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REFLECTIONS ON ISLAM AND CHRISTIANITY IN MODERN SWAHILI PROSE

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Abstract: This study sets out to outline the reflection of two predominant religions of Eastern Africa – Islam and Christianity – in the works of modern (20th and 21st century) writers of Swahili expression. It must be noted that, although the theme of religion is rather notable in modern Swahili writing, the critical works devoted to the theme are lamentably scarce (among them, for example, articles by Sonja Mezger and Fuko Onoda mentioned below). This renders the study a considerable relevance, since it is an attempt to start filling a notable gap in the scholarship of modern Swahili writing. Based on the comparative examination of the works of the writers from Tanzania and Kenya, the study investigates, specifically, the writers' views on the current relationship between the two religions and their perspective relations in the future.

Key words: Islam, Christianity, East Africa, Swahili literature

The modern history of Eastern Africa has been marked with co-habitation of two major religions of the world – Islam and Christianity. Islamic religion, brought to Eastern Africa around the 8th century (Horton & Middleton 2000: 48) by the Arabic seafarers and merchants, gradually, with the increasing settlement of Muslims from Arabia (and also India and Iran) on the East African coast, became the dominant religion and ideology of the so-called Swahili trade civilization – a unique conglomerate of the elements derived from medieval Islamic and traditional African social institutions, worldviews and cultures. Islam became the foundation on which had grown and developed classical literature in Swahili – the major language of sub-Saharan Africa. Propagation of Islamic worldview and values, reflections and moralizing on Islamic ethics, appraisals of the heroic deeds of the defenders of

the faith – these themes formed the main content of the *tenzi* (singular form – *utenzi*), long epic poems that were the main genre in classical Swahili lore. Islamic values and piety also permeated the *mashairi* – lyrical poetry that emerged in Swahili literature in the 18–19 centuries AD. For a more detailed account on the reflection of Islamic values in classical Swahili literature see, e.g., (Topan 1992, 2001).

Christianization of the East African region, which had gained momentum since the beginning of the European colonization, mostly covered the hinterland areas of Kenya and Tanganyika, the former "pagan" communities, which, under the influence of missionaries and new colonial governments, were actively adopting new religion. Thus the Muslim population of the coast region was largely spared from the imposition of Christianity, which to a high extent defined the present-day "geographical" distribution of the two religions in Tanzania and Kenya – Islam remains the main religion on the coast and the islands, whereas the continental area is predominantly Christian (although the coast features Christian "enclaves", and the continental area hosts relatively large Muslim communities). Currently in Tanzania the Muslims comprise about a half of the country's population, in Kenya their size is estimated between ten and twenty percent.

Although the current study focuses, as was indicated in the introductory part, on modern Swahili writing, it must be noted that already in classical or "old" Swahili literature the relationship between the two religions became a well-established theme, and in its earlier works – basically in the *tenzi* epics – it was largely represented as the clash of the two, in which the Christians were depicted as "infidels", and the Muslims – as the "warriors of the light", "valiant lions" and the like. Majority of these poems are in fact adaptations of earlier Arabic texts, describing the military episodes of the earlier history of Islam, – hence they are set not in Eastern Africa, but on Arabian peninsula and adjacent territories. One of the brightest examples of this genre can be found in *Utenzi wa Herekali* (The epic of Herkal), telling about the war between the Arabs and the Byzantines in the first millennium AD.

The relations between the "native" coastal Islam and Christianity, "imported" by the Europeans, in Eastern Africa proper were first depicted in the later exemplars of *utenzi* genre, composed by the Swahili poets in the last quarter of the 19th century after the German invasion of Tanganyika. In *Utenzi wa Wadachi kutamalaki Mrima* (The epic of German siege of Mrima, 1859) its author Hemed Abdallah al-Buhriy divides the "protagonists" and their enemies along the border of religion: the Europeans (*wazungu*) are "the enemies of Allah", "infidels", whereas the coastal dwellers (the Swahili) are united by the spirit of "defending the faith" and fighting for the sultan, "whose virtues are great – I can not even list them", and who relies on "docility and service of everyone" (Zhukov 1997: 180, 188). However, rather soon the religious principles gave way to practical – which may be seen again in the poems written by Swahili poets already during the first years of German rule in Tanganyika. The poets, who previously were calling for fighting against the "infidels" (at the same time observing that the Europeans have "iron boats", "canons and stutterers", "guns, shells and bullets", "their fortifications are impregnable" – Zhukov 1997, 188–189), started to join colonial service as interpreters and clerks, composing praise poems for their new employers. As an example one can quote an *utenzi* composed by the poet Nasoro bin Halefu bin Ishani as a homage to the German governor of Tanganyika Herman von Wissmann (1853–1905):

