

Is Mimetic Desire a Root Cause of Religious Violence in Tanzania? An Analysis of Girardian – Mimetic Desire Theory

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Abstract

Mimetic desire theory is widely available in the Western debates and has informed thinking and arguments in the disciplines of literature, sociology, anthropology, religion, theology, and political science in the Western Universities. Unfortunately, there are rare or limited debates on the application of the mimetic desire theory in Africa in general and Tanzania in particular. This article, therefore, attempts to [re]introduce the theory founded by René Girard – the Mimetic desire theory focusing on the causes of religious violence in Tanzania. The article uses information gathered from two case studies i.e. from Dar es Salaam and Geita Regions to argue that indeed religious violence in the country is the result of mimesis. The article argues that, Christians have imitated the act of slaughtering animals by Muslims, the resultant of which was violence between Muslims and Christians in the country. The article also adds that religion, however, was not the sole cause of violence in the country. Other factors such as economic marginalisation and power relations were at the core. Moreover, the masses actively and consciously chose the victims (scapegoats) for sacrificial purposes. The paper concludes that society must empower all citizens, regardless of their beliefs, to access the desired objects (scarce resources) in order to maintain peaceful coexistence. The article recommends more debate and studies on the analysis of the Girardian mimetic desire theory.

Keywords: religious violence, Girardian mimetic desire, scapegoat/victim

Introduction

Girardian Mimetic Desire Theory is very popular in Western scholarly debates (Palaver, 2013). The theory is widely used among scholars of literature, sociology, anthropology, theology, religion, and natural sciences. In Africa and Tanzania in particular, Girard's mimetic desire theory has rarely penetrated academic discussions on cultural, social, economic, and religious life. As such its application from the African point of view is very

limited. This article, therefore, is motivated with that lack of attention to this hedgehog, a thinker of the stature of Freud or Marx (Palaver, 2013:1), and consequently, uses his ideas in the understanding of religious violence that happened in the last two decades in Tanzania.

In his book “*René Girard’s Mimetic Theory*” Wolfgang Palaver (2013) announces that “the mimetic theory is first and foremost a theory of religion” ... that “describes the religious dimension of interpersonal relations” (Palaver, 2013:15). Religious violence that have happened threatened the peaceful co-existence of community members in Tanzania (Ndaluka, 2015) and thus, needs to be understood and studied to understand religious dynamics and causes so that peaceful co-existence is maintained.

The Girardian – Mimetic Desire theory has rarely been used to the tension that exists between Christians and Muslims. This calls for inquiry that aims at applying the relevance of the theory in addressing the underlying motivation behind the acts and behaviour of the attackers and the victims of religious violence. The most intriguing questions are: is the Girardian – Mimetic desire theory capable of explaining the origin of religious violence in Tanzania? How can it be complemented to make it an effective way of understanding the origin of violence and conflict in the country?

This article, therefore, attempts to apply the Girardian Mimetic Desire theory in answering the above- mentioned questions. In doing so this article is divided into three parts: the first describes the series of religious violence since the mid-1980s. Then I explain René Girard and the Girardian Mimetic of Desire Theory. This will be followed by the application of the Mimetic Desire theory in Tanzania's Muslims-Christians related violence. Information gathered from interviews and focus group discussions conducted in Chamazi, Dar es Salaam and Geita Regions between August and September 2014 are used as shreds of evidence in the application of the mimetic desire theory.

Participants in the interviews in Geita and focus group discussion in Dar es Salaam were selected purposively and involved individuals and government officials who possessed important information that was needed for the study. For instance, participants in the interviews in Geita involved government officials (i.e. the District Commissioner (DC), the Regional Police Commander (RPC), and religious leaders.

The participants in the focus group discussions in Chamazi, Dar es Salaam were community members and government officials at the Chamazi Ward. The discussion groups were clustered according to gender, age, and profession. The author, who was assisted by an assistant researcher, moderated the discussion. A total of six focus group discussions were held which included between 5 and 8 participants in a single group discussion. Information from the local newspaper (i.e. The Citizen newspaper) is also used to supplement field data. The gathered information was analysed verbatim; and short excerpts are used to illustrate religious violence concerning mimetic desire theorization. Lastly will be the conclusion and discussions.

In this article, the focus is on whether mimetic desire, as proposed by Girard, is a root cause of religious violence. At this juncture, it is necessary to define what religious violence means. The term violence has been defined in different dictionaries as the act(s) or word(s) that aim at hurting and/or destroying. For instance, the Oxford languages defines violence as the behaviour involving physical force intended to hurt, damage or kill someone or something. Additionally, Merriam Webster (1831) refers to violence as the use of physical forces so as to injure, abuse, damage or destroys; and the Cambridge dictionary defines violence as the actions or words that are intended to hurt people.

