

Diapraxis for peace: A case from Zanzibar

1. Introduction

After decades of pioneering with interreligious dialogue,¹ in June 2005 the World Council of Churches gathered at “a critical moment in interreligious dialogue” to take stock of progress made and discuss future directions.² A bridge-building conversation was convened, where “talkers” and “doers” met.³ As one might expect from a world gathering around a broad topic, the recommendations were many and varied.⁴

Taking the conference topic as its point of departure, this article will introduce the concept diapraxis and describe an example of it, arguing that it could constitute one among several fruitful avenues in future interreligious dialogue. It has the potential to bridge interreligious as well as intrareligious gaps; between religions such as Islam and Christianity as well as between the “talkers” and the “doers” within any religion. A major part of the article presents a case of diapraxis of which I was a part, namely the Joint committee of religious leaders for peace in Zanzibar.⁵

¹ WCC's 1967 consultation on “Christian Dialogue with Men of Other Faiths” in Kandy, Sri Lanka, “marked a new departure regarding relationships between Christianity and other faiths.” S.Wesley Ariarajah, *Hindus and Christians: A Century of Protestant Ecumenical Thought* (W.B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1991). 132. For a chronology of the WCC's meetings about or with relevance for interreligious dialogue from 1928 to 2000, see Jutta Sperber, *Christians and Muslims: The Dialogue Activities of the World Council of Churches and Their Theological Foundation* (Walter de Gruyter, 2000). 7-50.

Some of the meetings were specifically concerned with Christian-Muslim relations, such as the consultation held at Broumana, Lebanon, in 1972, on “The Quest for Human Understanding and Cooperation - Christian and Muslim Contributions.” The 1976 consultation concerning “Christian Mission and Islamic Dawah” in Switzerland included a contribution from Zanzibar; see Ali Muhsin Barwani, “Muslim Experience of Christian Mission in East Africa,” *International Review of Mission* 65, no. 260 (1976). 438-42.

² “We have the feeling that we need to sit down together with friends, take stock of our experiences and see how best we can proceed to make interreligious dialogue the meaningful way of relating and cooperating in a world of religious plurality.” Charlotte Venema, Hans Ucko, and Ariane Hentsch, *Changing the Present, Dreaming the Future: A Critical Moment in Interreligious Dialogue* (Geneva: World Council of Churches, 2006). 6.

³ “The talkers” is my way of denoting “those who tend to focus on interreligious dialogue,” (ibid. 8) frequently theologians. “The doers” is my way of denoting “those who concentrate on cooperative efforts on social justice issues in the midst of religious differences,” (ibid. 8) frequently those concerned with praxis, development and diakonia.

⁴ Among the topics that emerged from the group discussions were the purpose of dialogue, the need for intra-religious dialogue, the issue of conversion, religion as a tool for political ends as well as the need to spread best practices. Ibid. 76-84.

⁵ A forth-coming PhD thesis analyses the committee's origins, activities and impact. It is called *Unity is Strength*, and will be defended in 2017 at VID Specialized University, Stavanger, Norway. In the capacity of a missionary pastor sent out by Danmission to work in the Eastern & Coastal Diocese of the Evangelical Lutheran Church of Tanzania I was a member of the committee from 2005-2010.

2. What is diapraxis?

'Diapraxis' was coined by Lissi Rasmussen in 1988.⁶ In her seminal article on the concept, Rasmussen relates that among what inspired her thinking was her own experience with Christian-Muslim cooperation in *Ujamaa* villages in Tanzania.⁷ She also referred to a WCC conference in Mombasa in 1979, where diapraxis thinking was articulated, recommending that "Christians and Muslims spare no effort to live and work with each other, and with others, towards reconciling conflicts and helping local communities to act upon their own choices in self-development towards a more just and participatory society."⁸ At the conference, a proposal was made to replace the narrow term 'dialogue' with the more comprehensive term 'relationships.'⁹ One may observe that from the start, diapraxis was understood as giving primacy to relational thinking: "It is our relationships with people rather than our concepts about them that count."¹⁰ Moreover, it belonged in a tradition where transformative action had priority over cognitive understanding:

Against the background of my experiences in Africa and Europe, I see dialogue as a living process, a way of living in co-existence and pro-existence. Therefore, I want to introduce the term "diapraxis". While dialogue indicates a relationship in which talking together is central, diapraxis indicates a relationship in which a common praxis is essential. Thus by diapraxis I do not mean the actual application of dialogue but rather dialogue as action. We need a more

⁶ Lissi Rasmussen, "From Diapraxis to Dialogue," in *Dialogue in Action - in Honour of Johannes Aagaard*, ed. Moti Lal Pandit Lars Thunberg, Carl Vilh. Fogh-Hansen (New Delhi: 1988).