Na mtu asiyekiri	And a man who does not accept
Ya kama si sultani	That he is a sultan,
Huyu ni mtu jeuri	That man is insolent,
Ataka kitanzi shingoni […]	He wants a noose on his neck […]
Watengezwa maasi	They create rebellion,
Wasiotii Jermani	Those who don't obey Germans,
Guverneri Wismani	Governor Wissmann
Mola mzidishe kuwa…	Let God increase his life […]

(Quoted in Mulokozi 2001: 82–83)

The opposition between Christianity and Islam from a new viewpoint – that of a newly converted Christian – is found in James Mbotela's book *Uhuru wa watumwa* (Freedom of slaves, 1934). The author, through the mouth of the main character (the book is written as a story told by a father to his son), retells the life of hundreds, perhaps thousands of Africans (it is also possible that the author retold his own biography) who happened to witness the last years of Arab slavery on East African coast. The hero of the story, a native of continental Tanganyika (lake Nyasa region) was captured by Arab slave traders, brought in chains to the coast and loaded onto a ship to Zanzibar, from where he was to be sold into slavery to Arabia. But the slave traders' ship on the way to Zanzibar was intercepted by an English cruiser, the Arabs were arrested, and the former slaves were taken back to the coast, where they were offered either to get to their native places themselves, or to settle here, on the coast, "under the wing" of the missionaries – moreover, in exchange for accepting Christianity they were promised lifting fees. The English officers who freed the slaves, and then the missionaries, are portrayed in Mbotela's story as "knights without fear or reproach", whereas the Arab traders are depicted as the bearers of all human vices. Accordingly, the author's attitude towards their religions is that Islam "allows to sell people," while Christianity unites everyone with the idea of universal love and tolerance. Islam and Christianity are also seen by the author as opposite, moreover, hostile to each other, but also only from a "utilitarian" point of view: Muslims are bad because they make black people slaves, while Christians are good because they liberate and settle them – while the author also has no special illusions about the latter; answering his son's question "why can't we live here as in our home in Mpanda", the father says: "This is now a white man's country, my son. And we can do only what we are told to by those who brought us here" (Mbotela 1934: 23).

I quote here these excerpts from the texts, written during the first years of European colonization, to stress that the religious motifs in later works of "old" Swahili literature and early works of "new" Swahili

writing did not have an all-sufficient character; the struggle for faith as a "pure abstraction", an idea, the sentiments of jihad lost their relevance after the defeat of the uprisings in the late 19th century, led by Muslim leaders (moreover, even these uprisings were mostly motivated by different reasons – the advancement of European colonization was depriving the influential Muslim clans of their economic and political power in the region).

And the practice of colonial society showed that in the "new order" two religions could coexist without much conflict – the rulers of the Swahili cities reconciled with the new power (of the British in Kenya and the Germans on the Tanganyikan coast, who were later also replaced by the British), Christian communities grew on the coast (including those of former slaves), and Muslim religious life also proceeded without any special complications.

This practice of coexistence between Islam and Christianity seems to be one of the main reasons why some Swahili writers of the first half of the twentieth century developed almost "theomonistic" views, a belief in one God who is only addressed in different languages. First of all, this applies to the works of Shaaban Robert (1909–1962), the first major writer and classic of the twentieth century Swahili literature.

In his novella *Siku ya watenzi wote* (The day of all creators, published posthumously in 1968), Shaaban Robert, a Muslim by birth, describes an ideal society – a commune created in one of the East African cities, the inhabitants of which worship a certain divine power called "Mungu"; faith in this supreme being unites representatives of different religions – Muslims, Christians and "pagans" (followers of traditional religions). "Shaaban Robert, in search of the "right path" of man, of all people on earth, saw the way out in the creation of a single, abstract religiosity, a universal Faith, not associated with one or another specific religion, not having a specific form of worshipping. The writer was waiting for the day when the kingdom of One Faith would come, when […] the "the creators, the genitors, the Almighty" of various religions would unite in people's consciousness

into a single Creator – Mungu, a kind of generalized supreme being" (Zhukov 1997: 267).[1]

The living embodiment of Shaaban's ideas about a single faith are the main characters of the story – the head of the commune Ayubu, the son of a coastal Muslim and a woman in whose veins "flowed Portuguese, Greek and African blood," and his comrade-in-arms Sarah, the daughter of a local merchant. "Shaaban Robert was a deeply religious man – a Muslim […] However, the Christian religion (as an objective element of colonial society) had a great influence on him. That is why he finally developed an aspiration to rise above each of the separate religions. Even the heroine of the story has two names – Binti Rashidi and Sarah; the first is Muslim, the second is of biblical origin" (Zhukov 1997: 267).