However, the definition of religious violence is somehow tricky and many scholars have refrained from defining it. The difficult of the definition is due to the lack of consensus about what account as religious (Wijsen, 2013). Nevertheless, in this article we refer to religious violence as any physical act or words that is conducted with a purpose of causing harm, abuse, damage or kill someone in the name or sake of religious sentiment, belief or faith. In this article we provide examples of few acts that were conducted with the intension of caused harm and destroyed properties.

Religious Violence in Tanzania

In his study, Lawi (2015) highlighted trends and patterns in religious violence in Tanzania from the colonial past to the present. He postulated that, before 1987 the relation between Christians and Muslims in Tanzania was relatively good (Lawi, 2015:13). Wijsen and Mfumbusa (2004) pointed out the factors that lead to violence in Tanzania after 1987. To them, the introduction of neo-liberal policies in the second half of the 1980s coupled with the freedom of speech and (uncontrolled) freedom of religious preaching manifested in various religious meetings were some of the factors for the beginning of religious violence in Tanzania (Wijsen & Mfumbusa,

2004). Ndaluka (2012, 2014) also saw the persistence of uncontrolled religious comparative preaching (*mihadhara*) between Muslims and Christians revival groups as fuelling violence acts between believers of these main religions in Tanzania.

In general, violence attributed to religious sentiments started in 1987 with a demonstration by Muslims in Zanzibar against the secularization of family law (Lawi, 2015). In 1993 these tensions heightened with what was dubbed the Good Friday pork crisis (Mbogoni, 2004). These events were followed by the 1998 Mwembechai chaos, the bombing of the American embassies in Dar es Salaam and Nairobi on 7th August 1998, and 2000 Mwembechai chaos, and the Zanzibar riots of 2001 (Njozi, 2000; Wijisen & Mfumbusa, 2004). By then these were uncommon events in Tanzania (Njozi, 2000; Mbogoni, 2004). Violent acts rapidly increased from 2010 to 2015 and were evidenced by the burning of churches belonging to the following denominations: Lutheran, Agape, Tanzania Assemblies of God (Pentecostal), Gospel Miracle, Anglican, Seventh Day Adventist (SDA) and Christ the King Church. These churches were located in Unguja, Tanga, Dar es Salaam and Kigoma Regions (Ndaluka, 2015).

Current religious violence is attributed to activities of religious extremist groups such as the Al Shabaab in the East Africa Region. For instance, in July 2019 attack engineered by the Al Shabaab group in Somalia claimed the lives of 26 individuals, including three Tanzanians. The group also fired attacks at Garissa University College, Kenya on January 15, 2019, killed about 150 individuals, and injured many individuals. One Tanzanian was also killed in the Garissa attack (Dang 2019). Moreover, in 2016, 22 individuals were arrested at Kibatini – Amboni in Tanga Region in connection with the terror attack in the Tanga Region (Dang 2019). Previously, more attacks on police officers and Christian leaders were reported in 2015, and were attributed to Al Shabaab activities in Tanzania. These attacks resulted in the killing of several police officers, local leaders, and ordinary citizenry (Dang, 2019) in Tanga, Coast, Morogoro, Geita, Dar es Salaam, Unguja and Mwanza Regions (Ndaluka, 2015). According to the Global Terrorism Database, the total number of terrorism events in Tanzania for the past ten years (i.e. from 2008 to 2017) was 43 events.

These series of religious conflicts and attacks created a condition of fear in the society, and have redefined the state of religion in Tanzania, and call for a thorough examination of the motivation behind the events. This is therefore an attempt to bring Girardian Mimetic Desire discussions onto the

debate about the origin of religious violence in Tanzania. Examples from information collected from the field will be used to illustrate the arguments raised in this article.

Girardian Theory – the Mimetic Desire Theory

The Girardian Mimetic Desire Theory was introduced in the scientific debate in the late twentieth century by René Girard. René Girard is one of the twentieth Century's most original thinkers and the author of several groundbreaking books such as “Violence and the sacred” (1977), “Things hidden since the foundation of the world” (1978), and “Deceit, desire and the novel” (1966). He was a Distinguished Professor at the State University of New York (from 1971 to 1976). In 1976, he was appointed John M. Beall Professor of the Humanities at Johns Hopkins University and in 1981 served as Andrew B. Hammond Professor of French language, literature, and civilization at Stanford University.

