good or bad, right or wrong' (Fischer 2014: 4–5). These 'ordinary ethics' (Lambek 2010) are made 'explicit' (Bochow et al. 2017: 451) in the formal value frameworks of Christian and Muslim schools and position such schools in relation to each other – but also in relation to government schools – in Tanzania's educational market. These values also become embodied – and modified or challenged – in the everyday interactions (Mattingly 2013) between and among students and teachers, who often perceive themselves as studying and working in 'morally superior' schools.

Second, notions of and aspirations for a good life in Tanzania's faith-oriented schools are 'imagined' (Weiss 2004) and embodied by students and teachers in relation to large-scale historical and political-economic forces. These forces include colonial and postcolonial histories of

education and Christian–Muslim relations, alongside more recent histories of privatisation and faith-based development (Stambach 2010a), all of which have shaped the structural positions of Tanzania’s Christian and Muslim schools in highly specific ways (Dilger 2013a). These various dynamics highlight the fact that faith-oriented schools – which are embedded in state-structured systems of education and learning, and are thus both state projects and religious projects in the context of transnational governance – mould everyday practices of moral becoming among Tanzania’s young citizens in relation to religious belonging and marginalisation (see Loimeier 2007), social stratification, and larger urban and global transformations (Dilger 2017).

Third, this book provides a unique perspective on how the politics of Christian–Muslim difference and the formation of socio-economic inequalities in contemporary Tanzania have become deeply entrenched in students’ and teachers’ quests for a good life in faith-oriented schools. In particular, the book provides an understanding of the ‘common’ (Larkin and Meyer 2006: 286) – and simultaneously highly unequal – grounds on which the individual and collective quests for a good life in the country’s Christian and Muslim schools are based. It demonstrates that ‘faith’, ‘religion’, and ‘values’, while being central to moral becoming in these schools, acquire their place in specific educational settings and individual lives only in their entwining with larger colonial and postcolonial histories of religious difference and education. The comparative angle shows that the articulation and rearticulation of moral and religious belonging in Christian and Muslim schools always ‘involve broader interactional and institutional configurations of social power’ (Altglas and Wood 2018: 3) and thus have implications for the study of religiously diverse settings more widely (Soares 2016: 679).

Let me introduce these various aspects through the vignette of Teresa King,<sup>5</sup> who visited different Christian seminaries during her education. While Teresa’s schools were all located outside Dar es Salaam, her story is emblematic of the experiences of many other young people attending faith-oriented schools in the city.

### **Zooming in: Young People’s Moral Agency and Striving**

When I asked Teresa King for an interview about her schooling experiences, she had just enrolled in a Lutheran seminary in Moshi that

<sup>5</sup> In this book, all names of students, teachers, and school administrative staff are pseudonyms, except in those cases when they held a particularly prominent position or office and can therefore be understood as public figures.

typically admitted only pupils from the Lutheran church<sup>6</sup> and that charged comparatively high school fees. In 2010, Teresa's parents – who came from a relatively modest rural background – paid around 1.25 million Tanzanian shillings (TZH; about €600 at the time) in order to keep their daughter in school; this added significantly to their annual expenses, which also included the education fees for their other three children and some of their relatives' offspring.<sup>7</sup>

Teresa explained that the Lutheran seminary for girls had been the right choice for her. She was particularly positive about the 'systematic' approach that the school used in its teaching and management, as well as the way in which 'good morals' (*maadili mazuri*) were inculcated in the minds and bodies of both pupils and teachers. She also enjoyed the daily church attendance that had become an integral part of her rigid schedule, which started with the student-led morning prayers at 7 a.m. and ended with the (equally student-led) night prayers at 9.30 p.m. When I asked Teresa what she perceived to be the main difference between a government school and her Lutheran school, she claimed that her seminary's Christian framework ensured that its graduates would not go on to become involved in 'corrupt practices'. She also emphasised that the boarding school had a strong impact on her own life, which she described as having been lifted beyond the state of 'pure existence' (*kukaa tu*):

I can say that the church school has helped me a lot in my faith. Every day you are told that you are not supposed to commit sin; you are given examples [of] how people get healed, those who were [mute] begin to speak, [and] this is how you know that God exists. [In a government school] I would be very different. I would go to school and when I return home I would attend the church service just like everyone else. But in [my] school there are young people like me; we organise meetings around issues of the church. These meetings build [you] [*zinakujenga*] – different from the government schools where I would just sit.

The language that Teresa employed reflects how other pupils in my study compared the education in a government school with that of a faith-oriented school. Thus, the verb '*kukaa*' means sitting, living, or dwelling in English and is reduced to the meaning of 'existence' by adding the adverb '*tu*' (just, only). The use of the verb '*kujenga*', in turn, emphasises the widely described capacity of faith-oriented schools to

<sup>6</sup> Teresa was an exception in this regard as she had been baptised in a Mennonite church.

<sup>7</sup> In 2009, the state limited tuition fees for government boarding schools to 70,000 TZH per year but allowed private schools to charge boarders up to TZH 700,000 per year. This amount could be increased even further for extra services such as special food or transportation. In 2014, the tuition fees for state-run secondary schools were abolished. However, parents have to 'purchase uniforms for school and sports activities, exercise books and pens and pay for the medical expenses of their children' (Godda 2018: 3).

‘build’ or ‘make grow’ (although it is usually left open what exactly is built in a particular context – for example, a person’s individual faith, a community of people, or a sense of belonging).

In Teresa’s case, her reference to her school’s capacity to ‘build’ was related to her strong desire to find meaning in life, something that she had experienced since childhood. Her father especially was not interested in faith-oriented activities or church attendance of any sort. He particularly disliked those churches that, Teresa reported, employed ‘*kelele*’ (yelling) or divisive speech in their services (for instance, the neo-Pentecostal churches). However, although Teresa’s father tried to regulate his family’s church attendance, his wife and his daughter were persistent in finding their own position within the denominational spectrum that was available to them in their rural area, and Teresa was baptised in the local Mennonite church in 2005.

At the time of our conversation in 2010, she was still happy to belong to the Mennonite church, stating that it had prepared her to pray in other Protestant churches. In fact, during our conversation, she told me that she had been ‘saved’ in the previous year, a sign of the ongoing Charismatic renewal of the former mission churches in the country (Smith McKinnon 2017: 94ff.). She ascribed this change not least to the influence of her school, although she simultaneously emphasised that her state of salvation was ‘still weak’ when compared with some of her fellow students. When I asked her what she meant by being ‘saved’ (*kuokoka*), she replied:

TK I love Jesus [*nampenda Yesu*]. If you want to be saved, you pray the prayer of confession [*sala ya toba*]; then you do the things God likes. I have been saved, but I do not pray for other people [when they are possessed]. I have been saved with my own self [*binafsi yangu*]. Those who pray for other people have *extraordinary power*, they can *drive [the] devil away*.

HD<sup>8</sup> How did you become saved?

TK Almost everybody at my school is saved, but to varying degrees. There are those who were born with God, they are *so close*, everything they say is God. *I am close to him*, but others [are closer]. This means that at school everybody is saved, everybody is a *good Christian* but to a differing *degree*. There are those with *extraordinary power*.

Teresa King’s story shows how the religious context of her seminary shaped her stance towards faith and religion – and her understanding of ‘good morals’ – in particular ways. Like the students of Simpson’s research in a Catholic boarding school in Zambia, whose quest for upward social mobility became connected to their conversion to fundamentalist Christianity (Simpson 1998), she became ‘saved’ upon entering her

<sup>8</sup> In all dialogue, ‘HD’ is the author, Hansjörg Dilger.

Lutheran seminary. At the same time, her narrative highlights that there is no *automatic* relationship between attending a faith-oriented school and the deepening of a person's existing faith or their conversion to another. The reorientation of Teresa's faith depended as much on the communicative 'co-presence' (Pels 2013 [1999]: 25ff.) of students and teachers in her Lutheran school as on her personal and family background and her continued commitment to the Mennonite faith.