Diapraxis Og Dialog Mellem Kristne Og Muslimer: I Lyset Af Den Afrikanske Erfaring (Århus: Aarhus Universitetsforl., 1997).

Born in 1953, the Danish Lutheran pastor and theologian Lissi Rasmussen has been working with Christian-Muslim relations for decades, pioneering diapraxis initiatives and co-founding the Islamic-Christian Study Centre in Copenhagen, Denmark, in 1996. "Islamisk-Kristent Studiecenter," site accessed 31 October 2016 <http://ikstudiecenter.dk/>. She has also functioned as a resource person for the Lutheran World Federation (LWF).

One may argue that the concept largely corresponds to the type of dialogue categorised in the Vatican's *Dialogue and Proclamation* as 'dialogue of action':

"a) The dialogue of life, where people strive to live in an open and neighbourly spirit, sharing their joys and sorrows, their human problems and preoccupations. b) The dialogue of action, in which Christians and others collaborate for the integral development and liberation of people. c) The dialogue of theological exchange, where specialists seek to deepen their understanding of their respective religious heritages, and to appreciate each other's spiritual values. d) The dialogue of religious experience, where persons, rooted in their own religious traditions, share their spiritual riches, for instance with regard to prayer and contemplation, faith and ways of searching for God or the Absolute."

Pontifical Council for Interreligious Dialogue and Congregation for the Evangelization of Peoples, *Dialogue and Proclamation: Reflections and Orientations on Interreligious Dialogue and the Proclamation of the Gospel of Jesus Christ* (Pontifical Council for Interreligious Dialogue, 1991). 42.

⁷ "Extended familyhood". *Ujamaa* has etymological roots in Arabic, denoting 'community'. It is related to *jumuiya* (community, association) and *ijumaa* (Friday, the day of assembly.)

⁸ World Council of Churches. Sub-unit for Dialogue with People of Living Faiths and Ideologies, *Christian Presence and Witness in Relation to Muslim Neighbours: A Conference, Mombasa, Kenya, 1979* (World Council of Churches. Dialogue with People of Living Faiths and Ideologies, 1981).

⁹ Sperber, *Christians and Muslims: The Dialogue Activities of the World Council of Churches and Their Theological Foundation*. 36.

¹⁰ Rasmussen, "From Diapraxis to Dialogue." 277.

anthropological contextual approach to dialogue where we see diapraxis as a meeting between people who try to reveal and transform the reality they share.¹¹

The concept also has a critical edge towards traditional Western modes of acting and thinking, drawing inspiration from established communal practices in Africa and the Middle East:

A western understanding of dialogue, a constructed dialogue, would be absurd and artificial in the African context where diapraxis is already existing. Christians and Muslims in Africa do not have to learn how, but they just continue to live with each other. This also applied traditionally to countries in the Middle East and still does in certain areas. From the African example we can learn that it is by taking our starting point in our common life based on common work that we reach a mutual understanding.¹²

One may argue that among the possible avenues available after the above-mentioned “critical moment in interreligious dialogue” in 2006 was that the practice and philosophy of dialogue could move on from polite search for common ground towards the more ethical and proactive accentuation of “diapraxis as a way of life.”¹³

One may ask what criteria are necessary for denoting anything as diapraxis. Stephanie Dietrich introduces three criteria, defining diapraxis as “solidaric helpful action motivated by religion, containing interreligious and intercultural aspects.”¹⁴ One may extract three crucial components from her definition of diapraxis, namely the praxis aspect, the religious motivation and the interreligious aspect.

3. The diapraxis case of the Joint committee of Religious Leaders in Zanzibar 2005-2010

Having briefly introduced the diapraxis concept, in the following I will argue why it constitutes a fruitful avenue in future interreligious dialogue. This is primarily so because, first of all, by bridging the gap between religions, the prospects for peace at local, national and international levels are

¹¹ Ibid. 281.

¹² Ibid. 286-287.

¹³ Sigvard von Sicard, "Diapraxis or Dialogue and Beyond," in *Dialogue and Beyond: Christians and Muslims Together on the Way*, ed. Sigvard von Sicard and Ingo Wulfhorst (Geneva: The Lutheran World Federation, 2003). 131.

¹⁴ “Der Begriff der Diapraxis beschreibt solidarisches, helfendes Handeln, das religiös motiviert ist, und immer auch einen Interreligiösen oder interkulturellen Aspekt beinhaltet.”