Borrowing from psychoanalysis, sociology, anthropology, theology, literary works, political and religious perspectives, Girard developed a theory that postulates an understanding of the processes of violence and cultural issues. James Williams (1996) sees the mimetic theory as a “basic set of ideas on the origin and maintenance of culture, the structure and dynamics of the self and human relations and the transcendent basis of the world and human existence” (Williams, 1996:viii). Other scholars in the contemporary debate of the mimetic desire theorization such as Palaver (2013) describes the Girardian—mimetic desire theory as a theory of religion—the origin of archaic religions and their difference with the Judeo-Christians religions. Palaver (2013) asserts that the “mimetic theory is first and foremost a theory of religion. Thus the theory “describes the religious dimension of interpersonal relations” (Palaver, 2013:15).

Central to the Girardian theory are the ideas of the mimetic desire and rivalry, scapegoat mechanism, myth and ritual in archaic culture, and randomness. To Girard, mimetic desire is the unconscious habit of imitating appropriate actions or desires of others. To Girard, desire is the dynamism - the dynamics of the entire personality. It is something that involves the whole personality. This makes Girard’s usage of desire different from other theorists of previous and his time (Palaver, 2013:15). For instance, Freud’s psychoanalytic use of the term desire refers to sexual or erotic locked under the unconscious level of the human being (Freud, 1964).

Nevertheless, the concept desire in Girard usage is different in length with Sarte’s idea of the “*project*”, especially when used in its exclusive term

(Palaver, 2013:15). Furthermore, desire in the Girardian theory is closely related to Kierkegaard's "*subjectivity*" especially when used to connote passionate inwardness and choice (ibid). Nevertheless, Girard sees desire as the fundamental desire that forms and defines the total behaviour of the human being (Wallace and Smith, 1994). Therefore, human desires are basically culturally grounded (Hamerton-Kelly, 1994).

Rene Girard's theorization of desire is based on the assumption that, human behaviour and socialization are possible because of the human ability to imitate the acts of others (Palaver, 2013). That is to say, "... all human behaviours are learned, and all learning is based on imitation" (Wallace and Smith, 1994). Here Girard's theorization came closer to environmental psychology and learning theory in particular. These scholars (e.g. Adler, 1938; Boring, 1950; Bandura, 2006) have long-established the power of imitation during socialization where the child learns exactly from the conditions around him say and imitate the acts of a role model. This act of imitating the actions of those around us, however, does not end during childhood, but rather continues throughout the individual's life.

Consequently, Girard adds from the act of imitating the behaviour of others during socialization to imitating the desire of others. To Girard human desire is also imitative and acquisitive (Wallace and Smith, 1994). That is human beings learn what to desire by imitating the others' desire for an object. The point here is that the desire is not merely targeted to possess the desire of others but rather to possess the being of the other (i.e. to be the other). The ultimate outcome of such mimesis is conflict/ rivalry (Wallace and Smith, 1994; Shea 1994).

However, Girard's theorization differs from psychologists such as Bandura in some length. Bandura (1999) emphasized the fact that the imitations that individuals make are connected with some sort of cognitive process; the process that involves self-regulation (i.e. self-monitoring, self-judgment, and self-reaction). Unlike Girard who emphasizes unconscious reaction to the desired object, Bandura sees conscious reactions based on forces that are connected with the cognition process toward the desired action(s). Perhaps the most distinguished and prominent feature which distinguishes Girard's mimetic desire with psychologists like Bandura is the assumption that the imitation is not only for the sake of imitating but rather to assume and become the other (Girard, 1972).

Another Girardian theory's central premise is that mimetic desires always evolve rivalry. This may happen in two ways: on the first hand the

model and the imitator desire the same object. In this situation rivalry/conflict arises because the models/mediators have objects of desire of which the imitator is deemed to desire the same (Girard, 1986). Hamerton-Kelly (1994) summarized this situation by stating that “when any gesture of appropriation is imitated it simply means that two hands will reach for the same object simultaneously: conflict cannot fail to result” (Hamerton-Kelly, 1994).

Since all human desires are imitated or copied from models or mediators, the obvious reaction is that the model which is imitated becomes the rival of the one imitating preciously the same object he currently possess (Girard, 1986). On the other hand, the second way of rivalry happens in a situation where the model competes with the imitator on the same object (Girard, 1972). The resultant of that competition is the rivalry between the model and the imitator to possess the desired object (ibid.).

Girard’s understanding of violence (such as religious violence) starts with the premise that all violence is manmade grounded on mimetic desire and do not have a religious origin. Thus, the primary cause of violence is not the scarcity of resources, but rather the relationship between the imitator and the role model. According to Girard envy and jealousy are the main cause of mimetic rivalry (Williams, 1996). The phrase that: “men will become gods for each other”, was central in Girard theorization of violence” (Fleming, 2004). It is through this mimetic desire which leads to the formation of social structure that necessitates violence. “Fundamental unity of all culture and religion lies in the interaction between desire and violence” (Fleming, 2004).