Furthermore, Teresa King's story reflects the interrelatedness of moral becoming with the political-economic dimensions of faith-oriented schooling in Tanzania. Like many other families in the country since the mid- to late 1990s, her family has expended great effort to gather together the always rising school fees necessary to attend well-performing private (often Christian) schools. In a context where the constantly increasing expectations of the labour market have changed the value of educational degrees all over East Africa (Brown and Prince 2015: 31), students and their families struggle hard to find the best possible education. In Tanzania, while a diploma from one of the better-ranked secondary government schools (ordinary level or Form IV) was assumed to be sufficient for securing a job in the late 1990s, that qualification was perceived to be insufficient for finding employment, not to mention a 'good' job, in the 2010s. That the search for the best educational opportunities was often closely connected to the perceived moral framework of a school was emphasised by Teresa, who compared the academic success of church and government schools:

These days, even government boarding schools allow their students to pray. But the church schools promote morals more strongly. If you look at the *performance* of all schools in Tanzania – the *top one hundred* are church schools, the next one hundred are government schools. This is why church schools teach morals [*maadili*] better than non-church schools [*shule ambazo sio za kanisa*].

### **Navigating the Educational Market: School Rankings and Socio-Religious Inequalities**

The attraction of a specific school in Tanzania's educational market was reflected in, and at the same time produced by, the annual rankings published by the government, based on schools' performance in the national exams. As Teresa King's concluding statement made clear, these rankings were particularly important for the way in which people positioned 'government' (*serikali*) and 'church' (*kanisa*) schools in relation to each other. Even though these categories – or that of 'Islamic' (*kiislamu*) schools – are not officially used by the government in the

statistical classification of schools (see Chapter 2), they shape public discourse on the educational landscape, and individual quests for a good school, to a significant extent. These rankings have therefore become a significant part of Tanzania's governance – and people's navigation – of the education sector, which is guided by the goals of efficiency, quality, and transparency and shapes both institutional practices and individual subjectivities and desires in comprehensive ways (see Shore and Wright 2015: 22).<sup>9</sup>

The 'life-orienting' capacities of these rankings in relation to the attractiveness of different types of schools became especially apparent in my conversation with Ms Martin, one of the officials of the Christian Social Services Commission of Tanzania (CSSC) in 2008.<sup>10</sup> The official provided me with the 2004–5 list of the country's 200 best-performing secondary schools, which contained only the name of the school and its rank. I asked her to identify, on the basis of the name of the school, to which category (government, church, or Islamic) each of them belonged.<sup>11</sup> The CSSC official's categorisation confirmed what has been claimed by the media and the public for several years: 'church' schools figured disproportionately highly in the rankings, with 41.5 per cent of the 200 top-performing secondary schools (a total of 83 schools). They were followed by 'government' schools, which comprised 20 per cent,

<sup>9</sup> What struck me during my study was that even very young children followed the national school rankings that were published annually by the National Examination Council of Tanzania (NECTA); they were also highly aware of the shifting positions of individual schools in the list of top-performing schools in the country. How quickly a school's position could change was illustrated by the St Joseph's Millennium Secondary School (Chapter 6), which was ranked number 3 and number 14 in 2011 and 2012, respectively, but fell to number 34 in 2013 (NECTA 2012; 2013). The Feza Boys' Secondary School, which was renowned among both Muslim and Christian students and teachers I encountered as one of the 'top schools' in Tanzania, fell from number 3 in 2012 to number 28 in 2013 (NECTA 2012; 2013). All these ups and downs affected the reputations of the schools and were carefully noted by my interlocutors and affected their educational choices.

<sup>10</sup> Interview with Anastasia Martin, Dar es Salaam, 10 August 2008. On the CSSC, see Chapter 2.

<sup>11</sup> My request was motivated by the fact that it is difficult to state exactly the number of faith-oriented schools in Tanzania as statistics do not count them separately (except for denominational schools that are categorised as 'seminaries'). In 2001, Lassibille and Tan (2001: 148) claimed that 'Christian schools run by the Catholic Church and the Evangelical [probably Evangelical-Lutheran] Church of Tanzania ... make up about 16% of the country's secondary schools'. In contrast, Leurs et al. (2011: 3) refer to Tanzanian government figures that 'show that in 2003, of the 42 per cent of secondary schools that were privately run, 45 per cent were run by Christian and 12 per cent by Muslim organizations'. My own study found that, depending on the mode of counting, Tanzania's faith-oriented schools comprise 9–20 per cent of all secondary schools, with significantly fewer Muslim than Christian schools. See Chapter 3 for the challenges of grasping the classificatory and statistical aspects of faith-oriented schooling in Tanzania.



and other ‘private for profit’ schools (a category that may also include schools with religious orientation) at 13.5 per cent. ‘Islamic’ or ‘Muslim’ schools comprised only 3.5 per cent, while the remaining 21.5 per cent could not be placed in any of these categories by the CSSC official.

Reading this ranking against the three types of schools made salient a set of claims with which I had confronted the CSSC official and that I had heard voiced by various Christian actors – and by students such as Teresa King – in conversations about the quality of the *shule za kanisa* (also labelled *shule za dini*, or ‘religious schools’). These included assertions of the alleged moral superiority and strong performance of Christian schools, the importance of good management and leadership for educating the future leaders of Tanzania (as allegedly practised in Christian schools), and the overall significance of Christian schools for a successful education sector. These assertions were coupled with statements about the alleged weakness and ‘decline’ of government schools, and Christian (and generally private) schools’ struggles to attract more affluent students in order to sustain themselves through the payment of school fees. Most notably, there was a striking silence about ‘Islamic’ or ‘Muslim’ schools in all these comparative statements.

However, among revivalist Muslims, claims about the superiority of Christian education – which were widely shared by the mainstream media – were countered by a discourse that pointed to Muslims’ historical marginalisation. According to scholars such as Said (nd[a]; nd[b]), both the poor performance of Muslim schools and the underrepresentation of Muslims in higher education and public employment in Tanzania (Ishumi 2006; Musoke 2006) are tied to: the historical marginalisation of Muslims and their education institutions in colonial Tanganyika, the politics of excluding Muslims in Tanzania’s post-independence governments, an alleged conspiracy within government circles and ministries to bar Muslims from entering higher education or leading positions in the public sector, and an overarching alliance between the government and the (international) Christian churches that has allegedly ensured the dominance of Christians in all central areas of politics and society for more than a century. According to this discourse (see Chapters 2 and 3), the specific moral positions of students and teachers in faith-oriented schools – and their quests for a good life in the hierarchical educational system – are tied up with long-standing processes of social and economic (re)production that have perpetuated religious inequalities from colonial times.

In this book, I argue that the specifics of moral becoming in Dar es Salaam’s faith-oriented schools gain meaning only when they consider how historical and political forces – and their continued interweaving

with socio-religious and educational inequalities – are experienced and interpreted by students and teachers ‘as complex multiscale place-making projects’ (Gille and Ó Riain 2002: 279) in specific schools. I also aim to explore how ‘the negotiation of interconnected social actors across multiple scales’ shapes moral becoming in both foreseeable and unexpected ways (ibid.: 279). In particular, during my research I was often struck by the way in which the relationship between processes of power and individual trajectories in the quest for a good life was not necessarily one-sided – and by the fact that many families sought every possible means to overcome structural hurdles in their quest for education. This also applied to Muslim families’ struggles to improve their position in the educational market by scraping together school fees, often beyond their means, with the support of relatives, friends, or organisations within their reach.<sup>12</sup>

Ramadan Hamid provided one example of how even socio-economically deprived Muslim students actively navigate the educational market in their quest for a good life. Ramadan was 22 years old when I met him at an Islamic secondary school in Dar es Salaam in 2009. He was born on Mafia, an island south of Dar es Salaam; despite the fact that it has become a popular location for upmarket scuba-diving tourism, the island remains one of Tanzania’s poorest districts. Due to the poor state of Mafia’s educational system in the 1990s, when Ramadan was five years old his father, an employee at the national power company TANESCO, sent him to Zanzibar. There, Ramadan lived with his maternal aunt and completed public primary school and the first two levels of a government secondary school. In 2006, Ramadan’s father moved him to Dar es Salaam. As Ramadan recalls, his chances of completing higher education in Zanzibar were slim and the academic achievements of the other children living with his aunt were comparatively poor. In Dar es Salaam, Ramadan was sent to the secondary school of the Africa Muslims Agency (see Chapter 5), and in 2009 he was about to complete Form III. Ramadan saw clear advantages in attending ‘a private Islamic school’, as he termed it. Along with the alleged better quality of private Islamic schools compared with public secondary schools, he referred to the teaching of moral religious values:

As Muslims we have to know the values and proper conduct of Islam [*maadili ya waislamu*]. Even if we learn secular things [*mambo ya secular*] in this school too, we must also receive guidance [*uongozi*] [for our lives]. Our friends, the Christians, are taught by other Christians too.

