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Spirits & Sacred Sites: A Study of Beliefs on Unguja Island

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Spirits & Sacred Sites: A Study of Beliefs on Unguja Island



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Abstract

The spiritual beliefs and mizimu, or sacred sites, of villagers were studied in Mangapwani, Makunduchi, and Muungoni on Unguja Island. Through semi-formal interviews, a better understanding of the prevalence and tenets of spiritual beliefs and mizimu use in present Swahili culture was gained. It was found that belief in the existence of spirits is very widespread still today, although these beliefs include many variances. Mizimu are generally being kept in tact for traditional purposes, but the spiritual belief behind them is fading. It was recommended that further study of this topic is done, particularly on mizimu, as it is an important part of the Swahili culture that is disappearing over time.

Introduction

While traveling throughout the coastal regions of East Africa, foreigners may have a hard time rationalizing the presence of red and white ribbons within the natural landscape, maybe accompanied by a pot for burning incense or even a Coke. Unfortunately for them, this is not a beverage left for the purpose of refreshing and cooling off the sweaty tourists in the area. Rather, these are gifts left by villagers for the spirits that are believed to reside in natural features such as caves, large trees, and oceans. Although over 95% of the Swahili people, or people living on the coast and islands just off the coast of East Africa, are Muslim, much of this population incorporates a belief in djinn, or spirits, into their traditional Islamic beliefs (Schubert 1999).

The origin of the spiritual beliefs in Swahili culture is uncertain. Some assume that these ideas are “African” and native to the area, originating in the time period prior to Islam. As spiritual beliefs are common in predominantly Islamic areas other than East Africa, however, this assumption appears to be false (Middleton 1992). Many of the beliefs and rituals associated with djinn have no written doctrine, but are simply practiced, complicating the search for the starting point of this unique dogma (Larsen 1998). The Quran, or the fundamental text of the Islam religion, provides a description of the djinn and their counterparts, the shetani, or devils, and gives a foundation for the current spiritual beliefs observed on Unguja Island.

According to the Quran, the djinn were the first inhabitants of the Earth. They were created by God from the smokeless fire, while humans were created from potter’s clay. God “created the djinn and mankind only that they might worship [Him],” and warned that “those that now do wrong shall meet their predecessors’ doom” (Jinn, Az-Zaariyaat 51:56, 58). God created Adam, the first human, and breathed life into him. At this time, He asked all to bow down to Adam. Iblis, also known as Satan, refused to prostrate to Adam, thus becoming the first recorded defiant djinn. After pleading with

God, Iblis was reprieved from being accursed, and instead was released until the Day of Judgment comes, where God will reward those who have followed His will, and send those that have gone against Him into the fires of hell.

Upon hearing his fate, Iblis announced to God, "You have thus seduced me, I will tempt mankind on earth: I will seduce them all, except those of them who are your faithful servants" (Jinn, Al-Hijr 15:39). Iblis is considered the father of the shetani, or the evil djinn that distract and sway humans from their call to worship God. Not all djinn banded with Iblis; some heard the Word of God and vowed to never worship any other. These Muslim djinn are referred to as ruhani, and are believed to be of Arab descent by the people of Zanzibar (Larsen 1998). Djinn, like humans, range everywhere from the most devout Muslims to the most harmful and evil. All djinn will meet the same fate as humans, for God warned, "I will fill hell with djinns and humans all" (Jinn, Huud 11:119).

The Hadith- Sahih Muslim, another important Islamic text, reveals that every human acts as an attaché for djinn. Although most of them cannot be seen by humans, djinn may appear as snakes, so humans must remain wary. Djinn are also known to come out during the night and steal things away from humans. Even though djinn are known to participate in human trickery, there are people that still become increasingly close with the djinn. Humans will go to the djinn for advice or help, and seemingly get a response and their needs met. However, the help they receive is not straightforward but somehow warped, and they are led further away from God. Humans are warned to keep their distance from the djinn because of this effect. Nevertheless, God will help those that have fallen into trouble with the djinn. The Fiqh, or text of Islamic philosophical law, states that one can create a barrier between his or her self and the djinn by saying "In the name of Allah besides Whom there is no other god" (Jinn, Fiqh 4.124), along with reciting verses genuinely from the Quran.

From this information found in Islamic texts comes a very diverse set of knowledge and practices regarding spirits in the Swahili culture. The mottled nature of beliefs is partly a matter of interpretation; both individuals and different sects of Islam have come to their own conclusions regarding the spiritual world. Added to this is the lack of formality in acquiring spiritual knowledge and instruction. The Swahili attain the understanding of the djinn through conversation and observation: conversation with friends, families, elders, and waganga, or medicine men, and observation of rituals and spirit possessions, or times in which a djinn overtakes a person and speaks through him or her. This lack of formal protocol can cause the traditions to be highly localized and variable (Larsen 1998).

Traditions of spiritual belief in the Swahili culture are also seen through the presence of mizimu, or sacred sites. These sites are generally located in natural places such as oceans, large trees, prominent stones, forests, and caves, and are thought to be locations where djinn reside or are sometimes present. Practices involving these sites are highly inconsistent, just as the tenets of spiritual belief. Not only are they inconsistent, they may be slowly becoming less prominent. In the past two centuries, “The elements that make up Swahili religion...have become less local and Islamically more orthodox” (Middleton 163). As the orthodox Islam is less tolerant and flexible regarding spiritual belief and ritual, the unique Swahili religion that integrates a strongly monotheistic view with a belief in spirits is being threatened.

With local traditions being threatened by the more conventional orthodox Islam belief system, it is a critical time for the current spiritual beliefs to be recorded. Studies have been carried out previously on this topic, but the variability of beliefs even in areas of close proximity have made it hard to be acquainted with all there is to know about this set of unique religious beliefs. The goal of this study is to examine the characteristics and prevalence of spiritual beliefs and mizimu in Mangapwani, Muungoni and

Makunduchi, three villages on Unguja Island. As religion is such a central part of the lives of Swahili people, it is a useful way to gain a window of understanding into their culture. Actions that may be baffling to outsiders, such as bringing goat blood to an especially large rock, may be explained and rationalized when an understanding of the area's religious beliefs is obtained.