In his work “*Victims on violence: Different voices and Girard*”, Chris Shea (1994:260) highlighted four cycles of mimetic violence according to Girard:

- i. All desire leads to conflict: there is no other course of action that is considered viable. The other is jealousy to the point of open hostility.
- ii. No man has a friend, neighbour, kin or allies who can attempt to stop his/her victimization. Family ties have been weakened, and allowed the victims to be murdered by strangers.
- iii. No one learns from experience. The mimetic desire system makes no one capable of learning from their past victimization as children. They have no compassion, altruism, and sympathy over the victim.

- iv. Laws which represent the collective wisdom of humanity are, nonetheless, powerless to solve the problem of mimetic violence. People are eager to violate laws that control violence.

To Girard mimesis involves representations, intentions, and acts of acquisition. We mimic the desires of others and thereby come into conflict with them. Mimesis engenders conflict because the desires of individuals tend to converge on a common object as explained earlier on.

In his work entitled “*Ambivalence of the Sacred: Religion, Violence, and Reconciliation*”, Scott Appleby concurred with Girard regarding religion to be the cause of violence, and at the same time part of the solution to the problem of ethnic and religious conflict (Appleby, 2000). The phrase that religion “*is a bearer of peace and the sword*” exemplifies this premise. Religion is the cause of violence, at the same time it is also the solution (cure), or to use Wallace and Smith’s words is the “*poison and remedy*” to violence (Wallace and Smith, 1994).

However, to Appleby religion is not the sole cause of violence. He argues that:

“Violence is more prevalent in a society lacking a strong civic institution and social traditions of pluralism and tolerance. It tells believers inspired by sacred range against racial, ethnic and religious discrimination, unjust, economic policies, unnecessary shortages of food, clean water, and basic education for the poor, corruption and hypocrisy in government, state or corporate policies that cause environmental pollution and deforestation, the presence of millions of land mines in the soil of developing nations, and the systematic or collateral violations of human rights, whether by the state security forces or by religious or secular combatants” (Appleby 2000).

This indicates that there are several contributing factors to violence. Factors related to the social, economic, religio-political, and ethnonationalism dislocation/marginalization; gender disparity, lack of food security, lack of social security safety net, ownership of productive forces such as land and water supply, and human rights abuses can all lead to violence (Ndaluka, 2014; Appleby, 2000). However, in all these factors religion can provide a stimulant and the ignition to violence (Ndaluka, 2012).

Moreover, the Scapegoat mechanism is another tenet in the Girardian theory. The scapegoat mechanism involves the invention of suitable victim/victims who are sacrificed in order to restore social cohesion (Hamerton – Kelly, 1994). Suitable scapegoat includes individuals such as Jesus, Martin Luther King Jr or “groups that are marginal and different to a society sense of order hence considered a threat to its collective identity” (Wallace and Smith, 1994). These groups may include children, women, elderly, slaves, prisoners of war, unmarried adolescents, people with disabilities, and minority ethnic, religion, and race groups (Girard, 1972). The mechanism of scapegoating is hidden and generative. As such, the cloud transfers (misidentifies) the causes of disorder or violence to others i.e. the surrogate victim. To Girard scapegoating is grounded unconsciously in our culture and society. It also involves a collective action engraved on the belief of the “cloud” which is our “own belief” (Williams, 1996).

Fleming (2004) highlighted five prerequisites for the selection of the victim. These include:

- i. The victim must be recognizable as a surrogate for the guilty party.
- ii. Must be vulnerable.
- iii. Must be unable to retaliate.
- iv. Must be isolated without champions to continue the vengeful violence.
- v. Must be unanimity within the group that he is the one at fault.

When all the above prerequisites are available then the cloud perceives the victim as a criminal who deserves to be killed and expelled; and that marks the end of violence (Flemming, 2004). The society is served by the victim and yet everyone involved is not guilty (Flemming, 2004; Williams, 1996).

Girard also dealt with the conception of the myth and ritual in archaic culture in his theorization of mimetic desires. Like Emile Durkheim, who made a detailed analysis of the religion of the most primitive and preliterate group – the Arunta ethnic clan of Australia, Girard also took a great deal in studying primitive religion. He saw that ritual in its earliest form exists in reflexive mimetic repetition. Like Durkheim Girard realized that sacrificial ceremony played the purpose of uniting the society and establishing order (Girard, 1972).

In many societies such as the Arunta clan in Australian (Durkheim, 2001), sacrificial victims were always animals. In other societies (like in the case of Jesus in Israel), people are used as sacrificial victims for the sake of society (Palaver, 2013). The choice between the use of animals or human beings is based in effect on a value judgment. The human sacrifice is quite unsuitable for sacrificial purposes while the animal is eminently sacrificeable. However, the judgment is purely arbitrary and depends on the society's history. All victims bear a certain resemblance to the object they replace (ibid.).