Stephanie Dietrich, "Die Teilhabe Der Diakonie an Der Vermittlung Der Evangeliums: Solidarisches Handeln/Diapraxis Als Religiöse Rede in Postsekulären Gesellschaften," in *Religiöse Rede in Postsekulären Gesellschaften*, ed. Miriam Rose and Michael Wermke (Leipzig: Evangelische Verlagsanstalt, 2016). 254.

enhanced. Diapraxis can inspire new dynamics when dichotomies of various kinds are obstructing the development of societies and rendering ‘the common good’ a utopian dream.¹⁵ As a possible side effect, diapraxis has the potential to bridge the gap between the “talkers” and the “doers” within the religions.

In order to back up my argument, I will introduce a case of diapraxis of which I was a part, namely the Joint committee of religious leaders for peace in Zanzibar.¹⁶ Between 2005 and 2010 this Christian-Muslim peace committee facilitated and led sixty-six public dialogue meetings, most held in local communities, but also high-profile dialogue meetings with politicians present.¹⁷ Due to space restraints, the following will limit itself to presenting the latter kind of meetings, but the committee needs further presentation:

The goal for which it worked was peace,¹⁸ and the backdrop to the formation of the diapraxis peace initiative was political polarisation which threatened to destabilise Zanzibar and also Tanzania. The 26-27 January 2001 violence in Pemba had seen 31 opposition party sympathisers killed in clashes with the police, leading to the flight of two thousand Pembans to Kenya.¹⁹ To contribute to

¹⁵ The concept ‘the common good’ was largely synonymous to the goal for which the committee worked, namely “peace.” For a deeper discussion, Jonas Norgaard Mortensen’s book on the concept presents *personalism* as a third way between individualism and collectivism, arguably comprising a similar way of proposing a compromise between capitalism and communism. Among the thinkers who have inspired or been inspired by personalism, he refers to Nicolai Berdyaev, Max Scheler, Jacques Maritain, Emmanuel Mounier, Hal Koch, Martin Luther King, Emmanuel Levinás, Pope John Paul II, Desmond Tutu and Václav Havel.

Norgaard Mortensen was a Danmission missionary in Egypt 2010-12.

Jonas Norgaard Mortensen, *The Common Good: An Introduction to Personalism* (Boedal, 2014).

¹⁶ I was a member of the committee from 2005 to 2010. Having been sent out by Danmission to work ecumenically for the Eastern & Coastal Diocese of the Evangelical Lutheran Church of Tanzania with Christian-Muslim relations in Zanzibar, I was part of the process to have the committee established. The process started in 2003, and included a number of visits to the Anglican bishop Douglas Toto, the Catholic bishop Augustine Shao and the secretary to the Mufti’s office, Sh Fadhil Suleiman Soraga.

¹⁷ Between March 2008 and June 2009 the committee conducted thirty meetings to establish 284 local interfaith peace committees. The total number of participants was 2656. Twelve follow-up meetings between December 2009 and June 2010 were attended by 823 committee members.

The dialogue meetings were not public in the sense that everybody could participate, as it would have been difficult to plan and organise. The participants always had an invitation, usually issued through their institution. The meetings were public in the sense that media were invited to report from them and issues of public concern were discussed.

¹⁸ In its founding document, the committee committed itself to the task of coordinating “all issues concerning religious leaders in Zanzibar’s efforts on the whole issue of building and maintaining peace in the country.”

“Ilipitishwa kuwa kiundwe chombo kitakachoratibu shughuli zote zinazohusu jitihada za Viongozi wa dini hapa Zanzibar katika suala zima la kujenga na kudumisha amani nchini.”

“Jitihada Ya Viongozi Wa Dini Katika Kujenga Amani Tanzania (“Religious Leaders’ Efforts to Build Peace in Tanzania”), 9 August 2005.”

¹⁹ Gaudens Phillip Mpangala and Jonathan M K Lwehabura, “Conflict Resolution and Human Security in 2005 Elections,” in *The Many Faces of Human Security: Case Studies of Seven Countries in Southern Africa*, ed. Keith Muloongo, Roger Kibasomba, and Jemima Njeri Kariri (Institute for Security Studies 2005). 60.