<sup>12</sup> However, the dynamics of upward social mobility in faith-oriented schools were certainly limited (see Chapters 4–6).

Overall, however, children and young people from the Christian field in particular were often able to adopt a proactive role in the educational market; this highlighted these pupils' often more privileged position in their quest for a good life as they navigated educational hierarchies. Tellingly, the CSSC official whom I have quoted above emphasised not only the choice available to middle- and upper-class parents and families in opting for a certain school – which in turn shaped the mindset of teachers and employees whose jobs and existence depended on these choices – but also the active role of young children in moulding their parents' and families' decisions, often to the benefit of the top-performing 'church' schools. Ms Martin said:

In church schools, teachers are responsible for their work. If you don't perform well, no parent will take their children to this school. It is like a business for attracting students so that your school can work. Government schools have a fixed budget and don't have to worry about the money. Even my own children have the vision of going to a church school because they will score a high division there.

### **Learning Values: An Embodied, Fluid, and Affective Process**

How, then, are moral becoming and the embodiment of values defined in the context of faith-oriented schooling? Mattingly argues that the anthropology of moral self-formation has been defined by two different approaches. On the one hand, 'first-person' accounts of moral becoming foreground 'humans as "self-interpreting" moral beings whose perceptions, interpretations and actions help shape moral subjectivities in the singular as well as the collective' (Mattingly 2012: 171). On the other hand, 'post-structural' accounts of moral self-formation assume that the telos of ethical striving is predefined by 'powerful pre-existing moral codes and practices' (ibid.: 175) that become part of people's everyday lives through processes of institutional governance. While post-structural – and especially Foucauldian – approaches have the ability to analytically dissect institutional moral frameworks and the way in which people embody them through technologies of the self, the focus on the 'moral ordinary' highlights how individual subjects become capable of 'acting upon' these frameworks and inducing social change (ibid.: 179, 177; see also Mattingly 2014: 27).

With regard to the moral becoming of students and teachers in Dar es Salaam's faith-oriented schools, the focus on the 'moral ordinary' helps us understand how institutional value frameworks translate into the everyday experiences, reflections, and practices of students and teachers.

It also explains how students' and teachers' quests for a good life are located 'in the conjunction or movement between explicit local pronouncements and implicit local practices and circumstances' (Lambek 2010: 7). Thus, similar to a wide range of institutions in other African countries, Christian and Muslim schools in the city have become engaged in 'propagating ideas on how people should achieve or lead a good, prosperous, healthy and just life' (Bochow et al. 2017: 451). They aim at the explicit formulation of the ethical values they promote, which thus 'become "extraordinary" in their potential and significance' (Bochow et al. 2017: 451). They also engage in practices of teaching morals in order to instil their locally, nationally, and transnationally embedded value frameworks in the lives of both students and staff (Stambach 2010a; Dilger 2013a; 2017; Dohrn 2014; 2017).

In Dar es Salaam's faith-oriented schools, the explicitness of moral (self-) formation was most visible in the ways in which they positioned themselves – towards the wider public as well as the families and students they (intend to) serve – as unique providers of both secular and moral-ethical training. All of the schools in my research claimed to provide avenues for the cultivation of values among children and youths, and that, as a consequence, they were different from Tanzania's government schools, which – according to them – focused primarily on the teaching of secular subjects.<sup>13</sup> Furthermore, these schools formulated – and actively established – specific value frameworks for their students and staff that distinguished them from other faith-oriented educational institutions. For instance, Christian and Muslim schools made their ethical orientations explicit in mission statements, in public advertisements, in lessons on religion and/or morality, and in morning assemblies or in church or mosque services attached to the schools. In so doing, they positioned themselves as distinct moral and ethical spaces and as sites for instilling 'order and discipline' among young people (Simpson 2003: 37) within the wider cityscape of Dar es Salaam (Dilger 2013a; 2017; Dohrn 2014; 2017).

However, the dynamics of moral becoming in Dar es Salaam's faith-oriented schools involved 'ordinarisation', too: that is, the process of making 'ethical commitments' habitual 'in people's everyday lives' (Bochow et al. 2017: 451). Thus, the teaching and appropriation of values also happened implicitly at the schools I studied, for instance in

<sup>13</sup> These self-representations of Christian and Muslim schools do not imply that moral values are *not* taught in Tanzania's government schools. However, this aspect is not highlighted in public educational discourse, which associates faith-oriented schools with the teaching of 'good morals'. In contrast, government schools often have the reputation of teaching 'bad morals' to their students.

the more informal interactions between and among teachers and students during class breaks, in the schools' boarding sections, and during leisure time. Furthermore, children and young people enacted – and sometimes engaged with – multiple value frameworks to which they were exposed in their lives: of their school, the nation, the family, the urban environment, their peers at school, their friends at home, and so on. Thus, this book aims to uncover the various ways in which 'children actually behave in moral situations' (Woods 2013: 9) and how they were actively involved in making values ordinary through a wide range of verbal and non-verbal practices (see Rydstrom 2001; 2003). It explores the agency of children and young people in the formation of their own local moral worlds (Hirschfeld 2002) and their active involvement in 'trying to live a life that one deems worthy, becoming the sort of person that one desires' (Fischer 2014: 2).

While both explicit (mostly discursive)<sup>14</sup> and implicit (embodied) aspects are seminal for understanding students' and teachers' moral becoming in Dar es Salaam's faith-oriented schools, the boundaries between these domains were porous and often dissolved altogether in the lifeworlds of students and teachers. Moreover, the pupils and staff of faith-oriented schools themselves rarely made an analytical or terminological distinction between explicit (or objectified) ethical frameworks and implicit (or embodied) moral practices. They referred instead to 'morality' or 'morals' (and often also to Kiswahili equivalents such as '*maadili*') as a marketing feature that distinguished their educational setting and the way of life actually practised by its staff and students. Similarly, the 'good life' (*maisha mazuri*) denoted a moral and affective orientation in their quest for a better future as well as the social reality in which they were already living. In this book, I therefore differentiate heuristically between the explicit (largely discursive) ethical frameworks of religiously oriented schools, on the one hand, and the way in which they become embodied in the implicit moral practices of students and teachers, on the other. At the same time, however, if not indicated otherwise, and in line with my interlocutors' own preferences, the terms 'morality' and 'moral values' refer both to institutional discourses on

<sup>14</sup> The explicitness and implicitness of moral becoming in faith-oriented schools correspond with Bourdieu's theory of cultural capital formation in institutional settings. According to Bourdieu (1986), cultural capital exists in the embodied state, in the objectified state, and in the institutionalised state. While I use the categories 'explicit/objectified' and 'implicit/embodied' interchangeably in this book, I am most interested in the way in which the boundaries between these categories become dissolved in students' and teachers' everyday quests for a good life and their embeddedness in larger historical contexts (see the following section).

ethical and moral values – and their manifestations in educational materials and didactic practices – and to their embodiment in the everyday practices and interactions at particular schools.