According to the mimetic theory, myths reflect a contagious process of disorder that culminate with the death or expulsion of a victim. The myth that Girard focused on are:

- i. A theme of disorder or undifferentiating. The expression of this theme range from original chaos, or a disaster e.g. a plague epidemic, a fire, a flood, a drought, a quarrel between relatives. It encompasses any disaster that causes the community to suffer. These disturbances generate the myth.
- ii. One individual stands convicted of some fault. Regardless of the severity of the crime but its consequences are catastrophic and the victim is seen as the cause of the crisis (the scapegoat projection).
- iii. The identification of the scapegoat is facilitated by preferential signs of victim age. Mythical scapegoats are physically, morally, or socially impaired (strangers, cripples, outcasts, persons occupying a low or very high position in society).
- iv. The culprit is killed, expelled, or eliminated by either the whole community acting like one man or by a single individual.
- v. As soon as the violence against the victim is consummated, peace returns; order is (re)generated. The victim is seen as a saviour or a divinity (the second transference of the sacred).

These five areas of focus led to the assumption of randomness on choosing the victim for sacrifice. In a crisis, the crowd looks for a victim who takes the blame for the misfortune and disaster happening in society (Wallace & Smith, 1994). As explained earlier on vulnerability and marginality is the key prerequisite for picking the victim. Individuals who are marginal or different are randomly picked as scapegoats - *all against one* (Palaver, 2013:9). The victims are exterior or marginal individuals, incapable of establishing or sharing a social bond that links the rest of the inhabitants. Their status as foreigners or enemies, their servile condition, or

simply their age prevents these future victims from fully integrating themselves into the community (Palaver, 2013).

A Case Study I: Mbagala Violence: a Case of a Christian Boy Urinating on the Qur'an

Mbagala area violence in Dar es Salaam portrays a situation of mimetic desire that led to religious violence in Tanzania. The violence that happened in Mbagala was ignited by an act of a Christian boy urinating on “the Qur'an” (James – The Citizen on 13/10/2012). Information presented here was narrated by FGDs participants in Chamazi in September 2014. Chamazi is the ward near Mbagala town and a place where the act of urinating on the Qur'an occurred. In all 6 FGDs, this violence was narrated and remembered indicating it as an event that redefined the Muslim-Christian relations in the area.

For instance, a participant reported that “[T]he event happened on a Tuesday and there was no chaos until after Friday prayers. Between Tuesday and Friday afternoon, people continued with their activities as usual. But on Friday, after the prayers, demonstrations started at Rangitatu. Apart from causing businesspeople to close their businesses in the area, several churches (Anglican churches at Maturubai) and a mosque were torched, and some religious property was destroyed. Another participant added “Violence started in Mbagala when the child urinated on “the Qur'an”. It involved Muslims and Christians as well as the police who fired tear gas canisters to disperse them. People’s activities were halted as a result.” Another participant added, “Angry people blocked the road and threw stones at each other” (A female participant in the female adult FGD held at Chamazi, Dar es Salaam, on 8/09/2014.)

In the group discussion with female participants, a female youth said, “Initially, this event involved children [a Muslim child and a Christian child], but shortly later adults began asking why the child had urinated on the Holy Book.” (A female participant in the female youth FGD held at Chamazi, Dar es Salaam, on 05/09/2014.) According to her, the event happened when the children were playing. This was corroborated by a male youth who said, “It was a children’s event, and should have been treated as such.” (A male participant in the male youth FGD held at Chamazi, Dar es Salaam, on 05/09/2014). According to them, the event was exaggerated because of the existing tension between Muslims and Christians. The male youth also said, “People are on the alert; one side is waiting for the other to make a mistake and then create chaos. That is why they amplified the event and caused chaos” (ibid).

From the above interviews, the choice of the victims for the Mbagala violence fits well into the mimetic desire prerequisites of the scapegoat. The victim for the Mbagala chaos was the child who urinated on the Qur'an. It indicated that he was perhaps ignorant and naïve of the consequences of his action (see Flemming, 2004 quoted in the previous section). The boy was inspired by his Christian teachings that did not place the Qur'an among the books that are regarded as sacred in Christianity. According to interviewees, the Muslim rival challenged the Christian boy of becoming mad or turning into a snake if he would urinate on the Qur'an. Mimetically, the Christian accepted the challenge and urinated on the Holy book.