The ideas of Shaaban Robert were later to a certain extent reflected in the concept of *ujamaa* – official state ideology of Tanzania, practiced from early 1960s to early 1980s, under the leadership of Julius Nyerere (1922–1999), who is often called "the father of *ujamaa*". *Ujamaa*, a version of "African socialism", proclaimed that all the citizens of the country are united by common ideas, among them – a common faith, whose supreme being also received the name of Mungu (the Swahili word itself means "god" or "deity"). Of course, religious ideology of *ujamaa* did not imply the violent rejection of adherents of a particular religion from its tenets; however, confessional differences were considered "insignificant". The concept, developed by Tanzanian leaders, was in a way a compromise between Islam and Christianity (bearing in mind an almost equal representation of the two religions in the country); the official ideology was speaking about a certain abstract religion (even the country's national anthem addresses the same "abstract" Mungu). "During *ujamaa* Tanzanians were supposed to live as one regardless of their religious affiliations and ethnical backgrounds. This was meant to develop a sense of respect and human dignity. They were to learn to live without discriminating on the basis of gender,

[1] All the translations in this article are mine – M.G.

religion, race or tribe. […] Religiously, Nyerere believed and worked hard in separating religion from the state, respecting all religions and upholding religious freedom. With this he managed to suppress religiocentrism in the country and maintained a secular government while leaving citizens free to choose their religion and mode of worship" (Keya 2022: 1).

These ideas found their reflection in Tanzanian prose of the 1970s and 1980s. The authors were propagating inter-faith marriages, advocating the primacy of universal values – love, mutual understanding, spiritual affinity – over religious differences. Arguably the only example of a Tanzanian literary work of this period that condemns the transgression of religious dogmas is Agoro Anduru's novella *Kukosa radhi* (Without blessing, 1983). Its characters, a Muslim young man and a Christian girl, who contracted marriage against the will of their parents, are finally struck by the divine wrath – their only son dies, their marriage falls apart, the husband dies in a drunken brawl, and his widow, rejected by her family, goes astray. The positive characters in the book are the relatives of the young couple, who faithfully adhere to religious rules and are trying to dissuade the young lovers from a fatal step.

However, other Tanzanian authors demonstrated a directly opposite attitude to intra-confessional insularity – an example can be found in the novella *Harusi* (The wedding, 1985) by Abdrahman Saffari. In this story, a young Muslim doctor Mustafa falls in love with a catholic girl Jane; but the prospective marriage between them causes the discontent of Mustafa's parents, who force their son to marry his betrothed fiancée, a Muslim girl. However, because of dissimilarity of characters and the lack of common views about life Mustafa's marriage soon ends in a divorce, and his subsequent marriage to Jane gives Mustafa a happy family life, and even his relatives have to admit it. The words about "one God for all", which the newlyweds utter in the final chapter, indicate, in our opinion, a general approach of Tanzanian authors of *ujamaa* period to issues of an ideological nature, of which the question of religion is, of course, one of the topmost. Far from denying, but rather affirming the necessity of faith, Saffari at the same time points out the artificiality of

confessional barriers that create obstacles to the true unity of people. "Truly, marriages are made in heaven," exclaims at the end of the story an elderly sheikh Alhaji, Mustafa's father. In an interview, given to the author of this article, Saffari said: "I myself am a Muslim, this can be understood by my name, but I am strongly against the mutual accusations, exchanged by the representatives of different religions – only the God Himself could know, what is better or what is worse for us […] In any case I do not want to have anything to do with books like that one [Anduru's novella – M.G.), I think that such views are erratic. A writer's duty is to reflect the real state of things, and the readers will decide by themselves, what is good or bad" (Mazungumzo 2001: 53–54).