“Before Zanzibar established a joint interfaith committee to discuss Peace & Tranquility, Mainland Tanzania had already established one. Concerning Zanzibar, we were only invited to such joint meetings. But after the events in 2001 in which inhabitants of the island of Pemba were killed, it became clear that Zanzibar needs to have religious leaders speaking with

peace, the most influential religious institutions in Tanzania formed a nationwide initiative called *Juhudi za Viongozi wa Dini kuimarisha Amani* (JVD), the literal meaning of which is “Religious leader’s efforts to solidify peace.” It consisted of the Christian Council of Tanzania (CCT), Tanzania Episcopal Conference (TEC) and *Baraza Kuu la Waislamu Tanzania* (Supreme Council of Tanzanian Muslims – BAKWATA). From 2003 the Zanzibar Mufti’s office officially joined the national initiative, but in 2005 Zanzibar got its own committee.²⁰ One may ask why Zanzibar had its own committee. First of all, Zanzibar comprises a semi-autonomous part of the United Republic of Tanzania.²¹ An argument warranting a Zanzibar committee was that religion does not figure in the Articles of the Union, which stipulate the shared areas.²²

When the Zanzibar committee was established on 19 August 2005, it was made up of seven respected, influential and well-established religious institutions in Zanzibar: The *Kadhis’* courts,²³ the *Wakf* and Trust commission,²⁴ the Muslim Academy, the *Mufti’s* office²⁵ as well as the Catholic, Anglican and Lutheran churches.²⁶

The founding document specifically mentioned a specific and imminent challenge for peace, namely the upcoming 30 October 2005 elections: The committee was “to deal with issues of peace

one voice to speak with political leaders and those of the government so that those religious leaders are able to raise their voices to be heard by the political leaders concerning the bringing of peace and tranquillity to the inhabitants of Zanzibar”. Thabit Noman Jongo, “Efforts of Religious Leaders for the Sake of Supervising Peace and Tranquillity in the Country from 2001 to 2007”.

²⁰ Peter Maduki, “Taarifa Ya Kazi Za Juhudi Za Viongozi Wa Dini Za Kuimarisha Amani (“Work Report from the Joint Committee of Religious Leaders for Peace”),” (2005).

²¹ The union remains a contested arrangement, partly because the Articles of the Union were signed in a hurry after the 1964 revolution and not ratified by the Zanzibar Revolutionary Council.

Issa G. Shivji, *Pan-Africanism or Pragmatism?: Lessons of the Tanganyika-Zanzibar Union* (Dar es Salaam, Tanzania: Mkuki na Nyota Publishers, 2008). Xviii.

²² “Katiba imeangalia sana bara. Dini haipo katika muungano.”

Arngeir Langås, “Notes from Committee Meeting 8 March 2007.”

²³ “*Kadhi* means “judge”, a representative of authority, invested with the power of jurisdiction.”

Emile Tyan, “Kadi,” in *The Encyclopaedia of Islam: Volume Iv: Iran-Kha*, ed. C.E. Bosworth, et al. (Leiden: Brill, 1978). 373.

The most recent version of the *Kadhis’* courts system was revised in 1985.

“The *Kadhis’* Courts Act No. 3 of 1985,” site accessed 8 March 2016 http://www.judiciaryzanzibar.go.tz/act_1/The%20Kadhis%20Court%20Act%20No%2003%20of%201985.pdf.

²⁴ *Wakf* refers to “The act of founding a charitable trust, and, hence the trust itself.”

Rudolph Peters, “Wakf,” in *The Encyclopaedia of Islam: Volume Xi: W-Z*, ed. P.J. Bearman, et al. (Leiden: Brill, 2002). 59.

Among the functions of the *Wakf* and Trust commission in Zanzibar is the administration of religious property and pilgrimages.

²⁵ “The person who gives a *fatwa*.” A *fatwa* means “opinion on a point of law.”

Emile Tyan, “Fatwa,” in *The Encyclopaedia of Islam: Volume Ii: C-G*, ed. B. Lewis, Ch. Pellat, and J. Schacht (Leiden: Brill, 1965). 866.

²⁶ The Catholic church established itself from 1860, the Anglican church from 1864, and the Lutheran church from 1887-1890, before returning again from 1962.

and stability here in the country of Zanzibar any time but especially at this time, when the country enters the 2005 election struggles.”²⁷ Peace as the fundamental goal and responsibility was given a theological justification: “A big responsibility for religious leaders is to warn political party leaders and their followers that they ensure a lasting peace. This is their fundamental responsibility, given to them by God Almighty.”²⁸ The Joint committee was to “prepare religious and political leaders to sit together and look at how to develop and maintain peace in Zanzibar.”²⁹

As the election date drew closer, the first meetings were held in Unguja on 29 August and in Pemba on 10 September. Those invited were religious and political leaders as well as leaders of the state apparatus and law enforcement agencies. The Catholic bishop, Augustine Shao, gave a lecture on the Christian view of the morals required by leaders in society,³⁰ whereas Sheikh Abdalla Talib’s topic was the importance of peace and stability in society.³¹ The decisions regarding topics and speakers had been taken in the committee meetings.