The cloud (the group of Muslim youth) on the other hand looked at the vulnerability of their victim: i.e. being a child he was not expected to defend himself in the public platform, and/or in the court of law; and therefore, there was no possibility of the revengeful act after the sacrifice has been conducted. According to FGD participants in Chamazi, the sacredness of the Qur'an was obvious and known by everyone. So somebody who dared to defame and/or discredit the Holy book was regarded by the masses as guilty and deserved community actions and hence, the demonstration of some Muslim youth who demanded the child to be brought to the mob for the sacrificial act for defaming the Qur'an. According to the Citizen reporter (one Gabriel James on 13/10/2012), the group of Muslim youth demanded the boy to be handed to them for "beheading him" (sacrificing).

Girard's analysis of a scapegoat can be challenged by looking at the forces of secularization. Indeed in primitive societies, religious beliefs prevail above all aspects of life. This is, however, different in modern society where religious beliefs are checked against the secularization principle (Maghimbi, 2014). In a secularized society, the vulnerable are protected by law, hence the involvement of the Tanzania Police Force in Mbagala violence to contain the situation. The Muslims' demand for the Christian boy was not quenched with the sacrificing of the boy but with the firm action of state organs. As Appleby (2004) narrated, "the core values of secularized Western societies include freedom of speech and freedom of religion". Perhaps their demand could have been accepted and their action permissible in a primitive society, where there are no strong civic institutions and a tradition of religious pluralism (ibid.).

Moreover, the case in Mbagala also demonstrates that the cloud's (Muslim youth's) action was not unconscious, but carefully thought of. The violence was not conducted in Chamazi, a relatively rural area- but in

Mbagala and neighbouring areas. These areas are more vibrant in terms of the number of people and economic activities. The participants in the group discussions said the violence resulted in the loss of property through looting and stealing. It also destroyed properties such as cars and church buildings (Ref. James – the Citizen Reporter on 13/10/2012). The attack on people's cars and properties had an economic tone.

From the interviews, it was assumed that most of the owners of cars were Christians, and thus, supposedly benefited from the system than their counterpart Muslims. The attack and looting were demonstrations of the frustration by the Muslim youth resulting from economic marginalization and being regarded as “second class citizen”. The same lamentation was presented in the study by Musoke (2006): “The relationship between religion and employment in Tanzania”; In Mukandara, et al. (2006) *Justice, Rights and Worship: Religion and politics in Tanzania*; It resurfaces in Njozi (2000) *The Mwembechai killings and the political future of Tanzania*; and was reported in Ndaluka (2012, 2014, 2015).

This showed that the masses were conscious of their choice of actions. Perhaps here we can borrow from Giddens’ concept of the human agency, where he speaks that human actions are not always regulated by the social structure, but rather their practices actively shape the social structure (Giddens, 1984).

This also reproduced a picture demonstrating that human practices are not passive and/or only regulated by unconscious attributes. By engaging in looting, destroying properties such as cars reproduce a picture that indicated that the chaos in Mbagala was attributed to other factors rather than religious factors alone. Economic marginalization, and/or lack of resources as explained by Ndaluka (2012) could have been behind the incidence. Ndaluka (2012) has argued that, “most of the religious claims are not specifically religious but socio-economic and political which demand for equal footing and opportunities in terms of access to community resources such as education and public job placement” (Ndaluka, 2012). Resources, in this case, do not only refer to material structures (e.g. socio-economic or feeling of economical marginalization), but also encompasses cultural dominance, power relations, political empowerment and inclusion (Bourdieu, 1977; Gramsci, 1971), power distribution resources such as gender inequality, failure to have a national identity; instability; unfulfilled local grievances; land conflicts (especially triggered by climate change), symbolic and psychological resources (Bourdieu, 1991).

Case Study II: The Geita Region Battle for Slaughtering an Animal for Public Consumption

Interviews in the Geita region revealed that religious violence in Geita region started on 12th January 2013 involving a group of Muslims and Christian over the act of some Christian slaughtering a cow to be sold in a Christian Butcher for Christians to buy. In the interview in Geita region one key informant narrated that “on the morning of 12th January a group of people (Christians) slaughtered a cow on the African Inland church premises...when some Muslims who were in a mosque heard about it, they intervened ... as consequence violence broke out and one Reverend Mathayo Kachila (aged 44) of the Pentecostal church in Buseresere was killed and many others wounded” (Interview with Geita Police Officers, 14th August 2014.). In another interview, another key informant reported that, “The Bible emphasizes the importance of peace and the peaceful co-existence of people. However, servants of God can be either agents of peace or agents of violence. Tanzania will not fight because of ethnic differences, but they can very easily slip into a religious/political conflict”. (Interview with Bishop Stephano Saguda, Geita 15th August 2014.)