From social issues – about the place of religion in modern East African society, about the relationships between different faiths – many Tanzanian authors in their works move on to thinking about the philosophical aspects of religion, trying to comprehend its role in the life of modern humanity, its necessity in the future. Writers pay special attention to issues of true and false faith – the question of the "vocation" or "pharisaism" of a believer is one of the central issues in the novels of the prominent Tanzanian writer Euphrase Kezilahabi (1944–2020). Already in his first novel *Rosa Mistika* (1971), titled by the name of its heroine, the writer reflects on whether the concepts of "faith" and "religion" are connected, how deep the gap is between "formal" and true, internal faith. The bearer of true faith in the novel is the illiterate peasant woman Regina, the mother of the main character, who, not from the words of the priest, but with her whole being has comprehended and fulfilled the main commandments of Christianity – forgiveness and compassion for the fallen. Regina's antagonist in the novel is her husband, church warden Zakaria, a drunkard and hypocrite, who tyrannizes his family under the pretext of his concern for their "Christian morality." A similar pair of characters is depicted in Kezilahabi's novel *Gamba la nyoka* (Snake skin, 1979) – the illiterate peasant woman Tinda believes in God "by inspiration", for her God is the only consolation in life's endless suffering; Tinda's antagonist is a priest nick-

named Beard, philanderer and perjurer, who tries to seduce Tinda and ultimately suffers punishment at the hands of his own parishioners.

In Kezilahabi's dilogy *Nagona* (I dream, 1989) and *Mzingile* (Labyrinth, 1990), reflections on "formal" and true faith lead the writer to deny not only confessional differences, but also any "formalization" of the relationship between God and man in general, to the idea about the uselessness of those religious institutions that humanity has created over the centuries.

The hero of the dilogy, an abstract "person in general" named Mimi – "I", is one of the few survivors of a nuclear disaster; a premonition of imminent death leads him to the ruins of his native village. The author expresses his denial of any ideology, including religious, through a series of simple but capacious symbols – the hero walks around the ruins of a school, mosque, church and cemetery; at school he finds only a board with a warning "don't repeat our mistakes", in a mosque – a rotten mat, in a church – the skeleton of a priest with a volume of *Das Kapital* under his arm and a box of wine, and in the cemetery he notices that "the names have been erased from the monuments, but the boundaries between places for Muslims, Christians and pagans are still clearly visible" (Kezilahabi 1990: 79). In the ruins of the village, the hero finds decrepit and dying God, who has taken the form of an old man with a staff (in the text referred to as Mzee); his house on the mountain is destroyed, the old man is in desperation and is preparing to go into oblivion. The hero, without feeling any special affection for the old man, still takes care of him. One day, after heavy rain, the old man disappears; that same night, war-crippled nature begins to revive, and in the final scene, the inhabitants of the renewed world see an old man climbing a high mountain with a staff and a book under his arm. This ending scene may have a variety of interpretations – a rather "positive" one (that the connection between God and people are restored, and thus humanity begins to live again) (see, e.g., Gromov 1995; Bertoncini 2001), while Onoda gives a much more sceptical interpretation, stating that God is ridiculed in this final scene and "thus, this *mzingile*, or labyrinth, has no ending" (Onoda 2016: 84).

Sonja Mezger (2002) provides a convincing analysis of Kezilanabi's deconstruction of the very idea of religion (especially Roman Catholicism) in its modern version. However, at the same time she points out that Kezilahabi uses these same concepts of old religion to depict a newly born world. In the concluding part of the article she tries to find an explanation to that discrepancy:

> In *Mzingile* Kezilahabi deconstiucts important elements of Roman Catholic faith. In search of the meaning of life *Mimi* does not get any help or solutions, whenever he meets with institutions or God himself. But then why does Kezilahabi use Roman Catholic rituals and images derived from the Bible to describe the new world? A possible answer to this question can be found in the last chapter *Mwanamke* and *Mimi* are discussing the old order and the new world, pointing out that both have their origin in paradise (p. 67) – "This [life] started in the dreams of Mzee, it became worse, when he woke up and threw them out of the garden. This life now starts in the dream of emptiness at the fountain and is manifested by his non-existence. His old age allows the destruction and the renunciation of former foundations, and now we have the possibility to lay new foundations. This is science. Science does not follow the building up of one stone on top of the other." As it seems it is not a matter of using new pictures, but of using a new foundation on which the pictures are based. So Kezilahabi depicts the new world consequently through old images.
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> The deconstruction of the Roman Catholic institutions and the image of God serves to make one realize that these are only concepts which were originally supposed to facilitate a form of living together. This recognition is the basis on which the creation of a new order can be built. Therefore it seems, that Kezilahabi is not convinced, that Roman Catholic faith could be useful in search of the meaning of life. It is rather the quintessence, which is left after the deconstruction of these concepts, that he understands as helpful and as creative space: the emptiness. Or in the words of Kezilahabi: "Let us sleep and dream about the emptiness and our souls" (p. 68).
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> (Mezger 2002: 84).