In particular, I argue that the everyday quests for a good life in Dar es Salaam's Christian and Muslim schools are shaped by three dimensions. First, the learning – and teaching – of values is an embodied process (Rydström 2003; Swain 2003) that (re)orients students and teachers in relation to their schools and the wider world they inhabit. These values concern: consciousness of the self and others; body and dress; social status and difference; the presence of, and ways of engaging with, religious difference; notions of doing good and bad; the goals of learning and work; and relationships of affect and belonging. By reflecting on and embodying these values, students and teachers negotiate their moral becoming as the result of an intersubjective process that connects and cuts across the bodies and minds of the actors involved (Csordas 2008: 119). Furthermore, the process of learning values (re)orients students and teachers in specific ways to their socio-religious and socio-economic environments (a particular school, a certain discourse on the religious and moral self, a group or class of people, including their families, or the Tanzanian history and nation at large). At the same time, their embodiment of values contributes to the active building of socio-moral environments that are both locally 'emplaced' (Faubion 2011: 144) and simultaneously interwoven with national and transnational development, urban stratification, and class formation (cf. Fitzgerald 2017: 230–1; see also the following section).

Second, the embodiment of 'moral selfhood' (Winchester 2008: 1756) in Christian and Muslim schools is a situated process that includes both the non-conscious performance and the intentional – often pragmatic – enactment of values in everyday encounters. It is also a highly fluid process, one that is often fragmented and partly conflicted. In all these regards, the embodiment of values in faith-oriented schools is 'discontinuous' and 'partial', because moral and ethical commitments can shift over time (Lambek 2015: 309) and/or are performed for specific purposes. As Turner (2015: 59) argues, embodiment can refer to both a 'transitory, temporary, and partial experience' and 'a psychophysical transformation that generates a level of cognitive understanding and bodily knowing derived from intense experience that constitutes embodied knowledge'. The learning and embodiment of values in the schools of my study are therefore to be understood as practices that are characterised by ethical convictions, aspirations, and certainties as much as by 'contradictions, juxtapositions and impossible equations' (Schielke 2009: 178). Furthermore, moral becoming in religious settings can entail



the ethical desire to establish ‘continuity’ in one’s life (Mahmood 2001: 212) as well as the ‘preparedness to reflect on the ambiguity of selfhood’ (Janson 2015: 38).

Finally, I show how the learning and embodiment of values in Christian and Muslim schools involve an affective orientation that guides and shapes the intensity of students’ and teachers’ moral ways of being in the world. Throop (2012) explains that ‘moral sentiments’ refers to how people embody certain affective sensibilities and values in relation to their wider social and political environments. In contrast to short-term emotional sensations – which are felt in relation to specific situations in a person’s life – moral sentiments can be conceived as ‘affective dispositions’ that ‘refer to an individual’s conscious anticipation of an event and justify the appearance of a corresponding response’ (Reihling 2013: 31). Furthermore, such affective dynamics not only are relevant in the immediate context of the schools but also involve ‘highly diversified forms of sensation, which point to the dissolution and opening of human experience ... into its surrounding (urban) forms’ (Dilger et al. 2020: 14). In the context of the schools of my study, it is important to highlight that moral sentiments have an ambiguous dimension: they not only cultivate attitudes and practices towards a ‘good life’ (cf. Robbins 2013), but also include instances of resentment – sensations of anger and frustration, for example – that may become central to students’ and teachers’ perceptions of situations of injustice and injury (Fassin 2013). This becomes relevant, for instance, in the context of some of the Islamic seminaries, where grievances about socio-religious inequalities in Tanzania – and their entwinement with the history of the colonial and postcolonial states – are particularly relevant (see Chapter 5).

### **Politics, History, and Inequalities: Moral Becoming in the Educational Market**

While the moral becoming of individual actors always takes place in specific socio-historical and institutional settings (Mattingly 2012: 164), research on ‘ordinary ethics’ – or the ‘moral ordinary’ – says surprisingly little on how everyday moral experiences and practices are interlinked with larger processes of power and inequality. In his call on anthropologists to do more research on people’s everyday struggles ‘to do what they consider right or good’, Lambek criticises the fact that the discipline has largely overlooked ‘all this in favor of analyses that emphasize structure, power, and interest’ (Lambek 2010: 1). Similarly, Mattingly argues that ‘explanatory frameworks that emphasize the social and structural’ have ‘insufficient conceptual resources to reveal how

individuals struggle to judge how to realize “best goods” in the singular circumstances that ordinary life presents them with’ (Mattingly 2012: 179). According to this line of reasoning, power is reduced largely to a Foucauldian perspective on ‘oppressive social structures’ and the disciplining – and life-shaping – capacities of *institutional* forces (ibid.: 175, emphasis added).

In *Learning, Inequalities, and Faith*, I aim to show how students’ and teachers’ quests for a good life in Dar es Salaam’s faith-oriented schools are both individual and political affairs. As Didier Fassin has argued, morality and ethics ‘are often intimately linked with economic and political dimensions’, while ‘[t]he ethical grounds on which agents justify their conduct are influenced by the moral climate of the time’ (Fassin 2015: 2, 21). Consequently, anthropological investigations need to explore how specific ethical and moral issues have become ‘at stake’ under particular social and historical circumstances and how ‘the boundaries between these two forms of life, ordinary and public, tend to be empirically blurred’ (ibid.: 3). It is only in this way that anthropologists will be able to grasp how large-scale historical forces intersect in the bodies and moral becoming of individual actors in the specific places of their research.

In the faith-oriented schools of my study, students’ and teachers’ quests for a good life were inseparably entwined with the urban, national, and transnational settings in which the country’s educational market has flourished since the mid-1990s. These political-economic contexts define these schools’ structural and curricular frameworks, for instance through the implementation of global and national policies and reform agendas; they also implicate the schools in nation building (Coe 2005; Fumanti 2006; Phillips 2011), the governance and politics of religious diversity and difference, and the production and reproduction of the socio-political and socio-moral order at large (for example, through processes of urbanisation and class formation; see Lentz 2015). Furthermore, the mere existence of these faith-oriented schools – and their position in Tanzania’s educational market today – is deeply entrenched in wider reconfigurations of the relationships between state, society, and the neoliberal economy in African countries over the last decades (Comaroff and Comaroff 2000; Mbembe 2001; Ferguson 2006). The (partial) withdrawal of postcolonial African states from the provision of social services to their citizens has triggered the entrance of a wide range of non-governmental – both secular and religious – actors into the field of education, all of which play a role in moulding children into ‘good moral citizens’.

In order to understand how all these large-scale dynamics shape the quests for a good life in faith-oriented schools, it is important to turn to

the anthropology of education and the study of religion and development in (and beyond) African settings. Since the early 2000s, anthropologists have adopted an increasingly experience- and practice-centred perspective, one that focuses on individual actors' voices and actions within the context of schooling and power (Bettie 2003).<sup>15</sup> In particular, they have explored the multiple ways in which power relations are implemented and enacted in specific schools on both the micro- and the macro-level (Collins 2009: 43) and increasingly also in transnational and global settings (Stambach 2014; Stambach and Ngwane 2011; Fichtner 2012). They have also analysed how the formation and reproduction of gender, class, and race identities in educational settings are connected to large-scale socio-economic transformations and inequalities (Stambach 2000; Hunter 2019). Furthermore, schools have been examined as sites of disciplinary power where dense webs of surveillance and counter-surveillance are established, and where norms and values that are central for the functioning of the surrounding society are inscribed in the bodies of pupils and teachers (Baumann 2004: 2; Chicharro-Saito 2008; Blum 2011: 132).

While the anthropology of schooling has flourished as a field in Africanist anthropology, fewer studies have focused on subject formation or the dynamics of moral becoming in faith-oriented schools,<sup>16</sup> although there is a growing number of ethnographies of Christian and Muslim education and learning in African settings. Many of these more recent studies draw attention to the divergent ambitions, strategies, and resources mobilised by individual religious schools and actors in implementing – as well as challenging, modifying, or subverting – official educational policies with regard to the standards and meanings of 'good' education and learning in a particular political context (Strayer 1973: 329–30). They also emphasise the need to analyse the generation

<sup>15</sup> These works differed from anthropological and sociological research on schooling during the 1960s and 1970s, which pursued a predominantly Marxist approach and established connections among political economy, class-based inequalities, and the articulation of cultural consciousness in schools. According to these studies, different forms of cultural, economic, and social capital reinforce differences in the socio-cultural order that are 'reflected in the conduct and organization of classrooms and curricula and assigned a causal role in perpetuating linguistic, cultural, and economic inequalities' (Willis 1977; Collins 2009: 34).