Opportunities for tourism and conservation may be exploited from further study of spiritual beliefs and mizimu on Unguja Island. Increasing interest in cultural tours has been expressed, and the traditions and histories behind mizimu may prove to be a unique addition to such a tour. In rural areas experiencing very little to no tourism, a cultural tour including mizimu or a visit to a medicine man would be an effective way to receive income while sharing distinctive parts of the Swahili culture.

An improved understanding of mizimu and spiritual belief is also needed when considering conservation endeavors. Integrated management plans are being used more frequently in conservation, encouraging community involvement to ensure success. Environmentalists must be aware of the spiritual beliefs of the people on Unguja Island when developing conservation efforts. Prior research has been done concerning the potential for mizimu to serve as conservation areas because of already established restrictions at the site (Slakie 2003, Bretl 2007). There are mixed opinions on the topic thus far. Regardless of whether or not established mizimu should be used as sites of conservation, knowledge of the spiritual beliefs of the Swahili people is imperative to understanding and working closely with a community on the topic of conservation.

Through the study of spiritual beliefs and mizimu in Mangapwani, Muungoni, and Makunduchi villages on Unguja Island, it is hoped that all these areas of importance may be addressed and a better understanding of the peoples' religions and cultures will be achieved.

Study Area

The information for this study was collected on Unguja Island, also known as Zanzibar Island. The island is located approximately 25 miles off the coast of Tanzania in East Africa, situated in the Indian Ocean. Unguja is one of two islands included in the Zanzibar Archipelago, the other being Pemba Island. These islands, along with Mafia Island, are referred to as the Spice Islands. Unguja receives many more tourists than Pemba, although tourism on both islands has been increasing over the past decade. Unguja has a complex history, being used as a major trade port for centuries and a center of slave trade in the 19th century (*The Slave Trade* 2009).



Mangapwani is a village about 12 miles north of Stone Town on Unguja Island. Mangapwani was a location of black-market slave trade during the 19th century, and remnants of the Slave Chambers and Slave Caves can be seen still today. Mangapwani is settled on the west coast of Unguja, and boasts a beach containing many coral caves. It is a small village, with fishing and farming being the main sources of income.

Muungoni is a village on Unguja located about 15.5 miles southeast of Stone Town and a few miles south of Jozani Forest. The population being around 1,320, it is a

Methodology

The information in this study was obtained through semi-formal interviews and direct observation of mizimu and a spirit possession. Twenty-four people were interviewed individually. Some also participated in group discussions, and a few individuals were revisited for additional questioning. Owners of mizimu, elders, medicine men and teachers were sought out for their knowledge, and other individuals were interviewed for an accurate glimpse at the prevalence of spiritual beliefs today. Interviewees were asked an established set of questions (see Appendix B), and supplemental questions were asked as necessary to fill in information. Interviewees were made aware of the purposes of the study, and were assured of confidentiality. A translator was used to conduct most of the interviews. A demographic breakdown of interviewees is as follows:

Men:	19
Women:	5
Under 35 Years Old:	8
35-59 Years Old:	7
60+ Years Old:	9
Waganga (Medicine Men)/ Local Healers:	4
Teachers (Retired or Current):	5

Many mizimu were discussed during the interviews, and ten were visited either during or after the interview. The sites were investigated, and observations were recorded concerning the major characteristics of the sites, evidence of use, and any artifacts left at the sites. Mizimu owners or other informed individuals accompanied all visits to the sites.

One spirit possession was observed in addition, although not intentionally. Physical actions and affects of spirit possession were recorded, as well as the doings of the mganga, or medicine man, throughout the event. The woman possessed was questioned after the event for any happenings that could not be observed from the exterior.

Results

From the interviews conducted during a three-week period, data was recorded on the spiritual beliefs held by current inhabitants of Unguja Island. Findings suggest that the belief in the existence of spirits remains very prevalent on Unguja Island, as 100% of interviewees had some form of knowledge on djinn and shetani. Although all interview subjects believe in the existence of spirits, a “fear in spirits” or the belief in going to spirits with problems was much more varied (Figure 1).

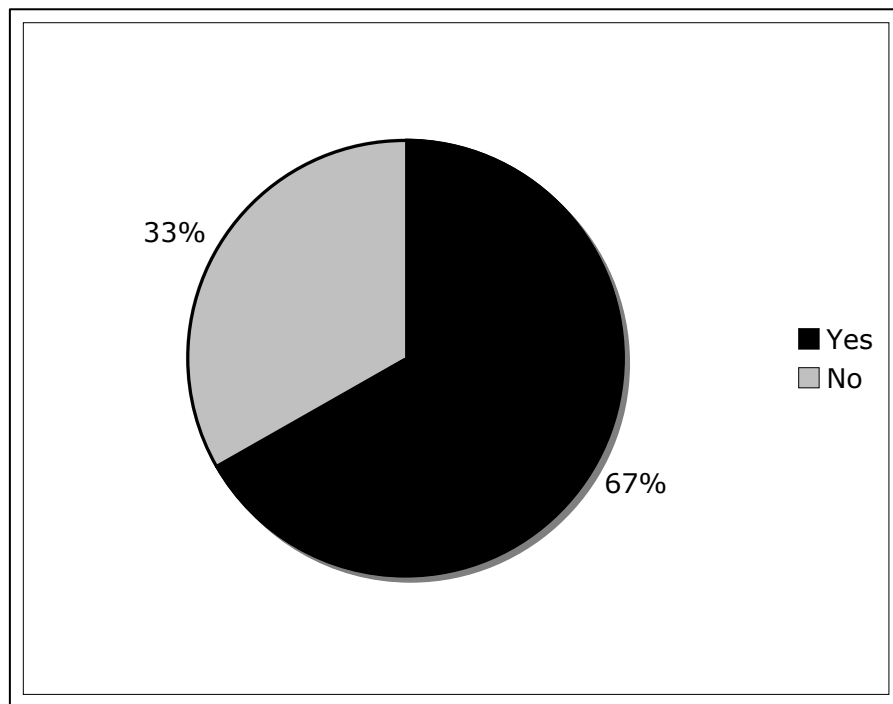


Figure 1. Percentages of those that fear and do not fear djinn and shetani are shown above. Over half of all interviewees expressed that they have sought out help from spirits when experiencing problems.