The next four meetings, conducted in Unguja on 28 and 29 September and in Pemba on 3 and 4 October, had the same contents. These were held for religious leaders and for CCM³² and CUF³³

²⁷ “Kushughulikia maswala ya Amani na Utulivu hapa nchini Zanzibar wakati wote lakini hasa wakati huu nchi inapoingia harakati za uchaguzi wa 2005.” Damas Mfoi, “Risala Ya Wana-Kamati Ya Viongozi Wa Dini Kwa Wakuu Wa Dini” (“Message from the Committee Members to Their Superiors”) Presented at “Siku Ya Kuzinduliwa Rasmi” (“the Official Launching Day”), Zanzibar, 19 August 2005. “Damas Mfoi, “Risala Ya Wana-Kamati Ya Viongozi Wa Dini Kwa Wakuu Wa Dini” (“Message from the Committee Members to Their Superiors”) Presented at “Siku Ya Kuzinduliwa Rasmi” (“the Official Launching Day”), Zanzibar, 19 August 2005.”

²⁸ “Jukumu kubwa la Viongozi wa Dini ni kuwaasa viongozi na wafuasi wa vyama vya siasa kuhakikisha kuwa amani inadumu. Huu ni wajibu wao wa msingi waliopewa na Mwenyezi Mungu.” Ibid.

²⁹ “Kuwaandalia viongozi wa Dini na wa Kisiasa kukaa pamoja na kuangalia namna ya kuendeleza na kudumisha amani Zanzibar.” Ibid.

³⁰ Agostino Ndelyakyama Shao, “Maadili Ya Viongozi Katika Jamii” (“Leaders’ Morals in Society”) Presented at “Mkutano Wa Viongozi Wa Dini, Wanasiasa, Vyombo Vya Dola Na Vya Sheria Unguja” (“Meeting for Religious Leaders, Politicians, State Organs and Law Enforcement Agencies in Unguja”), 29 August 2005.

Born in 1951, Shao was ordained bishop of Zanzibar in 1997. He is a member of the Congregation of the Holy Spirit.

³¹ Abdalla Talib Abdalla, “Umuhimu Wa Amani Na Utulivu Katika Jamii” (“the Importance of Peace and Tranquillity in Society”) Presented at “Semina Ya Viongozi Wa Dini Kwa Wanasiasa, Vyombo Vya Dola Na Vya Sheria” (“Religious Leaders’ Seminar for Politicians, State Organs and Law Enforcement Agencies”), Zanzibar, 29 August 2005.

Born in Zanzibar in 1969, Abdalla Talib Abdalla was a member of the Joint committee since 2005, representing the Wakf and Trust commission. He studied Arabic and Islamic Law at the Islamic University of Medina from 1990-96 and at the Master’s programme on Religions, Peace and Conflict Resolution at the Islamic University of Uganda from 2006-08.

³² Means “the revolutionary party”, established in 1977 as a merger between TANU (Tanganyika African National Union, established in 1954 from the Tanganyika African Association (TAA), which had been founded in 1929), and ASP (the Afro-Shirazi Party, established in 1957 when the Unguja Shirazi Association and the African Association, which had been founded in 1934), merged. By likeminded parties it is considered a national liberation movement like ZANU-PF in Zimbabwe, ANC in South Africa etc.

Roger Southall, “Threats to Constitutionalism by Liberation Movements in Southern Africa,” *Africa Spectrum* 49, no. 1 (2014). 89.

³³ Civic United Front, established in 1992.

candidates competing to be elected to the Tanzanian parliament in Dodoma and the Zanzibar House of Representatives. The opening addresses were given by the respective regional commissioners.³⁴

The competing parties both had slogans with religious connotations. Whereas *amani* (peace) was associated with the ruling party CCM, the opposition party CUF had appropriated *haki* as their slogan, which means justice or rights. Hence, when *haki* was heard, Zanzibaris would typically think of CUF.³⁵ As a religious initiative, however, it made sense to reclaim the key concepts of *amani* and *haki* from the political battleground and reintroduce them as religious concepts. The keynote lectures by bishop Shao and the Anglican bishop Douglas Toto may be interpreted as such attempts.³⁶ Bishop Toto reminded the politicians present that the two parties' slogans were originally religious concepts used by both religions. He urged the politicians to "reiterate to their followers the value of justice and peace for the country and warn them of the price to be paid if justice and peace were to disappear."³⁷ Bishop Shao, likewise, elaborated on the biblical teachings on justice and peace, emphasising *haki*'s deeper roots in the nature of God and not just in the judicial and human sense. Concerning *amani*, he stressed its deeper meaning as 'whole,' from the Hebrew concept *shalom*. His point was that peace is a fruit of justice and that without a consciousness given by God, a human being is not complete (*kamili*) and cannot lead people.³⁸ On a similar note, Sh Soraga in his keynote lecture referred to the history of Islam, characterising it as "full of teachings about how Islam urges love, unity, cohesion, understanding and peaceful living, not just among Muslims, but also between Muslims and non-Muslims (4.2.1)."³⁹