<sup>16</sup> According to Stambach (2006), anthropologists of schooling have subscribed largely to a secularisation paradigm that assumes education is governed by predominantly secular states. Within this framework, religion has been analysed, if not as a private affair, then as a challenge to state-led projects of subject formation through the provision of public education. This paradigm, and the public/private, religious/secular dichotomies that it presumes (Casanova 1992), may have prevented scholars from studying the relationship between religion and education systematically.

and transmission of religiously inflected knowledge and practice in faith-oriented educational settings as being closely intertwined with transnational religious networks of knowledge production, as well as with the political-economic agendas and bureaucratic processes of colonial and postcolonial states (Brenner 2001; Loimeier 2009). Finally, they shed light on these schools' cultural projects of 'civilization' and 'modernity' (Simpson 1998; 2003), 'enlightenment' and 'reform' (cf. Masquelier 1999: 235ff.), and the ways in which these projects have been embodied in many parts of Africa from the late nineteenth century to the present day.<sup>17</sup>

In this book, I argue that students' and teachers' moral becoming in faith-oriented schools in Dar es Salaam is closely intertwined with the specific religious and ideological – local and transnational – networks of individual schools that, to a large extent, shape their ethical frameworks and approaches to learning and teaching values (Stambach 2010a; Dohrn 2014; Dilger and Janson forthcoming 2022). Furthermore, their quests for a good life have been shaped by the partial withdrawal of the government from the provision of educational services; this has coincided with a new political role for and visibility of religious organisations in facilitating access to mass education among the country's citizens. The former mission churches in particular have thereby assumed a seat at the high table of public policy (Stambach 2006: 4), and they use educational projects as a means to intervene in the global apparatus of development and to lobby for the implementation of 'faith-friendly' policies and educational initiatives (ibid.: 3). And although the Muslim organisations that I discuss in this book operate on a significantly lower scale than their Christian counterparts – and struggle with a lack of resources as well as adversarial political forces in establishing their educational projects – revivalist Islamic actors approach education as a means for socio-political interventions too, and for launching heated moral debates about the marginal status of Muslims in Tanzanian society (Loimeier 2007: 139, 147; Dilger 2013a: 462ff.; Becker 2015: 118). These large-scale contexts and debates had a significant impact on the social and moral status of the schools of my study and became deeply engrained in their students' and teachers' quests for a good life and in the embodiment of their institutions' ethical frameworks.

<sup>17</sup> In particular, work on Qur'anic schools in West Africa has shown how religious knowledge becomes embodied in the lives of young Muslims through specific forms of discipline, ritual, and training (Ware 2014; Hoechner 2018). Such bodily formations may aim both at the preservation of indigenous knowledge and communal life and at the accommodation of societal change (Boyle 2004).

### **Towards a Comparative Study of Religiously Diverse Institutional Fields**

Last but not least, the moral becoming of students and teachers in Dar es Salaam's Christian and Muslim schools has to be understood in the context of the highly unequal positions that these schools hold in the educational market and in Tanzanian society more widely. Thus, the overall privileged status of Christian schools and the structurally weak position of Muslim educational institutions are closely entwined with educational policies and the governance of religious difference during colonial and postcolonial times (see Chapters 2 and 3). More recently, Christian and Muslim schools have established relations with, and have secured resources from, religious bodies in Europe, North America and the Arab world. This had implications for the way in which the government attempted to regulate especially the activities of Muslim revivalist organisations in the public domain after the 1998 bombings in Dar es Salaam and Nairobi and after the events of 11 September 2001 (Ahmed 2009: 427; Dilger 2013a: 464). In all these regards, the educational engagements of Muslim and Christian actors cannot be separated from the growing pluralisation and politicisation of the religious field from the early 1990s onwards, with a broad range of actors being able to propagate their moral positions publicly via different media channels and new institutional interventions with local and transnational publics.<sup>18</sup>

Scholars of religion in Africa have long studied either diverse articulations of Christian ideas, practices, and organisations (Gifford 1998; 2004; Spear and Kimambo 1999; Meyer 2004; Maxwell 2006; Kirsch 2008; Marshall 2009) or the ways in which Muslims in Africa experience, perform, and navigate their social, cultural, and political environments (Loimeier 1997; 2013; Levtzion and Pouwels 2000; Schulz 2011; Kresse 2018).<sup>19</sup> Contact zones between the two religious fields – or between indigenous or 'traditional' religions and Christianity or Islam – have been studied primarily with regard to conversion, thereby highlighting not only biographical narratives and experiences of conversion from one religion to another (Langewiesche 2007; Scharrer 2007) but also the

<sup>18</sup> Public debates on the involvement of religion in politics have been articulated historically, too, for instance with regard to the banning of the East African Muslim Welfare Society by the postcolonial state (Heilman and Kaiser 2002: 701–2; Loimeier 2007: 141; see also Chapter 3).

<sup>19</sup> Even in edited collections that analytically compared the social and/or cultural position of different religious actors in postcolonial settings, individual contributions usually focused on Christianity, Islam, or 'traditional' or 'indigenous' religion (e.g. Hansen and Twaddle 1995; Schulz and Dilger 2013).

wider religious, political, and economic settings of individual experiences of cross- or intra-religious transitions (Comaroff and Comaroff 1986; 1991; Meyer 1999; Engelke 2004; Becker 2008; Scharrer 2013; Janson 2014; Leichtman 2015; Saurer 2018).<sup>20</sup>

Especially since the early 2000s, a new strand of scholarship has focused on the field of Christian–Muslim relations in Africa. Scholars of religious studies and theology have argued that Christians and Muslims have coexisted peacefully in large parts of the continent for a very long time (Ammah 2007: 152). According to these scholars, these generally good relations have been disturbed particularly by colonialism and the growth of both Islamic and Christian fundamentalist groups after independence (Ojo 2007; Rukyaa 2007; Frederiks 2010: 266–7). The ‘offensive’ preaching of some Christian leaders (Magesa 2007: 172), the mutual ‘stereotyping’ among both Christian and Muslim groups (Mwakimako 2007: 288), and global events such as 9/11 and other terrorist attacks are said to have caused a turn to ‘fundamentalist religiosity ... which [is] characterised by an exclusivist and often antagonistic stance towards both more liberal representations of their own traditions and towards people of other religious persuasions’ (Frederiks 2010: 267). Such tensions and conflicts – and the mutual intolerance that fosters them (Mwakimako 2007: 295–6) – can be overcome, according to these scholars, as religious teachings and scriptures contain opportunities for dialogue and ecumenical engagement that need to be built on in the face of poverty and conflict (Ammah 2007: 148–50; Frederiks 2010: 270).

Anthropologists and other scholars of religion have challenged such a narrative. They argue that both Christianity and Islam are inherently diverse religions that are shaped not only by the dynamics of internal differentiation but also by internal politics, discontinuities, moral ambivalence, and competition (Meyer 1998a; Engelke 2004; Schielke 2009; Janson 2014; 2015). Because religion is only one facet of social and cultural identities (Soares 2006: 3), the diversity and discontinuity within and across religious debates and practices are complicated further by political and economic processes and interests (Becker 2006; Obadare 2006; 2007). Similarly, the circulation and appropriation of new media technologies have led to the public contestation of religious ‘authority’ and ‘truth’, including transnationally (Eickelman and Piscatori 2004; see also Schulz 2006). Against this background, it is hard to imagine that Christian–Muslim relations in (and beyond) Africa will not *always*

<sup>20</sup> Processes of conversion also often remain partial or syncretic in that, for instance, adherents of Yoruba religion in Nigeria incorporate Islam or Christianity in their religious identities (Olupona 2011).



include contestation as well as appropriation and mutual learning (Soares 2006: 13) in the inherently messy entanglements of a globalising world.