The proportions of responses differ when replies are broken down into interview location. Those interviewed in Makunduchi articulated the most utilization, as 82% of respondents go to djinn with problems, while responses from villagers in Mangapwani and Muungoni were more evenly distributed (Figure 2).

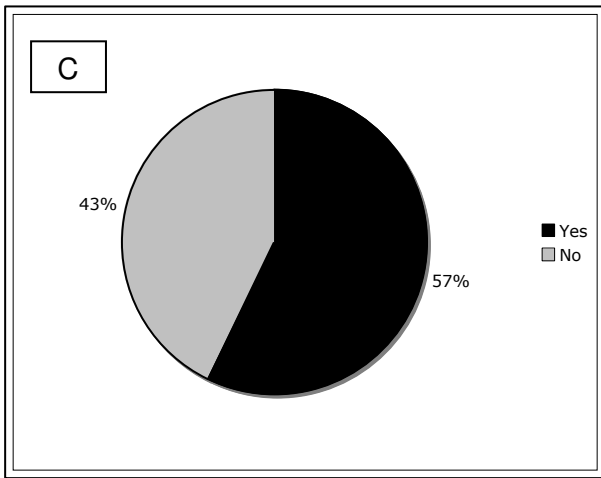
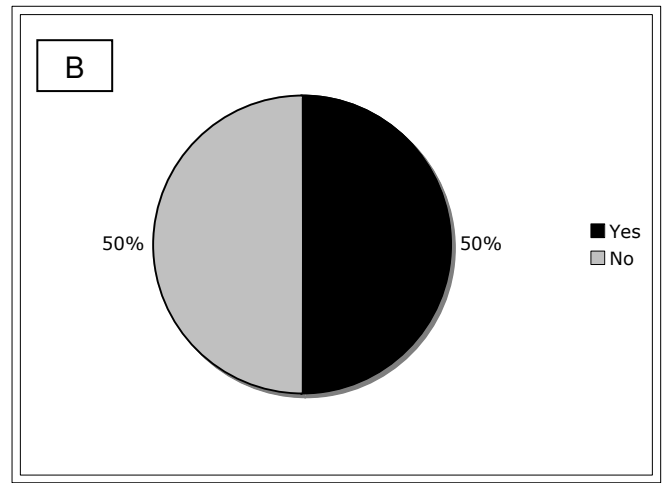
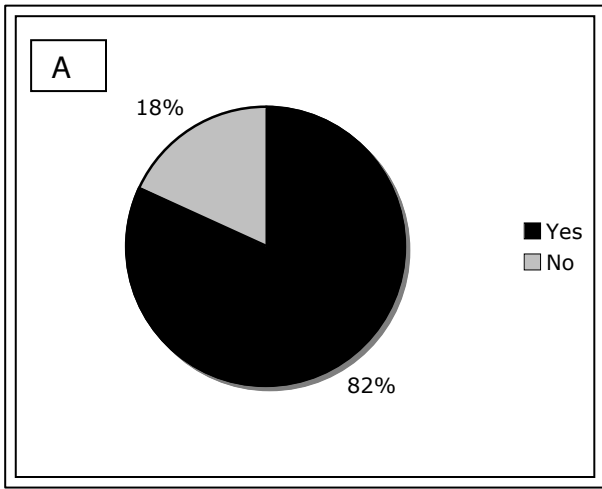
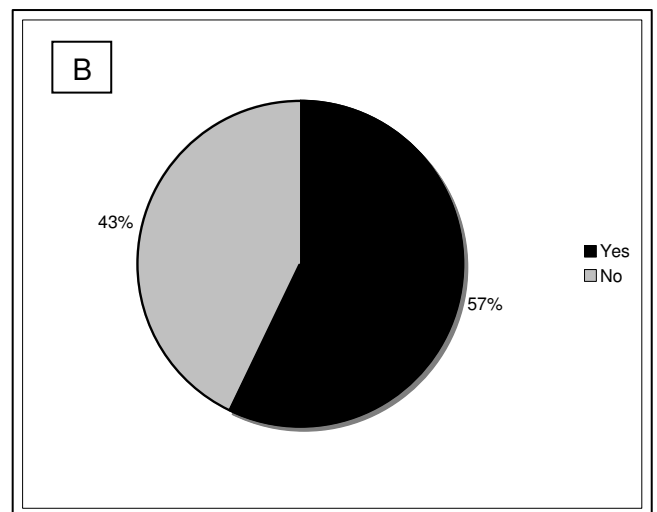
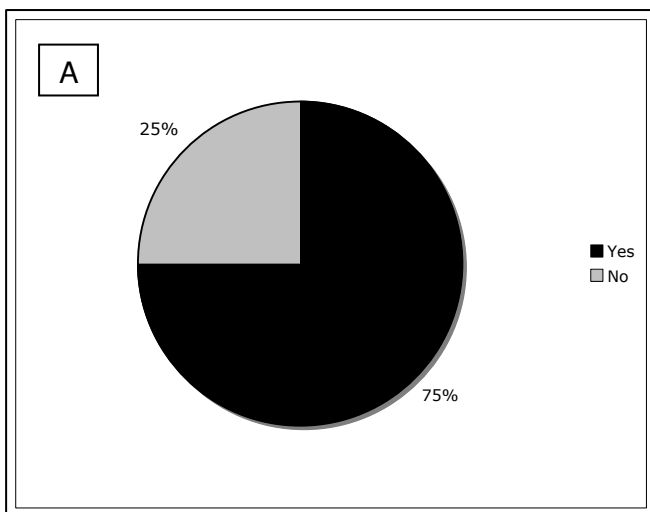


Figure 2. Proportions of responses are shown concerning the use, or lack thereof, of spirits when experiencing problems. Comparison of interviewee replies in Makunduchi (A), Muungoni (B), and Mangapwani (C) are illustrated.

Differences were not as noteworthy when comparing responses of different age groups. The 35 and under age group had the largest fraction of people who go to spirits for help, while the 35-59 age group had an almost even ratio (Figure 3).