³⁴ Unguja has three regions (pl. *mikoa*, sg *mkoa*) and Pemba two, each of which are divided into two districts (*wilaya*).

³⁵ "CCM kauli mbiu yake ni amani na utulivu na CUF kauli mbiu yao ni haki sawa kwa wote."

"CCM's public message is peace and tranquillity and CUF's is equal rights for all."

Douglas M. Toto, "'Mtazamo Wa Wakristo Kuhusu Uchaguzi Mkuu Mwezi October 2005'" ("Christians' Perspective on the October 2005 General Election") Presented at "Mkutano Wa Viongozi Wa Dini Na Wagombea Wa Nafasi Za Uwakilishi & Ubunge Wa Vyama Vya Ccm Na Cuf Zanzibar" ("Meeting for Religious Leaders and Ccm and Cuf Candidates Competing to Be Elected to the Parliament and the House of Representatives"), 28 September 2005."

³⁶ Sadly, Bishop Toto died 9 February 2006, having been the bishop of Zanzibar since 2002.

³⁷ "Tunawaomba muwahamasishe wafuasi wa vyama vyenu wafahamu thamani ya haki na amani katika nchi yetu pamoja na gharama ya haki na amani iwapo tutaipoteza."

Toto, "'Mtazamo Wa Wakristo Kuhusu Uchaguzi Mkuu Mwezi October 2005'" ("Christians' Perspective on the October 2005 General Election") Presented at "Mkutano Wa Viongozi Wa Dini Na Wagombea Wa Nafasi Za Uwakilishi & Ubunge Wa Vyama Vya Ccm Na Cuf Zanzibar" ("Meeting for Religious Leaders and Ccm and Cuf Candidates Competing to Be Elected to the Parliament and the House of Representatives"), 28 September 2005."

³⁸ Shao, "'Maadili Ya Viongozi Katika Jamii'" ("Leaders' Morals in Society") Presented at "Mkutano Wa Viongozi Wa Dini, Wanasiasa, Vyombo Vya Dola Na Vya Sheria Unguja" ("Meeting for Religious Leaders, Politicians, State Organs and Law Enforcement Agencies in Unguja"), 29 August 2005."

³⁹ "Historia ya Uislamu imejaa mafunzo jinsi Uislamu unavyohimiza upendo, umoja, mshikamano, maelewano na kuishi kwa Amani, si tu baina ya waislamu wao kwa wao, bali pia miongoni mwa waislamu na wasiokuwa waislamu."

Fadhil Suleiman Soraga, "Hali Ya Amani Zanzibar Hivi Sasa Na Muelekeo Siku Za Usoni" ("the State of Peace in Zanzibar Now and in the Foreseeable Future") Presented at a Seminar for Muslim and Christian Religious Leaders, Zanzibar, 28 June 2005."

The seriousness of the situation was felt by all, with Sh Talib reminding the politicians present that people were folding their hands in prayer because of fear.⁴⁰ Extracts from news reports provide a glimpse into pre-election tensions: "Publicity Secretary of CCM in Zanzibar, Vuai Ali Vuai, refuted claims by CUF that his party is training the so-called Janjaweed fighters, saying this is ploy to misinform and misguide foreign observers."⁴¹ The opposition leader Seif Sharif Hamad threatened to make use of mass demonstrations known as "people's power", inspired by the November 2004 – January 2005 Orange revolution in Ukraine: "I am afraid if the elections are not free and fair we shall be forced to take a lesson from Ukraine."⁴² President Amani Abeid Karume, on his side, told foreign nations not to interfere in domestic politics of Zanzibar.⁴³