*Learning Morality, Inequalities, and Faith* builds on Soares (2006) and Larkin and Meyer (2006), who all call for the study of Christian and Muslim ideas, practices, and organisations in sub-Saharan Africa as part of overarching historical configurations and within a single analytical framework. It contributes to the still comparatively small corpus of anthropological studies that try to understand how ‘encounters’ (Soares 2006) between Christians and Muslims – symbolic, discursive, or imagined, as well as physical, institutional, or spatial – are enacted and embodied.<sup>21</sup> As Larkin and Meyer (2006: 286) have remarked, Christian and Muslim revivalist organisations – and, I would add, other religious actors such as the Catholic church – ‘share a great deal of common ground’ in contemporary sub-Saharan Africa; while they often position themselves as competitors or opponents, they ‘overlap strikingly in the procedures in which they have come to prominence, the practices on which they depend, and the social processes they set in motion’ (ibid.: 286).

In this book, I analyse comparatively how Christian and Muslim actors’ contemporary engagements with schooling in Dar es Salaam have led to, and were triggered by, the repositioning of ‘faith’ and ‘religion’ through wider societal and political-economic transformations. I focus on how these educational initiatives are experienced and enacted by students and teachers through the lens of ‘learning values’ in order to shed light on both the ethical frameworks of these schools and their everyday embodiments. In all these aspects, it is important to note that the ‘common ground’ (Larkin and Meyer 2006: 286) of Christian and Muslim interventions in the field of schooling in urban Tanzania refers not so much to the direct encounters between students and teachers of these faiths, although these do occur, especially in Christian schools where Muslim students and teachers are admitted and employed. Rather, the common, and highly unequal, ground of these schools is constituted through their mutually entangled positions in the histories of education and religious difference in colonial and postcolonial Tanganyika/Tanzania, and how these histories have shaped their shared

<sup>21</sup> Recent social scientific work that has explored Christian–Muslim encounters focuses especially on West Africa (Peel 2015; Janson 2016; Nolte et al. 2017; Obadare 2018). In Tanzania, there are few empirical studies that have explored Christians and Muslims in a joint analytical framework, but see Omari (1984), Ndaluka and Wijsen (2014), and Dilger (2013a; 2014a; 2014b; 2017).

project of ‘learning values’ under conditions of state regulation and the free market economy.

Against this background, a comparative focus on moral becoming in Christian and Muslim schools allows for a new understanding of the multiple practices of power that have shaped – and continue to shape – religiously diverse urban settings in East Africa, both in transnational contexts and through the local educational engagements of particular actors. In the conclusion to this book, I argue therefore that ‘the similarities and differences, the overlaps and tensions, between Christian and Muslim actors and organizations in Africa’ (Janson and Meyer 2016: 618) need to be understood in relation to the larger contexts of politics, inequalities, and power that have shaped the quests for a good life in religiously diverse fields in urban Africa over the last decades (Soares 2016: 679). This entails not only a broadening of perspectives with regard to exploring the long-standing histories of Christian and Muslim encounters in particular local contexts, but also the opening up of different methodological approaches, including the critical use of quantitative methods and of relevant statistical figures in our field sites (see Nolte et al. 2016), for analysing these mutual entanglements.

### **Studying Moral Becoming in Dar es Salaam’s Christian and Muslim Schools**

The ethnographic research on which this book is based was conducted in six faith-oriented schools in Dar es Salaam between 2008 and 2010 (ten months of fieldwork in total). Baumann and Sunier (2004) emphasise the importance of doing comparative fieldwork in educational settings in order to understand how schools become *distinct* cultural places where overarching values of a society or nation state are taught and embodied in specific ways. They argue that it is only through comparative field research that ‘pointed contrasts and surprising internal consistencies’ (ibid.: 21) become visible.

In a similar vein, the questions of my research evolved and were refined as I moved from one field site to the next, understanding that each of the schools in my sample had its particular narratives, routines, and practices that set it apart from – and simultaneously connected it to – the others. In some cases, specific topics became especially relevant during the time of my stay: for instance, class debates on the conduct of a charity event before Easter 2010 in the Catholic schools (Chapter 6). In other cases, these different thematic foci were representative of students’ and teachers’ long-standing concerns at a school and depended especially on the students’ age and gender as well as on the

socio-economic status of their school. Thus, while the Christian primary schools struggled with the playfulness of their pupils, both the Muslim and Christian secondary schools became a space for the negotiation of love relationships and individual styles of dress. Furthermore, the strict emphasis on speaking English was particularly prominent in the affluent Christian and Muslim schools whose students and teachers were usually fluent in the language. This differed from the structurally weaker Muslim seminary, where most informal conversations and part of the teaching were conducted in Kiswahili.

My selection of the six schools aimed to reflect this diversity by considering the following aspects.<sup>22</sup> First, the sample tried to represent the most prominent types of religious involvement in Dar es Salaam's educational sector from the mid-1990s onwards, while acknowledging the dominance of Christians in both education and the overall population.<sup>23</sup> Second, it points to different educational levels and socio-economic backgrounds in the city's educational market. Thus, four of the schools operated on the secondary level (two Muslim, two Christian) and two on the primary level (both Christian). One of the secondary Muslim schools was run by the Africa Muslims Agency (AMA), the other by a reformist<sup>24</sup> mosque; both were gender-segregated schools (for boys and girls respectively). Two of the Christian schools (one primary, one secondary) were established privately by a neo-Pentecostal pastor, while the other two (one primary, one secondary) were originally Catholic missionary schools that had been nationalised during the Ujamaa period and then transferred back to the Catholic church in the early 2000s. The four Christian schools and the mosque-owned school catered to the upper middle classes and the lower middle classes respectively; the Catholic schools ranked highest socially. The AMA-owned school attracted mostly students from poorer families.

All these schools followed the same secular state curriculum and were subject to state standards for examination procedures. At the same time,

<sup>22</sup> However, the selection was also partly based on the mere accessibility of individual schools (see below).

<sup>23</sup> The Pew Forum estimates that the majority of Tanzania's population is Christian (60 per cent), 36 per cent are Muslim, and 2 per cent practise 'traditional religion' (US Department of State 2014; see also Chapter 3). These statistics are hotly contested in Tanzania (see Chapter 3).

<sup>24</sup> Many of the new Islamic organisations and mosques differentiated themselves – religiously and politically – from the national Muslim organisation BAKWATA, which was established in 1968 and is widely perceived as a government body (Loimeier 2009: 73). I refer to these organisations, as well as to the new generation of Christian (especially neo-Pentecostal) churches, as 'reformist' (or, alternatively, 'revivalist' or 'activist'), although they would not necessarily call themselves this (Dilger 2014b).

they were dedicated to teaching moral values and, in part, religious content, which was typically connected to an explicitly Christian or Muslim (though not necessarily denominational) framework. At the Muslim secondary schools, for example, religious knowledge was taught during Islamic Knowledge and Arabic classes, and there was an obligatory midday prayer in the on-site mosque. In the Catholic schools, religious knowledge was taught in Bible Knowledge or Divinity Studies classes and church attendance was mandatory; the Pentecostal schools had classes in *dini* ('religion') and/or 'Pastoral Programme Instruction'.

In each of these schools I conducted participant observation for three to four weeks,<sup>25</sup> focusing on one classroom per school, and held more than 70 interviews as well as numerous informal conversations with students, teachers, and administrators. The research also included a questionnaire on the socio-demographic profiles of students and their families and the students' expectations for the future, as well as a drawing project in one of the Catholic schools. To understand the schools in their wider contexts, I studied the six schools' institutional histories and their connections with various religious and non-religious actors (government ministries, faith-oriented development organisations, religious leaders) within and outside Dar es Salaam. Finally, I reviewed literature from secondary sources and archives, including articles in Kiswahili and English newspapers, statistical data, registration and policy documents, and aerial photographs documenting the transformation of urban space in the immediate neighbourhoods of the schools. The close attention to these larger socio-political contexts helped me understand how my study sites' position – or their mere existence – in the educational market has been shaped by often long-standing histories (Gille and Ó Riain 2002: 288).