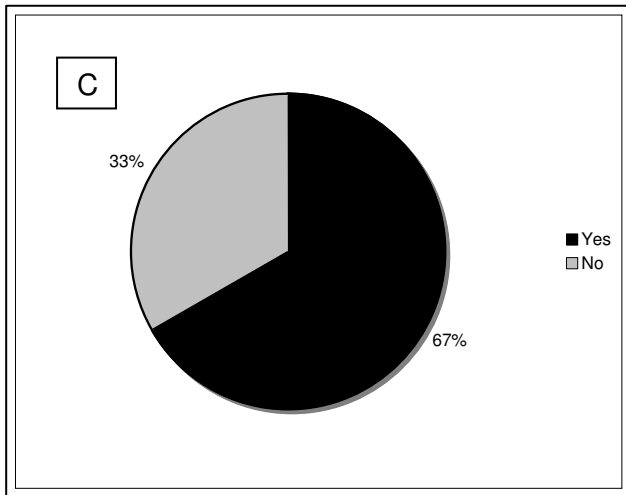


Figure 3. Percentages of responses shown, divided by age group, of whether or not spirits are sought out when facing a problem. Age categories are as follows: under 35 years old (A), 35-59 years old (B), and 60+ years old (C).

The information obtained through interviews displayed high variability in spiritual beliefs. A few respondents used the terms “djinn” and “shetani” interchangeably, whereas others had more concrete, although varied, definitions of each. Several of those interviewed defined djinn as being good, bad, and everywhere in between, while shetani are all bad. However, some expressed the exact opposite view, saying that shetani can range from good to bad while djinn are all bad. Others said that both shetani and djinn range in character just like humans do. The ideologies of where djinn and shetani come from were just as radically varied. Many believe that both djinn and shetani were created by God. Yet, some believed that djinn were created by God while shetani were created by humans, while others believe the contrary: shetani were created by God while djinn were created by humans. No clear answer was given when the relation of spiritual beliefs and Islam was inquired. Some said the two belief systems were completely separate, others said that spirits were created by God, and still others said that Islam shows that spirits exist but should not be dealt with.

A common ground was found when discussing the effects of shetani and djinn. Almost all agreed that djinn and shetani affect humans positively and negatively. Of all those who were interviewed, 45% stated that they had personally been affected by spirits, while many that had not been personally affected knew someone that had been.

Djinn and shetani are believed to enter a person's body and travel through the bloodstream, having the ability to possess the person's mind, heart, or any other part of the body. Spirits can cause one to become ill, experience inability to sleep, sleepwalk or even die. Some believe that humans may control djinn and shetani; they capture them by putting tree roots, a horn, blood or other things the spirit likes in a jar, and then are able to send the djinn or shetani after their enemy.

Possession by a spirit is not necessarily a bad thing, however. One mganga said that he uses the djinn that possess him to communicate with other individuals' djinn that may be causing problems. He has many djinn, including an Indian, European, Arabic and Masai djinn, that when possessing his mind, allow him to speak languages he otherwise would not know. This possession permits him to speak to any djinn that may be harming his patients. Some also believe that djinn and/or shetani are able to help with problems one is experiencing. This help is normally sought by visiting mizimu. Many families have their own mizimu, and there are public mizimu found in many areas as well. Though not all respondents go to djinn or shetani for help, all had knowledge of why some visit mizimu, or sacred sites. Reasons cited during interviews are listed below, in order of frequency mentioned.

1. Sickness/Injury
2. Want children/troubles conceiving a child
3. Need money
4. To avoid personal and family problems
5. Successful festival (Makunduchi)
6. Success in election
7. Help in school
8. Need material items
9. Personal success
10. Good behavior of children
11. Agriculture
12. Luck
13. Victory in football game
14. Help in finding a spouse

Special care must be taken or particular rules must be abided by at many mizimu if one wants his or her plea for help to be answered. Interviewees listed many restrictions regarding etiquette at the mizimu they go to, or the mizimu in their families. Limitations are listed below, in order of frequency stated.

1. Must go at a specific day/time
2. Must clean and take care of the site
3. Cannot go without permission
4. Remove shoes before entering area
5. Cannot go when unclean (women menstruating, those who have not cleaned after having sexual relations)
6. Cannot go without a purpose
7. Must give warning calls to spirits
8. No defecation or urination
9. Special clothing requirements
10. No small children
11. No perfume or jewelry

Along with the guidelines above, many mizimu have restrictions as to who can visit the site. Many of the sites may be seen by anyone, although many require permission prior to the visit. Only 16% had more strict limitations (Figure 4).

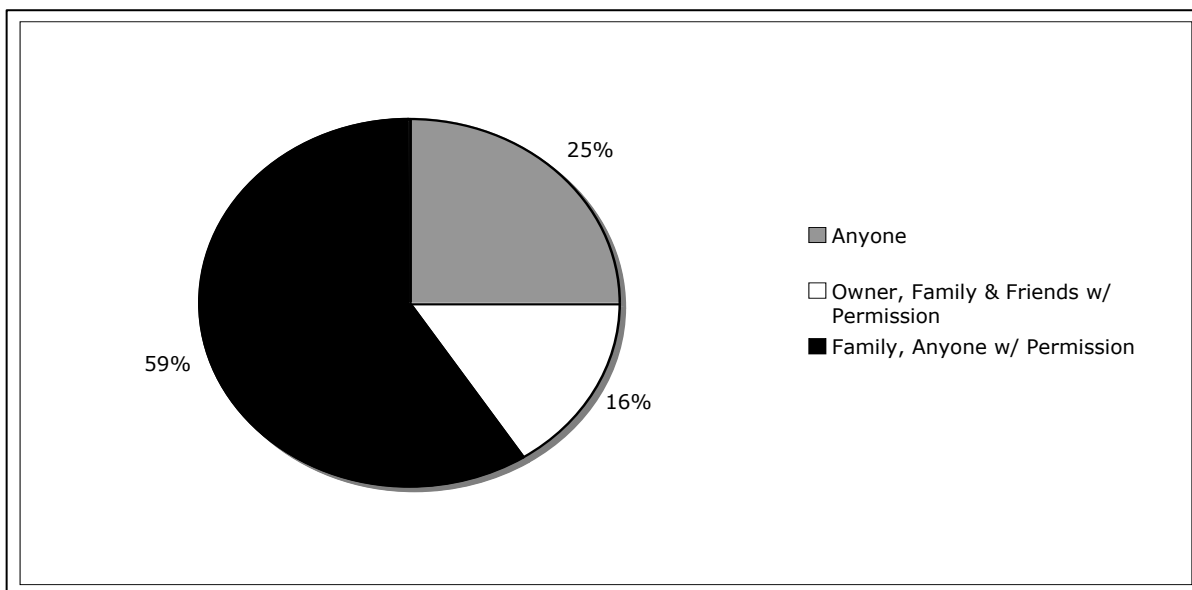


Figure 4. Guidelines for who may and may not visit the mizimu discussed in interviews are shown.