Sh Talib reminded the politicians present that those who sow troubles are not alone in reaping bitterly from them. In the open discussion after the keynote lectures many people used the opportunity to engage in the conversation. A CCM representative emphasised the need to use words wisely, whereas a CUF representative warned that committing sins in the month of Ramadan was worse than at other times. Many people mentioned the importance of educating the youth and of having balanced coverage in the media.⁴⁴ At the end of the meeting a Muslim prayed a *dua* (improvised Islamic prayer) in Arabic and everybody sighed after each sentence as if to express their longing for peace. When it was over, one of the committee members surprisingly asked me to pray on behalf of the Christians. Despite being unprepared, I "prayed in Swahili for God's help for peace in Zanzibar and his help to us all to love one another. After that the meeting was over and many shook my hand to thank me. In every way this was a touching experience of unity among people in the same boat, regardless of party or religion."⁴⁵

When election day arrived and the electorate waited for the results to be announced days later, there was less violence than expected. For a peace committee, this was good news. According to the

Born in Zanzibar in 1957, Soraga studied at Zanzibar Muslim Academy from 1974 to 1977, followed by studies at the Islamic University of Medina from 1982 to 1988. From 1989 to 1998 he worked as the leader of Islamic affairs at the Wakf and Trust Commission, then until 2003 he was a teacher at Nkrumah Teachers' Training College. From 2003 he has been the executive secretary at the Mufti's office.

⁴⁰ Arngeir Langås, "Notes from Mazsons Public Dialogue Meeting 28 September 2005."

"Cuf Campaign for Fair Elections Now Goes International ", *Kiswahili Press Summary*, 8 September 2005.

⁴¹ "Ccm Complains to Police over Defacing of Its Posters in Pemba," *Kiswahili Press Summary*, 7 September 2005.

⁴² "Cuf Campaign for Fair Elections Now Goes International ",

⁴³ "Karume Accuses Donors of Arm-Twisting Zanzibaris ", *Kiswahili Press Summary*, 8 September 2005.

⁴⁴ "Notes from Mazsons Public Dialogue Meeting 28 September 2005."

⁴⁵ "Dialog Med Politisk Dimension," *Danmission* 2006. 10-13.

The prayer was both the first and the last time I spoke in the many public dialogue meetings in which I participated in the period from 2005 to 2010. The prayer served as an implicit presentation of who I was; a Norwegian missionary working for the Lutheran church in Zanzibar. The most likely reason why I did not speak again is that "peace in Zanzibar" is a complex topic that requires contextual insights barely obtainable for a foreigner.

National Democratic Institute's election report there was "a noticeable reduction in violence and tensions during the campaign period."⁴⁶

One may ask whether the Joint committee contributed to defusing the tensions and maintain peace in connection with the elections. A study by Sh Abdalla Talib Abdalla, also a member of the committee, found that its efforts for peace before the 2005 presidential election were decisive: Based on interviews with eighty political, religious and civil society leaders, his study concluded that "religious opinion-shapers, specifically the categories of religious leaders, religious activists, and FBOs, played [a] significant role in peace making and peace building activities during the three electoral phases of the 2005 general elections in Zanzibar."⁴⁷ He concluded that "religion plays a very important part in bringing about peace during elections. This is in the sense that religions have the capacity of softening the hearts of those who subscribe to them."⁴⁸ Moreover, when I conducted interviews during my field studies in November 2013, several of my interviewees suggested that there was a causal link between the committee's meetings for politicians, with their strong appeals based on religious teachings concerning their moral responsibility for peace, and the subsequent peaceful elections:

And this committee made a lot of efforts, conducting seminars for political leaders, religious leaders, and others, to build peace, that peace is an important thing, that we have to seek it, we have to fight for it and make absolutely sure that peace lives. You see. And this continued, that election in 2005 went very well, we had no problems.⁴⁹

One may conclude from the case presented above that the Joint committee did indeed build bridges between Christians and Muslims, thereby constituting an example of diapraxis for peace.

⁴⁶ National Democratic Institute International Observer Mission, "Final Report Zanzibar Elections October 30 2005," (2005). 35.

⁴⁷ Abdalla Talib Abdalla, "The Role of Religion in the 2005 General Elections in Zanzibar" (Islamic University in Uganda, 2009). 61.

⁴⁸ Ibid.

⁴⁹ "Na hii kamati ilijitahidi sana kuwa na semina za viongozi wa kisiasa, wa kidini, wa nani, kwa ajili ya kujenga amani, kwamba amani ni kitu muhimu, lazima tukitafute, tukipigania, na tuhakikishe kabisa kwamba kinaishi. Unaona. Na hii ikaendelea, ule uchaguzi wa mwaka 2005 ukaenda vizuri kabisa, hatukuwa na matatizo."

"Interview 8, 8 November 2013."