### **Doing Research in a Setting of Politicised Religion**

During my stay at the schools, my positionality as an ethnographic researcher was challenged in multiple ways. Power differentials were established by my position as a white, advanced researcher from a German university, and also by my age (see Barker and Smith 2001; Punch 2002). My daily presence in the classrooms – seated in the back rows, without actively contributing to teaching activities – helped

<sup>25</sup> Students and teachers in faith-oriented schools spend sometimes eight to ten hours per day in the schools, and in boarding sections even longer. The fieldwork therefore delivered substantial insights, even though it lasted 'only' several weeks in each institution.

establish rapport with the students. At the same time, it was important to build a relationship with the ‘adult gatekeepers’ (Punch 2002: 329),<sup>26</sup> and I complied with my expected social status by staying with the teachers during breaks and occasionally spending time with them outside school. Furthermore, my positionality as a middle-aged male researcher became relevant during my research at the Muslim girls’ school, where staff paid careful attention to how I conducted one-on-one interviews with the students (see Chapter 5); it was also important in how male and female students responded differently about the subject of sexual relations in the Catholic and Muslim boys’ secondary schools (see Chapters 5 and 6).

On another level, however, my positionality as a researcher was also shaped by the strong politicisation of religious differences in Dar es Salaam – and beyond. Thus, when I inquired at the Ministry of Education and Vocational Training about information concerning the status of religious instruction in public schooling, the employee – a self-declared Roman Catholic – asked me whether I was not ‘afraid’ of doing research in Muslim schools. If she were doing this research, she added, she would be concerned about ‘taking sides’. Similarly, at a workshop on faith-based organisations (FBOs) in Germany in 2019, a (Christian) FBO practitioner asked me ‘how I could compare these [Muslim] schools with Christian schools’. He insinuated that the Muslim schools of my study – which he obviously confused with Qur’anic schools that he associated with ‘an anti-educational stance’ – could not be compared with the successful Christian schools in Tanzania. Such questions prompted me to reflect on my status of doing research in the context of religiously diverse settings broadly, and specifically of anti-Muslim sentiments and the perception among Muslim revivalists in Tanzania that the state – and the international development community – were discriminating against them (Ndaluka 2014a: 82ff.).

Anthropologists have raised questions about how a researcher’s religious commitments – or, alternatively, an agnostic or atheist stance – affect their understanding of religious practices and feelings and shape their position/positionality in the field. Is the non-religious researcher unable ‘to take the religious part of the religion seriously’ (van der Geest 1990: 596)? Does ‘confessing’ to being an atheist lead to reduced trust, or even outright rejection by a religious community (Blanes 2006: 228; Wiegele 2013)? Does an ethnographer’s faith make them more

<sup>26</sup> In the neo-Pentecostal schools, some of the teachers were initially suspicious of my everyday presence in the classroom, which they associated with the visits of school inspectors (see Chapter 4). Notions of suspicion and mistrust in one of the Muslim seminaries are discussed later in this chapter.

sympathetic to ‘the dilemmas, or visions, expressed in another’ (Clough 2006: 278)? And can their religious commitment help reduce any emotional and intellectual distance with their interlocutors (McClutcheon 2006: 746)? Researchers need to understand how their multiple positionalities shape social relations and communication during ethnographic research on religion and religious difference (Blanes 2006: 223–5; DiCarlo 2013: 76; Mattes et al. 2019a; Mattes 2020).

During my research, I attended church services of various Christian communities associated with the schools I was studying. My Protestant upbringing in Germany, and my largely agnostic stance during my youth and adult years, had not prepared me for praying the ‘Way of the Cross’ in a Roman Catholic church or for participating in the highly emotional services of the neo-Pentecostal churches in Dar es Salaam.<sup>27</sup> Participating to a certain degree in some religious practices in these settings was a way to show respect for the faith and the feelings of my hosts (Blanes 2006: 229–30) – and it was also connected to my desire not to stand out in the crowd more than I already did due to my skin colour. However, sensations of discomfort or uncertainty are experienced not only by agnostic anthropologists but often also by church members themselves (DiCarlo 2013: 79; Mattes et al. 2019a). Religious or moral feelings may also vary among church attendees, and they are not necessarily judged for this (Blanes 2006: 229–30).

Doing research in a context of religious difference was therefore even more challenging for me at the Muslim schools and when engaging with interlocutors on the revivalist Muslim spectrum. Such troubles were only partly related to the often strongly moralistic world views that my interlocutors held with regard to gender, sexuality, and family life. I faced similar challenges in Catholic and neo-Pentecostal settings (see Van Klinken 2019: 67). Furthermore, I experienced some gatekeepers’ ‘delaying tactics’, not only in Muslim contexts but also in Christian or government settings, when trying to gain access to information (see van de Bruinhorst 2007: 52). These delays were sometimes not even strategic, but rather connected to people’s reluctance to accept the idea that an anthropologist might be curious about the (personal, political, financial) context of a certain research finding. However, I encountered particularly strong mistrust on the part of some of my Muslim interlocutors, not necessarily with regard to me as a person but often to other actors in society or in relation to ‘life at large’, which also included widespread perceptions of the West as ‘anti-Muslim’ (see Becker 2006: 596).

<sup>27</sup> However, I was more prepared for the latter due to my previous research in a neo-Pentecostal church in the city (Dilger 2007).



At the beginning of my fieldwork, notions of suspicion became visible when I attempted to establish access to several Muslim schools as field sites. I was aware that the research permit from the University of Dar es Salaam and the letter of introduction from the district officer were not sufficient for establishing trust in a context of potentially strong reservations towards state institutions. Thus, when I visited schools, I was always introduced by someone who was personally acquainted with some of the teachers or the headmaster – and my good knowledge of Kiswahili certainly helped open many doors in the field. But while I was generally well received by the schools I visited, not all of them wanted me to conduct research at their particular site. In one of the Islamic seminaries that I visited as a potential field site, I was quickly drawn into a conversation with two teachers who told me that the educational activities of Muslims were often suspected of leading to ‘terrorism’ (*ugaidi*). The teachers emphasised that they did not think that I personally held such views but that they ‘just wanted to prepare me’ for the questions that others with a certain ‘bitterness’ (*uchungu*) might have towards my project. Despite their reassuring words, however, a few days later I received a short text message from one of the teachers stating that the headmaster had declined my request to do research there.

During my fieldwork, I carefully avoided being drawn into – or starting – conversations about religion and politics in Tanzania. However, especially in the AMA boys’ school, named Al-Farouq, I was repeatedly asked to adopt a position on the marginalisation and suppression of Muslims in Tanzania. On one occasion, I presented my research questions and methods to a group of teachers who listened carefully to my speech before raising questions about my deeper motivations for this study. One teacher in particular – who was known in the school for his committed demonstration of faith – asked about my position on the lumping together of Islam and terrorism in public discourse, and about my stance towards Islam ‘in general’. I responded that I was hoping to show with my research that, as well as the widely known, highly ranked Christian schools, Muslim schools also played an important role in education in Tanzania. While the teacher was satisfied with my answer, he was keen to follow up on my subsequent point that a mutual understanding between Christians and Muslims required a deeper understanding of the viewpoints of Muslim students and teachers themselves. Before I could answer his question about what I – ‘a researcher with an MA and PhD degree’ – thought personally about Islam and Muslims, the other teachers in the room, who were seemingly embarrassed by his insistence, told their colleague that I ‘had already responded’.