Responses for whether tourism is allowed were slightly different, as tourists are not seeking help from the djinn or shetani, but simply cultural education. The majority of

mizimu owners spoken with would allow any tourists to visit, while a few were much more hesitant (Figure 5).

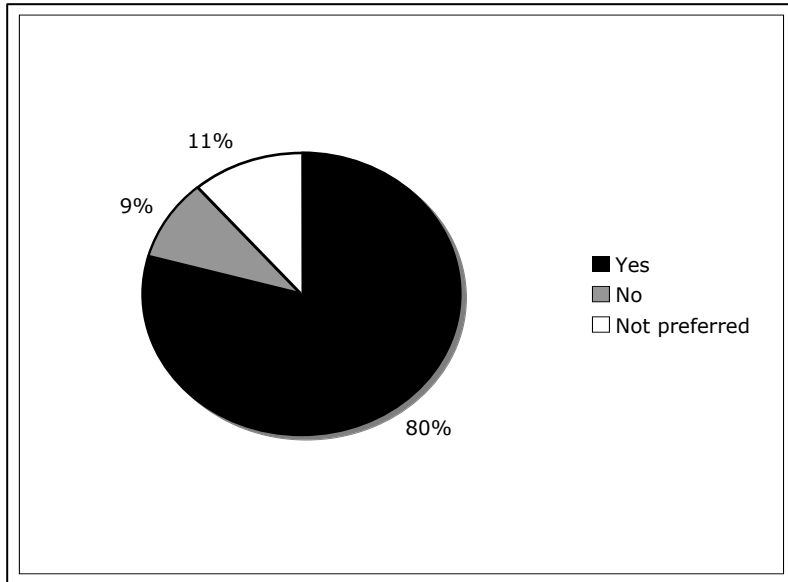


Figure 5. The allowance of tourism at the interviewee-owned mizimu is shown.

Although many mizimu are still being passed down in the family from generation to generation, discussion with villagers in Mangapwani, Muungoni, and Makunduchi showed that the overall use of mizimu is going down over time (Figure 6).

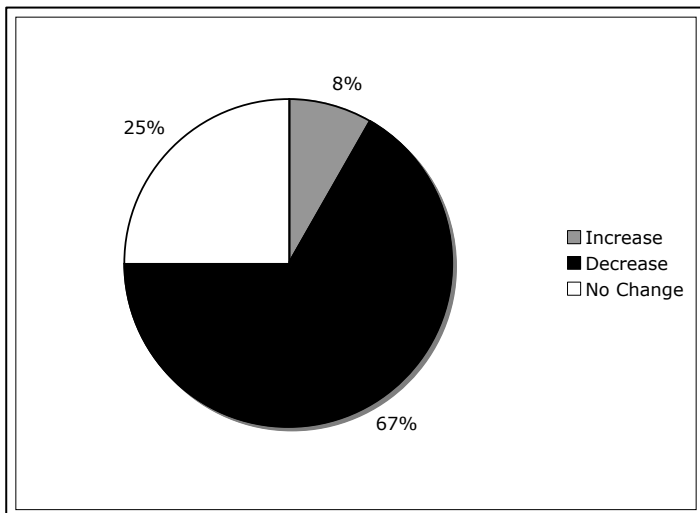


Figure 6. Interviewee responses to the question “What do you think the general trend of mizimu use has been over the last 50 years?” are shown.

There were a number of causes offered for the observed decline in mizimu use and belief. Interviewee responses are listed in the order of the frequency stated.

1. Younger generations do not believe / have not been taught traditions of past generations
2. Increased education
3. Increased technology
4. People today are facing less problems than in the past
5. Decrease in power of mizimu
6. Less dealings in business
7. People cannot afford offerings/sacrifices for mizimu

Two respondents cited an increase in mizimu use and belief, with the following explanations.

1. Upcoming election
2. Increase in population

Those that have seen no change stated that they have seen the beliefs regarding mizimu passed consistently from generation to generation with little change.

Discussion

The interviews conducted displayed some unique and variable characteristics of spiritual beliefs throughout Unguja Island. It was found that spiritual beliefs are still very prominent in the study area, and are in no danger of declining in the near future. The high prevalence of spiritual belief in today's Swahili culture may be due to the presence of djinn and shetani in the Quran, which is referenced to by about everyone in this dominantly Muslim society (Soucy 2008). When analyzing spiritual belief by location, Makunduchi showed the highest occurrence of spiritual belief, with 82% of interviewees seeking out spirits in times of trouble. Makunduchi has retained a more traditional way of life, seeing few incoming tourists and little development of technology in the area, and this may be conducive to a higher preservation of spiritual belief.

Muungoni displayed the lowest abundance of belief in djinn and shetani. Although it is situated in a rural area, the area is seeing an increase in access to electricity, therefore increasing access to television and other technologies. Within the last few decades, a road was constructed right through Muungoni, increasing access to the area. This added electricity and accessibility to the area may be affecting the pervasiveness of spiritual belief in the village. From the interviews conducted, the Islamic belief appeared to be a bit more orthodox than the other two study locations. Although orthodox Islam includes the belief in the existence of spirits, it does not encourage dealings with shetani and djinn (Middleton 1992). This is another possible reason for the decreased spiritual beliefs in the area.

Slightly over half of respondents in Mangapwani expressed willingness to visit djinn and shetani when problems arise. Although it is an area that has little technology available, many of the interviewees were students. Some of those interviewed suggested that an increase in education may come with a decline in spiritual belief. Therefore, the findings from these interviews may somewhat misrepresent the

prevalence of spiritual belief in Mangapwani, being lower than in reality. The area does have some distinguished tourist attractions however, such as the historical slave chambers, so increased tourism may be contributing to a lesser frequency of belief in spirits (Slakie 2003).