4. Conclusion: Whither diapraxis

The question is whether the diapraxis model constitutes a fruitful avenue in future interreligious dialogue. From the experience of the Joint committee of religious leaders for peace in Zanzibar one may conclude that diapraxis does indeed constitute a constructive model for thinking and acting when the goal is peace, the common good and the bridging of gaps between religions. One reason is that diapraxis thinking takes context seriously, being neither idealistic nor universalistic, as emphasised by, Sigvard von Sicard, a nestor in Christian-Muslim dialogue: "Diapraxis is not idealistic, but takes given attitudes and situations seriously."⁵⁰

When societies are polarised and conflicts nurtured by violence and harsh words, dialogue and diapraxis show the way forward. Whereas various political models for the sake of retaining power have been adept at identifying differences, then resolving them through violence, the diapraxis model likewise acknowledges difference, but, building on commonalities, seeks a non-violent solution.

As a side effect diapraxis is prone to inspire "thinkers" to become more practical and "doers" to consider the perspectives that occupy the "thinkers."

On a critical note, one may ask reasons not to get engaged with diapraxis on a practical level. There could be misunderstandings as well as more fundamental disagreements concerning goals. There could be power differences. Such challenges could be overcome in a trustful process, however. When the partners display transparency and accountability, careful to be "subsumed by none", the chances are greater for achieving the desired outcome. Diapraxis is a journey, however, with its stages.

Diapraxis thinking is not dissimilar to the task proposed for Europe by philosopher Slavoj Žižek: "The task is to move beyond mere tolerance of others to a positive emancipatory *Leitkultur* which can sustain authentic co-existence. Don't just respect others, offer a common struggle, since our problems today are common."⁵¹ Stephanie Dietrich, likewise, has emphasised the relevance of diapraxis in the increasingly pluralistic societies of Europe.⁵² Moreover, she has identified diapraxis

⁵⁰ Sicard, "Diapraxis or Dialogue and Beyond." 131.

Born in 1930, Sigvard von Sicard served in Tanganyika/Tanzania from 1956 to 1965, being the first leader of the Synod of Uzaramo-Uluguru, the precursor to ELCT's Eastern & Coastal Diocese. Having been a teacher at Makumira Theological College (1965-68), he did his PhD at Uppsala University under the supervision of Bengt Sundkler before becoming a founder-member of the Centre for the Study of Islam and Christian-Muslim relations at the University of Birmingham from 1973. He has contributed to the interfaith programs of the Lutheran World Federation.

⁵¹ Slavoj Žižek, "Europe Must Move Beyond Mere Tolerance," site accessed 29 January 2013 <http://www.guardian.co.uk/commentisfree/2011/jan/25/european-union-slovenia>.

⁵² "Besonders im Bereich der Entwicklungshilfe, aber auch in immer pluraler werdenden Gesellschaften in Europa, ist die Forschung und Arbeit am Diapraxisfeld von zentraler Bedeutung. Der Diapraxisbegriff wurde entwickelt, um den Zusammenhang von Dialog und konkreter Zusammenarbeit deutlich zu machen."

work and research on it as important, particularly in the field of development aid.⁵³ Beyond Europe, one may also ask whether the potential of Christian-Muslim cooperation for peace has been sufficiently explored in countries that share certain characteristics with Zanzibar, such as Egypt and Ethiopia.⁵⁴

Among the lessons learnt by the committee, is that no top-down model for diapraxis fits every context. Such a condition charges each local, regional or national context with discerning the most fruitful model of interreligious cooperation in their location and initiate or continue it. Deeper levels of reflection are required to determine whether the lessons learnt in Zanzibar are applicable elsewhere. But more explorations of diapraxis in practice should continue, as well as research based on such experiences.

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Dietrich, "Die Teilhabe Der Diakonie an Der Vermittlung Der Evangeliums: Solidarisches Handeln/Diapraxis Als Religiöse Rede in Postsekulären Gesellschaften." 254. See also Slavoj Žižek's quote in 7.3.

⁵³ Dialogue and diapraxis in the context of development is explored in Arneir Langås, "Dialog Som Forudsætning for Fred Og Udvikling På Zanzibar," in *Kristendom Og Udvikling: Kan Tro Flytte Bjerger?*, ed. Uffe Torm (Frederiksberg: Dansk Missionsråd, 2015)..

⁵⁴ Both countries have serious social and political challenges. However, both share the blessing of having large Christian and Muslim populations with high levels of religious commitment and a strong degree of "religious literacy." Strengthening Christian-Muslim cooperation for the common good may be of particular help and inspiration that could help make Egypt and Ethiopia better places to live.

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