The author of this study tends to agree with this interpretation along one of its key aspects – the concept of "emptiness", which, as it must be noted, is qualitatively different from the "emptiness" mentioned in

the novel of Mkufya (see below). Kezilahabi's "emptiness" may rather be interpreted as tabula rasa, a clear field (or, in Mezger's terms, a new foundation) on which new humanity would build a new consciousness and a new faith – but it would by necessity include some "old pictures", which are indispensable for the human existence. Likewise, "science" in the quoted text shall not be interpreted in the present narrow sense – it is rather a symbol of this new consciousness, which largely denies the prejudices and other drawbacks intrinsic to older forms. In other words, "impartiality" of consciousness and search for harmony with the world and oneself – these appeared to be the main values for Kezilahabi during this period of his work.

Similar motifs permeate the novel by the Tanzanian writer Wiliam Mkufya *Ziraili na Zirani* (Azrael & Zirani 1999). The plot of the work is a rebellion against the Divine Throne of the "forces of materialism" led by Satan, into which "theomachists" of all epochs unite, – from Giordano Bruno, Galileo and Luther to Lenin, Bakunin and Che Guevara (in the finale, all the events described turn out to be a grandiose performance staged by the Almighty to punish humanity, mired in sins). The text brings together an impressive variety of historical and mythological characters – the organizational meeting of the "forces of materialism" is attended by Darwin, Marx, Voltaire, Holbach, Diderot and Feuerbach, along with the demons of Christian hell, chaired by Lucifer, and Muslim demons headed by Azrael (as a courier they use a "swanky guy from Russia named Mayakovsky" – Mkufya 1999: 78–81); in the final battle against the heavenly host, "materialists" are fighting side by side with the characters of Christian and Muslim demonology – Lucifer, Iblis, Alal, Azazel, Rahabu and others. Paradise is protected from the "forces of materialism" and hellish forces by Muslim and Christian angels – Michael, Gabriel, Raphael, Azrael, Uriel, Malik and Ridvani. Finally "forces of materialism" along with infernal troops win the battle – the Divine Throne is destroyed; but instead of the triumph of victory, the "god-fighters" feel only desolateness and fear. "The death toll of the bell made them shudder and be horrified by the

chaos they had left behind. Zirani and his companions stood as if struck by thunder. A shadow of doubt, turning into fear, appeared more and more clearly on their faces: instead of debunking the mystery of faith, they found themselves faced with an even more incomprehensible mystery – the mystery of emptiness" (Mkufya 1999: 225). While asserting the necessity of faith, the author at the same time places the blame on humanity both for the meaninglessness of religious differences and the strife caused by them. It is significant that one of the main characters in the novel, an African named Zirani, goes to hell "for not observing the fundamentals of the faith bequeathed by his parents." "And what faith were your parents of?" – Zirani's companion asks. "Father was a Muslim, mother – a Christian", replies Zirani" (Mkufya 1999: 100). Mkufya not only asserts the need for religion – but the need for a single faith, which should unite humanity in the face of the dangers that threaten it at the turn of the millennium, especially in the face of the threat of self-destruction. Mkufya's novel can be regarded as a serious attempt to "reassess the values" of human civilization, to turn to the fundamental principles of existence, which humanity, according to the author, has lost in "a continuous war with itself, which it called progress."

Speaking about the theme of two religions in a modern Swahili-language prose, it is impossible not to mention the works of Said Ahmed Mohamed – today's largest Tanzanian writer, poet, playwright and author of numerous prose works.

In his early, realistic novels *Asali chungu* (Bitter honey, 1976), *Dunia mti mkavu* (The world is a dry tree, 1980), *Utengano* (Separation, 1980), *Kiza katika nuru* (Darkness in the light, 1988), *Tata za Asumini* (Enigmas of Asumini, 1991), the author depicts the life of the Muslim communities of Zanzibar and the Tanzanian coast, introduces the reader to the characteristic features of the life and worldview of his heroes. In his later works, which, like the novels of Kezilahabi and Mkufya discussed above, have obvious elements of parabolic prose and postmodern writing, the author addresses the problem of the relationship and coexistence of two religions in a broader perspective – in the

context of global changes that, in the author's opinion, can lead humanity to spiritual and then physical death.