In examining spiritual belief according to age group, some unexpected findings were observed. Respondents under 35 years old showed the highest frequency of beliefs, as 75% of informants under 35 reported they would seek djinn or shetani if needed. This finding is contradictory to the belief that young generations are failing to keep traditional beliefs of djinn and shetani thriving (Bretl 2007). A few participants falling into the category of below 35 expressed that they go to the djinn and shetani and visit mizimu out of respect for their parents. As these individuals get older, their spiritual beliefs may diminish.

Although the youngest age group had the highest percentage of believers in djinn and shetani, the 60 years and older informants had the most developed set of beliefs. It was in these interviews that the most specific details regarding spirits and their characteristics were obtained. Even those that do not believe in going to djinn and shetani with difficulties were very certain of the information they shared. Those aged between 35 and 59 years old exhibited the least amount of spiritual belief, with 57% saying they would visit djinn and shetani for help, should problems arise.

In discussing spiritual beliefs, problems arose with clarity of answers from individuals interviewed. Many stated that they do not believe in spirits initially in the interview, but after further questioning, stated they would go to djinn and shetani for assistance or displayed a fear of them. The knowledge all interviewees have of spirits made it apparent that all believe in their existence. However, there is a difference between the existence of spirits and the belief in interacting with spirits. The difficulties arising from this question made it necessary to distinguish between the two categories.

Even in trying to clarify, it remained challenging to interpret the beliefs of some people and put them in either category. This lack of straightforward responses has been seen in previous studies as well (Bretl 2007). The varied nature of beliefs also added to the complications of partitioning interviewees into active participants versus observers of spiritual beliefs.

When inquiring about the way in which Islamic and spiritual beliefs relate, very mixed responses were given. Some reported that spiritual beliefs and Islamic beliefs are kept separate. Some may have answered this way because of the inability to explain how the two belief systems fit together, or because they thought this is what an American interviewer would prefer to hear. Although these people stated that they regard the beliefs in Islam and spirits as separate, they are incorporated into one belief system.

A number of interview subjects asserted that spirits (djinn or shetani, depending on the person's definition) were created by God, and therefore are tied in with Islam. Some spirits follow the Islamic belief system, while others go against God. Good spirits are on the side of humans, working to be faithful towards God; bad spirits are trying to sway humans from God, distracting human Muslims from their desire to please God. Since God created the spirits, these respondents view that it is acceptable, according to Islam, to interact with good, Muslim djinn or shetani.

Others declared that although the Quran describes the creation and existence of djinn and shetani, the spirits should not be dealt with. As one interviewee reasoned, "spirits are against Islam, as God said that spirits are bound for the fire. Since [spirits] know this, they want people to follow them so they are all together in the fire." One previous study on djinn and shetani found that people base their spiritual beliefs on the Quran, as the text outlines what is and is not acceptable in spiritual belief (Soucy 2008). It is evident from the beliefs expressed by the interviewees incorporated in this study that

the Quran is interpreted very differently by different people. Regardless of the varying extent of interviewees' spiritual beliefs, many agreed that if one is experiencing a problem, one should go to Islam first. If the problems persist, then those who believe in the help of spirits will go to that as a second option.

The diversity of belief in characteristics of djinn and shetani was somewhat surprising, as both terms are reasonably characterized in the Quran. This variation supports previous findings of little formal instruction on the beliefs of djinn and shetani (Larsen 1998). Responses for the origin of djinn and shetani were varied, but to a lesser extent.

The responses to spirits' definitions and origins were based somewhat regionally. The vast majority of interviewees in Mangapwani believe that both shetani and djinn range from good to bad, and that both were created by God. Makunduchi was varied to some extent, but had a clear tendency; many believe that djinn are comparable to humans in their behavior, while all shetani are evil. Both are believed to have been created by God. Interview subjects in Muungoni showed no trend, as all answers were multifarious. These trends suggest that Mangapwani may have a more regional ideology of djinn and shetani, whereas Muungoni spiritual belief may come from a more dominant family tradition. Makunduchi residents may utilize both regional and family tradition, therefore showing dominant trends in some aspects of spiritual belief while being more scattered in others.

Although many beliefs were varied, all respondents shared very similar thoughts on how djinn and shetani can affect humans. This commonality may be attributed to the ability to feel or witness these affects, as opposed to other tenets of spiritual belief, which are simply ideology. The only main differences seen in responses regarding the effects of spirits on humans involved which type of spirit, djinn or shetani, produces what

effect. However, this is reliant upon how djinn and shetani are defined, which was previously discussed.

Some interviewees shared more specific information at will, which provided data making up a miscellaneous collection of spiritual knowledge. Previous investigation of spiritual beliefs has revealed a unique type of spirit, called a “Kizungu” spirit, residing only in Makunduchi and Tanga, a city on the Tanzanian mainland, on the coast and near the Kenyan border (Muombwa 2009). Interviewees in Makunduchi confirmed this observation, as a few interview subjects spoke of European “Kizungu” spirits. One believes he is inhabited by this type of spirit, allowing him to speak English while possessed by it and communicate with those that may be afflicted by a similar type of spirit. Other types of spirits can be found everywhere: male and female, Muslim and Christian, Arab, Indian, Masai, and African, just to name a few.

These various types of djinn and shetani may be found at mizimu visited by spiritual believers. The reasons for visiting mizimu were fairly consistent throughout all interviewees. A couple of the reasons cited, however, were not applicable for all regions and times. Many respondents in Makunduchi reported visiting their mizimu once a year, a few days before the Makunduchi festival, Mwaka Kobwa Festival. For obvious reasons, this explanation for visiting mizimu was not present in the other two study locations. Another motive shared for going to mizimu was the upcoming election. Interview subjects knew of others who have visited mizimu for the success of their favored candidate, or have visited an mizimu themselves. As the election is this coming fall, fall 2010, this reason would be more commonly cited now than at other times. Although 33% of interviewees do not seek help or go to pray at mizimu, they were informed of why some do visit the sites. The use of mizimu may be slowly fading, but the knowledge regarding the sites is still prevalent.