The informant in another interview also narrated that, “some Christian denominations, especially the newly established Pentecostal churches, supported the Christians who slaughtered the cows, but the established denominations such as the Roman Catholic Church opposed the idea.” (Interview with Geita District Commissioner 14th August 2014). This participant added that “things started going wrong in 2007 when it was alleged that some Muslim clerics were preaching against Christianity, that the Government favoured Muslims, that Muslims earned some money by slaughtering animals, that animal slaughter was a religious ritual for Muslims” (ibid.)

The above testimony from interviews in Geita, violence is one of many examples of religious violence caused by mimetic desire in the country. From the interview, the slaughtering conflict was a consequence of a long claim, between Muslim and Christian, about who has the right to slaughter livestock in community abattoirs (Ramadhani, 2015; Ndaluka, 2012, 2014, 2015).

Christian claims against the meat slaughtered by Muslims were grounded on three arguments that have been highlighted in the quoted extracts. Firstly, the act of slaughtering livestock earned Muslims income. Secondly, livestock slaughtering was part of Muslim religious ritual, and thus Christians forcefully participate in the ritual alien to Christianity by

eating animals slaughtered by Muslims (Ref. interview footnoted 11-12). Christian's resolution to the phenomenon was to have abattoirs and butchers dedicated to Christians, and to those felt uncomfortable to participate in Muslim rituals.

This is purely mimesis that led to serious and fatal rivalry. From the interview, we learn that the act of Christians slaughtering animals in the manner that Muslims do (which indicated a mimetic desire of the object of slaughtering) was not received well by their Muslim counterparts. Following the slaughter of a cow by Christians at the African Inland Church premises (Ref. interview footnoted 9) on 12th January 2013, violence erupted resulting in the beheading of one Reverend Mathayo Kachila (aged 44), a pastor of the Tanzania Assemblies of God Church and wounding several individuals.

The violence in Geita provides a possible example of mimetic desire theorization. Although the country laws do not provide for legal authority to Muslims to be sole butchers of animals in the region and the country in general, Muslims were legitimized for the act of slaughtering, and hence received both the social status and economic incentive. On the other hand, Christians had also desired to possess the same. The object (butcher/slaughterer) has for years been desired by Christians. Despite Christians' desire for the act of slaughtering, they were prohibited (not because the law prohibits Christians to slaughter) to join Muslims in the act of slaughtering animals, but rather those possessing the object (Muslims) had been culturally legitimized.

At this juncture, we are reminded by Girard that mimetic desire is culturally grounded. The Tanzania Animal Diseases Act of 2003, the Veterinary Act of 2003, The Animal welfare Act of 2008, and Regulation No. 7 (G.N. No. 27) provide for the manner in which slaughtering of animals must be conducted. All the laws and Regulations No. 7 insist on adherence to "religious belief". To some quarters, the laws were not explicit to which religious belief should the slaughtering of animals for public consumption be adhered to. Nevertheless, it remained a matter of discursive and social practice guided by the mental model shared by a community member which positioned Muslims as people who slaughter animals in community abattoir.

The legitimation was sanctioned by an Islamic ritual of slaughtering; and the belief (taboo) that prohibits Muslims to eat meat slaughtered by non-Muslims. This is another desire that Christian imitated from Muslims

(refer to interview narrates that Muslims slaughter of animals is a religious ritual).

On the other hand, in an interview with the Geita District Commissioner, we get how the victims for the sacrificial act were selected. The victims were the newly established churches [the Pentecostals]. According to the 2010 Pew Forum survey, 61% of the Tanzania population is Christian, 35% Muslim, and 4% were from other religious groups. Moreover, a 2008-09 Pew survey found that above half (51%) of Tanzanian Christians identified themselves as Roman Catholic, while 44% identified themselves to be Protestant. Furthermore, those who identified themselves as Protestants, Lutherans carry 13%, Pentecostals 10%, Anglicans 10%, and adherents of African initiated churches 5%. These statistics produces a picture that Pentecostals are the minority, and thus subjected to the situation of the scapegoat.

Religious conflict in Geita involved some Muslim groups on one hand and African Inland Church and Tanzania Assemblies of God Church on the other hand. The established denominations such as the Roman Catholic Church were spared in the inclusion of sacrificial acts. This follows perfectly in Girard's identification of the scapegoat: the victims were strangers/new in the area (perhaps have insignificant and/or non-influential followers), who did not have support from the majority of the residents, including fellow Christians – the Catholics. So the elimination of them was accepted and perceived as a way of bringing back the harmonious relations in the area.

Therefore, the slaughtering of animals was viewed as an indicator of religious superiority and marginalism (Fleming 2008:13). It is noted from the interview that Christians claimed that “Muslims are favoured” by the government, which by the time the President of Tanzania was a Muslim. The perception of marginalization created the environment and perfect condition for victimization.