In the novel *Babu alipofufuka* (When grandfather was revived, 2002), about the journey of the main character into a certain parallel world, allegorically depicting the "today" of our planet, there is an episode in which crowds of people, symbolizing poor countries, are rushing for sops that giants with the names of industrial powers throw at them. The sops are not enough for everyone, and, having quarreled, the poor people start throwing at each other "the stones of faith" – the transparent hint of the long-time practice of using the religious rhetoric for the purposes hardly related to religion as such. In the same novel, the author asserts that the vices of modern human society – thirst for profit, disregard for all and every kind of values and neglect of the lives of future generations for the sake of enrichment – have no religious differences, which is embodied in the images of the main character, a businessman named K., a Muslim by birth, who rejected religion for the sake of the new cult of money, and his "teachers and inspirers" – the moneybag Khalifa and his friend, an English businessman.

In the novel with the eloquent title *Dunia yao* (Their world, 2006), the main character, also bearing the abstract name Ndi, tries to find a way to confront the murderous nature of the modern world, "their world," the world of profit and cruelty, and he assigns an important role in this to the unity of religions. Ndi, an African and a Muslim by birth, says about himself that "I want to be a Muslim in the Christian sense, or a Christian by Islamic truth" (Mohamed 2006: 144). Ndi condemns those who have "one foot in faith and the other in politics" (p. 153), and in one of his dreams (which for him are "more real than reality") he sees Africans of all nations and religions who gathered in the symbolic Valley of the Talisman to hear the word of the one Creator.

Similar issues can be traced in the works of Swahili-language writers of Kenya written in recent decades. Kyallo Wamitila's novel *Nguvu ya sala* (The power of prayer, 1999) also explores questions of true and false faith. The novel is centered on the conflict between the heroine,

a girl named Susan, and her "mini-society", the family, which is personified by the figure of Susan's father, the priest Richard, who in his blind worship of religious rules is ready to destroy the fate of his own children. "A faith that kills parents' love for children cannot be true," Susan says to her father when he throws out of his house his eldest daughter, who "dared" to fall in love with the neighbor's boy. The novel appears to be influenced by the early prose of Euphrase Kezilahabi (Wamitila is also the author of a number of critical works on Kezilahabi's writing), but the author avoids the rather sharp accents characteristic of the early Kezilahabi's works, offering the reader more impartial, "polyphonic" view of the situation described.

In the novel *Bina-adamu* (Wonder-man, 2002), which, like the works of Tanzanian authors discussed above, actively uses elements of parabolic prose and postmodern writing (Wamitila is one of the founders of the "Kenyan branch" of the so-called "new" or "experimental" novel in Swahili), the author depicts in allegorical form how traditional religions – Islam, Christianity, Buddhism, and others – are replaced in the minds of our contemporaries by a "new faith", consisting of surrogate values of the era of globalization and the "new world economy". "We too easily turn anything into gods," complains the author through the words of his main character (Wamitila 2002: 152). According to the author, the main task of modern humanity is not so much the search for "new gods" or "new faith", but rather the fight against the devil, who has penetrated deep into the consciousness of people. The hero himself meets with the devil, in the novel called the "global villain", in one of the final scenes: "It will be difficult to fight me," I heard the familiar voice. "I penetrated into your very mind. I am even where I am not. Or rather, when I am not there, that means that I am! And what about your youth, your boys and girls?" (Wamitila 2002: 153). This struggle, as the author believes, should know no religious differences – all past strife must be forgotten for the sake of victory over the common enemy and the salvation of humanity.

For the conclusion, it can be stated that almost from the first decades of the emergence of modern Swahili literature, it was oriented towards the

idea of peaceful coexistence and constructive dialogue between the two religions. Such views as expressed in Agoro Anduru's *Kukosa radhi*, in which the author asserts the "incompatibility" of Islam and Christianity, were opposed by other authors of both Christian and Muslim denominations, for example Abdrahman Saffari and William Mkufya. Many writers (such as Kezilahabi, Mohamed, Mkufya, Wamitila) in their works have shown the abuse of religious traditions for various inhuman purposes as one of the characteristic traits of modern society. This drives them to the idea of the general inability of existent religions to cater to the needs of modern humanity, which in its own turn leads them to the concept of a new "common faith", incorporating elements of Christian, Muslim and other religions, that may succeed to provide more unity for humanity (the idea of such a common faith was already outlined in the formative period of modern Swahili literature by one of its founders, Tanganyikan author Shaaban Robert). Most of the works mentioned in this study may be regarded as the author's warning to mankind, calling their audiences to reassess the current use and nature of religious traditions for the sake of establishing common goals and ways of existence.

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