Interview subjects had divergent views on the purposes of the mizimu. Traditionally, mizimu are locations inhabited by spirits, either ancestral or natural. Offerings are brought to the sites for the spirits, the locations are visited consistently, and they are kept within a particular family or group (Middleton 1992). Interviewees' mizimu descriptions were generally similar. A large portion stated that his or her mizimu is spiritually important. Of those that did not, the main reason for keeping his or her mizimu was cultural tradition. Offerings are still brought to the sites and the locations are visited due to tradition. Others who do not believe in the sites' spiritual importance maintain the mizimu out of respect for their families. Although they may not believe, their parents and grandparents did, and to ignore the site would show a lack of respect for their families.

Most of the informants that consider their sites spiritually important reported that djinn and/or shetani reside there. Half of these informants knew of the specific shetani or djinn living at the site, while the others knew of the presence of spirits but not any more particular information. For example, the Slave Caves in Mangapwani, considered a public mizimu, is said to be the home of a spirit named Mainda, a snake that guards the cave. Mainda is a good spirit that will help those that visit it. One interviewee in Makunduchi described the spirit that lives at his mizimu, Tawakali, as a shetani named Mwenda na Kazi. The shetani normally looks like a person, although it can change form and appear as a snake. Accounts of more detailed knowledge regarding the spirits at mizimu were more commonly heard in Mangapwani and Makunduchi, while those in Muungoni knew little about the spirits dwelling at their mizimu. The increased knowledge of particular djinn and shetani in Mangapwani and Makunduchi may be due to the increased prominence of spiritual belief in these areas. Personal relationships, even friendships, with shetani and djinn may also be more common or accepted in these two villages, increasing their familiarity with certain spirits.

Mizimu in all three study locations had similar guidelines regarding what one can do at the site. Surprisingly, certain restrictions did not necessarily relate to whether or not spirits are believed to inhabit the site. For example, one is supposed to call “Hodi!” or “Hello!” before entering the area of one mizimu in Makunduchi, although they believe that no spirits live there. They do this greeting as part of tradition.

Sites that prohibit taking things from the area have been previously studied as potential conservation areas (Slakie 2003, Bretl 2007). Only about 20% of the mizimu discussed prohibit removing things or harming the area. It is uncertain whether this restriction is motivated by fear of spirits or because of tradition. However, prior findings suggest that an environmental protection based on fear should not be utilized, as it is not fitting or sustainable (Bretl 2007). Therefore, one cannot jump to any conclusions regarding the potential of mizimu as conservation areas. The increased understanding of the people’s culture and spiritual beliefs may still aid in the development of conservation areas, although the mizimu may not be ideal locations for them.

The opportunity for cultural tourism may be more promising, as 80% of interviewees expressed no problems with foreigners visiting their family sites. Agreements would have to be worked out in advance, as many owners, particularly in Makunduchi, require some offering for sharing information regarding the djinn and shetani living at their mizimu. More public mizimu, such as the Mangapwani Slave Caves and Pungwa Mzimu in Muungoni, where the villagers come together to celebrate Islamic holidays, would be ideal for tourists looking to learn about spiritual beliefs. Caves are particularly fascinating landmarks for tourists, and also have great potential for cultural tourism. Many areas on Unguja that receive little tourism, like Makunduchi, would receive economic benefit from such cultural tourism.

Although spiritual beliefs are still very established throughout the studied areas of Unguja Island, interview subjects have witnessed a decline in practices concerning

beliefs of djinn and shetani. The most frequent reason given for this decline was the lack of belief of the younger generations. Information obtained from interviews in this study both supported and conflicted with this reasoning. When mizimu owners reported only partial belief in the families' site, members of the younger generation were consistently cited as the non-believers. However, of all the people directly conversed with, the interviewees under 35 years old showed the highest rate of spiritual belief. The youngest age group in my study may have an unusually high belief in spirits, not representative of the younger generations of all Unguja. These findings may suggest, however, that spiritual belief is not declining, contrary to popular belief.

With the amount of technology and education on the rise in this area, however, one cannot deny the threat to spiritual belief. The Islam religion is becoming increasingly orthodox in Swahili culture, so the increase in formal Islamic education is a threat to the prevalence of spiritual belief (Middleton 1992, Slakie 2003). Increased amounts of technology, coupled with education, give the people of this area alternate ways of solving problems. Already, as one interviewee reported, many will visit a modern hospital before seeking the help of an mganga and the djinn and shetani at mizimu. It is hard to ignore the impending threat to spiritual belief if increasing development continues. As the majority of spiritual beliefs thus far have been retained, however, they should at least be secure for the near future.

In conducting this study, several difficulties were unavoidable. The use of a translator was essential for many interviews because of the language barrier. The inability to directly communicate added an unavoidable bias to the information received. With that being said, as much was done prior to beginning interviews to make sure that all terms were properly understood, particularly terms crucial to the information for this study, such as "spirit" and "sacred." Being a foreigner conducting a study on a potentially sensitive subject such as spiritual belief also proved a bit difficult. It is

impossible to know whether the interviewees gave honest answers or the answers that a young American woman would want to hear. A clear introduction and reasoning of the study was given before every interview, and as much trust as possible was gained from the interviewee to get the most accurate information possible.

Conclusion

The religion of the Swahili people involves a unique integration of traditional Islam with belief in spirits, or djinn and shetani. Although the Quran and other Islamic texts provide a basis for the belief in shetani and djinn, spiritual beliefs are highly variable due to diverse interpretations of the texts and lack of formal religious education. The findings from interviews conducted in Mangapwani, Muungoni and Makunduchi show that spiritual beliefs are still prevalent, and mizimu, or sacred sites, are still maintained, even if only for traditional purposes. Spiritual beliefs, although still prominent today, are threatened by increasing exposure to technology and formal education. With the possibility of decreasing traditional belief in djinn and shetani, now is the time for these beliefs to be studied and recorded. These beliefs provide a window of understanding into the Swahili people, and increase cross-cultural understanding.