From the interview, it was also clearly learned that the selection of the victim was not accidental. There was cognitive knowledge (as narrated by Bandura (1999) by the masses of their victim's alienness and thus, actively (as informed by Giddens 1984) made conscious decision to select their sacrificial victims. My argument here is that the selection of the sacrificial victim had social, religious, and economic interests guided with cognitive and agency processes. I intend to add these ingredients into Girard's assertion of the selection of the scapegoat.

Apart from the selection of the scapegoat, we also learn that the desire to slaughter by Christians was stimulated with the need to conduct a ritual of slaughtering animals in the manner that Muslims do. The act of slaughtering carried a symbolic value for the Islamic religion, and in so doing, some Christian's denominations assumedly lacked symbolic representation of this valued ritual and consequently the mimetic desire to acquire the same. One of the claims against eating animals slaughtered by Muslims was that the animals were slaughtered according to "Islamic rituals", and thus Christian's denominations also have their own Christian rituals that have been ignored and therefore were a time to repossess the practice.

Slaughtering in a ritualistic manner was a mimetic ritual that Christians desired and felt, simply because Muslims had possessed it (Girard 1962:13). The act of slaughtering animals was romanticized between Muslims and Christians, hence slaughtering animals became a "product of the interpersonal relation" for both Muslims and Christians. However, unlike other interpersonal relations, this relation is built on the "metaphysical desire" and unwitting imitation of a Muslim slaughter.

Perception of the Muslims in Geita about Christians was that Christians reached a point in which they could not be "reformed or educated or healed of their sickness" (Bellinger 2001), and thus, to solve this sickness was to eliminate them. Bellinger (2001) quotes Thomas Merton in extenso:

"In the use of force, one simplifies the situation by assuming that the evil to be overcome is clear-cut, definite, and irreversible. Hence there remains but one thing: eliminate it. Any dialogue with the sinner, any question of the irreversibility of his act, only means faltering and failure. Failure to eliminate evil is itself a defeat. Anything that even remotely risks such defeat is in itself capitulation to evil. The irreversibility of evil then reaches out to contaminate even the tolerant thought of the hesitant crusader who, momentarily, doubts the total evil of the enemy he is about to eliminate" (Thomas Merton 1965 quoted in Bellinger 2001:120).

Merton's idea of elimination of the evil concurs with Girard's scapegoat. In the Geita area, the act of slaughtering by Christians was seen as an invention, or a sickness that needed to be eliminated or contained. Christians became scapegoats causing problems, and threatened the status quo, and therefore, a menace to social order and collective identity (Wallace and Smith 1994). Here again, there is a conscious and not unconscious

involvement of the cloud (the Muslims) in the selection of the sacrificial victim. Not all Christians were involved in the chaos, but only the Pentecostals culminating in the killing of their pastor. Mainstream churches such as the Catholic Church, which has the majority believers in the area, were not involved.

Conclusion

Religious violence has far-reaching effects on the individual, the community, and the respective nations. In summary, the effects of religious violence include: Hampering development and thus affecting the countries revenue collection (UNDP, 2016); increase income insecurity to an individual including increased unemployment; affects education system and education of children; loss of properties and lives; increase food insecurity and lead to psychological trauma to the victims and relatives.

Solving religious violence requires an understanding of the desires that are important in society, and most importantly, who possess the desired objects. Girard (1986) proposes that, the cure to mimetic desire is in communicating a message that reaches out to the individuals as individuals. Religious violence in Africa, and Tanzania in particular, happens because the desired object (such as, prosperity (social, political or economical), human right, and inclusiveness) is so dear to the extent of causing conflict between the one possessing the object on the one hand and those desiring the possession (or those who want to become like the role model).

Scholars must always strive at understanding the underlying causes of religious violence in the country, Africa, and the world over. We should also understand that the causes of religious violence are not universal but mimetic and contextual in nature. Moreover, while acting toward addressing violence they must adopt a multi-sectoral and multi-religious approach.

Emphasis should be put at efforts that target eliminating element of religious violence: such as capacitate community to handle religious violence; engage in research or collaborate with higher education institutions to conduct researches that look for a solution; Engage different religious organization; create enabling environment for community welfare, creation of employment and food security; and support responsible government in the mission to limit violence by communicating the message that reaches vulnerable groups (i.e. the youth and children). Lastly, we should always be reminded by Appleby (2000) that: “lasting peace will require a continuous struggle for reconciliation among people living within zones of previous or potential deadly violence”.

Into the Girardian mimetic desire theory, some ingredients are necessary to be included in the understanding of the motive behind the decision to engage in violence. Human behaviours (such as mimetic desires) are basically guided with social interests and expectations of the individuals and those around them. These, in turn, are regulated by cognitive processes and agency constituted in a particular discursive practice and setting.

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