The students of Al-Farouq were also curious about my views on Islam and politics, even after I had completed my research. When I returned

for a visit to the school several months later, I was received warmly by the students. One of them was quick to ask what had happened to the questionnaires that they had filled in the year before. Another student asked: 'How do you feel when you return to a school like Al-Farouq?' In that moment, I realised (again) that such questions were never asked by the pupils and teachers of Christian schools. The students' reaction also reiterated how strongly a public discourse that labelled Muslims as 'hostile' (*wabishi*) and 'violent' (*wajeuri*) shaped the young men's perceptions of themselves<sup>28</sup> – and simultaneously their perception of me as a white researcher from Germany, an earlier colonial power. I responded that I had 'locked away' the questionnaires in a place where they could be accessed only by me (as I had promised them) and that I felt 'welcomed' (*karibishwa*) by the students, 'as had also been the case in the preceding year'. The students did not persist with further questions about the research; instead, one of them asked whether I had ever eaten *ugali* or *makande*.<sup>29</sup> When I affirmed that I had, the young men seemed pleased and some of them laughed.

Back at my desk – struggling to bring my diverse research materials into a coherent narrative – I aimed to do justice to the feelings of injustice and inequality I had encountered in the field and that often went hand in hand with my interlocutors' individual quests and hopes for a good life. I attempted to achieve a balanced representation of Christian and Muslim engagements with education in a historical context, where especially the interventions of the latter were discussed as being highly controversial in public discourse. I also made an effort to provide a thorough analytical contextualisation of the dynamics of privilege and marginality at the schools of my study, dynamics that are rooted in long-standing colonial and postcolonial histories of religious difference, education, and social stratification. Finally, I intend to promote a stronger focus on processes of politics and power in anthropological studies of the entangled dynamics of institutionalisation and moral becoming in the highly varied Christian and Muslim contexts of global Africa (see Chapter 7).

<sup>28</sup> In fact, many of my Christian interlocutors expressed strong reservations about certain cultural traits that they linked to Islam and that they found fundamentally different from their own religious background. One employee of a Christian NGO argued that Muslims had a problem with being governed by a Christian leader, as, 'for them', all Christians were 'unclean'. Others emphasised the alleged 'aggressiveness' of Muslims, which they linked to the idea that Islam was a 'religion of war' (*dini ya vita*).

<sup>29</sup> *Ugali* (porridge-like meal made from maize or millet) and *makande* (a dish made from kidney beans and corn) are staple foods in Tanzania.

## Outline of the Book

The first part of this book explores the common – and yet unequal – historical background to the emergence of the new generation of Christian and Muslim schools in Dar es Salaam. Chapter 2 describes how Christian and Muslim encounters in the city have been shaped by colonial and postcolonial histories and by related memories of religious and educational differences. I argue that the ‘past-oriented narratives’ of Islamic activists and media actors in particular have become emblematic of the ways in which Muslims perceive their position and status in the wake of globalisation and the market economy. I show that a focus on specific historical events has sustained the moral sensation among Muslims that they are systematically denied access to education and positions of power in contemporary Tanzania. Furthermore, the ‘language gap’ that resulted from Tanzania’s post-independence language policy in education<sup>30</sup> has reinforced the growing popularity of church-run schools in the stratified educational landscape, where a good command of English becomes a condition for success.

Chapter 3 describes the historical development of the educational system in Tanganyika/Tanzania and how it has become entangled with growing socio-religious inequalities since the mid-1990s. I argue that the various moral, political, and epistemological uncertainties that the increasingly diffuse religious landscape of Dar es Salaam presents to its inhabitants are all closely intertwined. Religious competition and the desire to claim spiritual, moral, and geographical territory in Dar es Salaam impel the state to intervene and establish order (for example, by vetting new religious organisations). But they also present a moral challenge for students and teachers at faith-oriented schools, who are often highly aware of public perceptions of their institutions’ religious networks and their efforts to sustain and further expand their claims. In order to understand the politicisation of religious differences over the last decades, I explore the dynamics of inter- and intra-religious competition and polemics in Dar es Salaam, as well as experiences and memories of the state’s attempts to govern religious difference and conflict in the postcolonial context; the latter became particularly emblematic in the dissolution of the East African Muslims Welfare Society in 1968.

The second part of the book focuses on the multiple experiences, practices, and politics of moral becoming in six Christian and Muslim schools in Dar es Salaam. Chapter 4 describes the establishment of two

<sup>30</sup> In Tanzania, the language of instruction in primary schools is Kiswahili, whereas the use of English is mandatory in secondary and tertiary education.

schools by the pastor of one of the largest neo-Pentecostal churches in the city against a background of processes of social segregation as well as spiritual insecurity in the context of perceived urban ambiguity. The two schools, which cater to students from different socio-economic backgrounds, foster class formation among students and staff as well as the ethos of a 'caring discipline' among the teachers. At the same time, there are significant tensions among the staff that result from concerns about national and ethnic favouritism and from a rigid system of performance monitoring. The two schools also establish networks of local, national, and international belonging, which are particularly valued among teachers hired from abroad. Furthermore, an essential part of the two schools' reputation derives from the fact that they are perceived as faith-oriented schools providing 'moral education'. However, articulations of faith and morality play a rather implicit role in the everyday practices of the schools, with regard to not only the learning of values but also the (informal) healing prayers that are conducted for (exclusively female Muslim) students who are believed to have been exposed to evil spirits and witchcraft attacks.

Muslim schools hold a specific status in Dar es Salaam's educational landscape. While many activist organisations have worked to overcome the historical marginalisation of Muslims in Tanzania, Islamic schools remain largely hidden in the public discourse on education. Chapter 5 provides insight into the histories and practices of two gender-segregated Islamic seminaries in Dar es Salaam. It argues that educational practices and experiences in these schools have been shaped by networks of revivalist Islamic thought within and beyond the city of Dar es Salaam, as well as by perceptions of marginality, especially in the boys' school. In particular, the students and staff of the boys' seminary share a discourse on religious difference that is closely tied to their experiences of underprivileged educational and living situations, and their perceptions of poor future prospects overall. At the same time, the sensation of being religiously different gives rise to practices of Islamic self-cultivation that extend, in both seminaries, to gender-specific notions of gender, dress, and the body and, in the girls' school, the sense of belonging to an aspiring urban Muslim middle class. In contrast, in the boys' seminary, striving to become 'good Muslim men' was tied to a rigid discipline for meeting the challenges of an 'unclean' and 'depriving' world.

In contrast to the Muslim revivalist organisations and neo-Pentecostal actors, both relative newcomers, the former mission churches have been at the forefront of educational service provision during large parts of Tanganyika's/Tanzania's history. Chapter 6 examines a Catholic primary school – established by a German order of nuns in the early twentieth

century, nationalised in 1969, and then returned to the Catholic church in the early 2000s – and its corresponding high school, which was opened in 2010. The owner of the schools, the Catholic Archdiocese of Dar es Salaam, emphasises that it collaborates closely with the Tanzanian government to provide social services for the socially underprivileged. However, the two schools operate on the basis of comparatively high school fees and have the reputation of being ‘top schools’ that attract families and students from the middle and upper classes. The chapter argues that the Catholic schools are aware of the discrepancies between these diverging ethical orientations and their work to forge an affective commitment to the workplace among their teachers, who feel somewhat inferior to their pupils due to differences in social status and the parents’ condescending attitudes. It also shows that pupils are trained to embody the values of the Catholic middle-class environment through particular forms of bodily discipline and regular attendance at church events. Finally, students engage in cultivating an ethos of helping and caring for ‘the needy’ in Dar es Salaam, for example by participating in a charitable trip to a local orphanage.

The conclusion compares the diverse educational engagements of Christian and Muslim actors in Dar es Salaam, highlighting the convergences and divergences in the quest for a good life across these two religious educational fields. I argue that anthropological research is particularly well suited to producing new empirical insights into the coexistence of Christian and Muslim actors and lives – and their entangled struggles for moral becoming – in urban Africa. The ethnographic research of this book makes clear that, in contemporary Tanzania, faith-oriented schools have become – in highly varied ways – a public force in the wake of urbanisation and its unequal articulations. I argue that comparative studies of religiously diverse urban landscapes in Africa need to adopt a stronger focus on processes of institutionalisation, as well as on configurations of inequality and power (Soares 2016: 679; Altglas and Wood 2018), in order to understand the close entanglement of moral becoming, social stratification, and religious differences in the highly volatile contexts of the globalising market economy.