Recommendations

The variable and complex nature of belief in djinn and shetani allow for many additional research opportunities on this topic. Although it was beneficial to get an overview of spiritual beliefs on Unguja by conducting interviews in three locations, any one of these locations would have provided enough information for an in-depth study on spiritual beliefs. By studying in just one location, one could observe whether or not as much variability of belief is seen in a confined area.

A general survey of spiritual beliefs would be beneficial, particularly focusing on belief according to age group. It was impossible to conclude anything significant from the results in this study regarding the spiritual beliefs of younger generations, as mixed results were observed.

A study on the potential for cultural tourism in locations that see little visitors, such as Makunduchi, would also be valuable. Although tourism could bring economic benefits, it is important to make sure the community comes to an agreement on whether this would actually create a positive impact on the area.

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Appendix A: List of Interviewees

Location of Interview	Name	Gender	Age	Occupation
Mangapwani	Ali Chaga	Male	23	Student
Mangapwani	Ame Ame	Male	22	Student
Mangapwani	Asha Saidi	Female	24	Student
Mangapwani	Asiata Thabit	Female	33	Student
Mangapwani	Yussuf Machano	Male	60	Teacher
Mangapwani	Hadija Hassan Yussuf	Female	22	N/A
Mangapwani	Hamisi Juma	Male	25	Student
Muongoni	Nahoda Hassan	Male	97	Retired Farmer
Muongoni	Khamisi Mhidini	Male	70	Retired Farmer
Muongoni	Khamisi Joya	Male	~55	-----
Muongoni	Mtumwa Makasu	Female	95	Local Healer
Muongoni	Haji Vuai	Male	~45	-----
Muongoni	Mwalimu Ali	Male	50	Teacher
Makunduchi	Mwadini Haji	Male	75	Farmer & Mganga
Makunduchi	Hassan Mussa Haji	Male	36	Journalist
Makunduchi	Mussa Ali Simai	Male	61	Retired Teacher & Mganga
Makunduchi	Azaineb Mohammed	Female	51	Manager of Hospital
Makunduchi	Aliaense Hussein	Male	37	Farmer
Makunduchi	Hassan Suleman Abdallah	Male	65	Retired Teacher
Makunduchi	Haji Haji Mzale	Male	70	Retired Teacher
Makunduchi	Issa Hamsa Issa	Male	18	Student
Makunduchi	Hassan Amur Hassan	Male	60	Farmer
Makunduchi	Ussi Mwita Haji	Male	33	Fisherman

Makunduchi	Shumbagi Mrisho	Male	35	Fisherman & Mganga
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Appendix B: List of Interview Questions

For Interviews with Villagers:

- Informant name, age, occupation
- How long have you lived in this village?
- Do you believe in spirits? Do djinn/spirits have anything to do with Islam?
- Where do shetani and djinn come from?
- Are all spirits good or bad?
- How can spirits afflict people?
- Have you personally been afflicted? If so, how?
- Do you know about the mizimu in the area?
- Can you tell me about a specific site? Do you go to this site yourself?
- Do you know the history behind this site? A story of its origin?
- Are there restrictions about who can visit the site?
- Are there restrictions about what you can do there?
- What problems is it used for?
- Can tourists visit the mizimu?
- Have mizimu changed over your lifetime? If so, how?
- Why has the use of mizimu as a whole declined?

For interviews with Mizimu Owners:

- Informant name, age, occupation
- How long have you lived in this village?
- Do you believe in spirits? Do djinn/spirits have anything to do with Islam?
- Where do shetani and djinn come from?
- Are all spirits good or bad?
- How can spirits afflict people?
- Have you personally been afflicted? If so, how?
- What is the name of this mizimu?
- How long has the site been used?
- Do you know the story of the mizimu's creation?
- Does the site have religious or spiritual importance? If so, explain.
- How is it handed over from one generation to another?
- Is the site used? By whom?
- Are there restrictions about who can visit the site?
- Are there restrictions about what you can do there?
- Why do people visit the site? What kind of problems is it used for?
- Can tourists visit this site?
- Has the site changed during your lifetime? How?
- Why has the use of mizimu as a whole declined?

Appendix C: Random Fun Facts

A lot of the most interesting information obtained from interviews was not necessarily relevant for the purposes of the paper. However, it should still be shared, as it adds to the wealth of knowledge of spiritual belief. Here are some interesting tidbits of information from my interviews and observations:

- The Mangapwani Slave Caves act as both an mzimu and a historical site. During the time of the slave trade, slaves would spend their nights in the cave, using it as a home. Without any light, slaves also discovered two alternate ways to get out of the cave and escape. Many died trying to escape, however. One escape route lead to the beach, and would sometimes fill with water. Therefore, those that could not swim were killed. The other escape route was much longer than the first, and some died while trying to find their way out in the dark. The escape route by the beach was eventually discovered, and guards were put there to stop slaves from escaping.
- Kwambara Mzimu, a site in Bumbwini (near Mangapwani), is believed to be the home of the biggest spirit in the area. Matochi, the big spirit, lives there with his wife, Kitiba, a nice and helpful spirit. At noon, anyone in the area must climb into a tree or leave, as Matochi is believed to come out from the site. Matochi can imitate different shapes, and has been seen as a large snake. Many people have died in the area; it is thought that these deaths were caused by Matochi.
- Some people capture shetani and djinn and sell them to others. Some responded to the inquiry of spirit origin with a name, referring to a person that sells spirits.
- The hospital in Makunduchi sees many patients that believe in spirits and the use of mizimu. Sometimes, people that are admitted to the hospital with an illness will ask to leave because they think the illness is spiritually related. The hospital requires the patients to sign a form if they are discharged, saying that the patient is leaving against the advice of the doctors at the hospital.
- Humans can fall in love with and marry djinn or shetani. However, the interviewee said that one should not love a shetani and a human, as the shetani may cause problems because of jealousy.
- The medicine man I visited had a horn that he said was a home for the djinn. Any person that smells the horn three times will be overcome by their djinn, if they have one. A woman from mainland Africa smelled the horn three times, and immediately started groaning, yelling, and swaying back and forth. Her eyes were somewhat rolled back. The medicine man grabbed the top of her head and stood behind her, speaking Arabic. After she was no longer possessed by her djinn, she said that while she was possessed, she could hear a voice, but otherwise could not remember anything. Her throat felt sore after the possession.