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*Published in:*  
Mission Studies

*DOI:*  
[10.1163/15733831-12341568](https://doi.org/10.1163/15733831-12341568)

*Publication date:*  
2018

*Document version*  
Peer reviewed version

*Citation for published version (APA):*  
Olsson, H. G. (2018). Narratives of Change: Healing and Pentecostal Belonging in Zanzibar. *Mission Studies*, 35(2), 225-244. <https://doi.org/10.1163/15733831-12341568>

This is the author version (post-print) of the article published in the journal *Mission Studies* 35: 2 (2018), 225-244. Cite as: Olsson, H. (2018). Narratives of Change: Healing and Pentecostal Belonging in Zanzibar, *Mission Studies*, 35(2), 225-244. doi: <https://doi.org/10.1163/15733831-12341568>

## **Narratives of Change: Healing and Pentecostal Belonging in Zanzibar**

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### **ABSTRACT**

In the predominantly Muslim context of Zanzibar, Pentecostal Christianity is slowly on the rise as a result of an influx of labor migrants from mainland Tanzania. A paramount feature in these churches is the provision of divine healing and deliverance from spiritual affliction. This article analyses how narratives of healing in one of Zanzibar's major Pentecostal churches, the City Christian Center, influence how religious belonging is negotiated and manifested. Focusing on Zanzibar-born Pentecostals with Roman Catholic backgrounds, the analysis suggests that healing and practices conducted to deliver individuals from pain and suffering are connected to a wider reevaluation of moral and social actions characterizing Zanzibar society. It stresses that Pentecostal belonging builds on Zanzibar-born members' previous experiences of Zanzibar in a process of both affirmation and rejection, in which adherence to Christianity is intensified by an increased knowledge of God's power to heal, and opposition to the Muslim majority is strengthened by connecting it to sickness.

### **Keywords:**

Zanzibar; Pentecostal Christianity; religious belonging; healing; Pentecostal-Muslim interactions

### **INTRODUCTION**

Some cars and *pikipiki* (vespas) are driving by on the dusty road outside the small and newly opened shop in one of Zanzibar Town's suburbs. Some kids on their way home from school stop, buy some sweets from the neatly displayed candy table, pay, and go on. The lady behind the counter smiles, proud of her business. She has lived her whole life in Zanzibar where she was born and raised by her Roman Catholic parents. However, life has not always been easy. Due to her Christian identity, she often felt herself alienated from the predominantly Muslim society, a hardship exacerbated by recurring illness which required regular consultation with traditional (Muslim) healers (*waganga wa kienyeji*). But nothing helped until a major event occurred in her life that changed everything. With joy

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and gravity, Raheli<sup>2</sup> explains that her life took a new turn when, a few years ago, just across the road from her current business, she was healed in the premises of the Tanzania Assemblies of God's (TAG) major outreach, the City Christian Centre (CCC). She was finally delivered from the pain that had haunted her throughout her life. The healing caused her to leave the Roman Catholic Church and become what she and her fellow CCC members refer to as a 'saved Christian' (*aliyeokoka*), something which also manifested in her getting married, giving birth to two children, and becoming an independent entrepreneur now running her own business.

Raheli's retelling of how she was healed in many ways confirms what has been stressed as one of the most important features behind the growth, influence, and success of Pentecostal and Charismatic Christianity globally; namely, the element of healing and deliverance from illness (e.g., Brown 2011). The narrative exemplifies the way in which its contemporary healing practices address sickness, poverty, and economic hardships—often, in Africa, generating personal transformation and appropriation of a new Christian lifestyle in sharp contrast to local cultural practices (e.g., Dilger 2009, Clarke 2014, Gifford 2011, 2014, Kalu 2008). Despite its acknowledged importance within this growing strand of Christianity, context-rooted assessments of the wider social role of Pentecostal and Charismatic healing have remained sparse. This contribution discusses the significance of Pentecostal healing in the Muslim majority setting of Zanzibar by analyzing how testimonies and experiences of healing address connections between the material and the spiritual world and, in the social sphere, shape both the production of religious belonging and relationships across religious divides. By attending to narratives of healing within a minority within a minority—Zanzibar-born members of the CCC whose congregation primarily consists of labor migrants born *outside* of Zanzibar but attracted by its rapidly growing tourist industry (Olsson 2015)—the study investigates the power of healing narratives to produce religious belonging and serve as an important conduit through which a narrative of a socially and spiritually hazardous Zanzibar is produced.

The reason for selecting Zanzibar-born members as research subjects is threefold: firstly, their long-term experience and deep knowledge of the local context points to their potential as cultural brokers between newly arriving Christian migrants and the local Muslim majority community. Their local rootedness means that they hold a special place within the CCC church by virtue of their ability to provide newcomers with insights and guidance in navigating local society, although, importantly, their presence in the CCC church also blurs its external origins by providing local authenticity. Secondly, addressing the position of local converts in a context of intracontinental migration is a variation on the more common theme of the relationship between newcomer and host in the emerging field of studies of African Pentecostal Christianity and transnational migration (e.g., Adogame 2010, Ludwig and Asamoah-Gyadu 2011). Consequently, their narratives and testimonies of hardships and healing from sickness in Zanzibar serve as idiomatic examples of the pitfalls associated with a life outside of Pentecostal belonging—despite common Zanzibari belonging—and therefore provide access to the changes in social and moral practice generated by healing. Analyzing Zanzibar-born members' rationalization of divine healing also provides a comparative perspective onto other religiously motivated healing practices in Zanzibar and serves to disclose how the search for healing is imbedded in a world where (good and evil) spiritual forces are regarded as influencing humans' wellbeing. Thirdly, Zanzibar-born CCC members often have a background in other Christian churches, often the Roman Catholic Church. This places their current Pentecostal belonging in relation to long experiences of alienation vis-à-vis the Muslim majority and casts additional light on the role of divine healing in their shift to Pentecostal Christianity; in other words, its significance in their turn to Pentecostal Christianity and how it is embedded in a wider process of evaluating prior and current religious practices in relation to wider social interactions, cultural habits, and moral action.

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<sup>2</sup> All names used in the text are pseudonyms.

While analyzing the role of healing in the reshaping of Christian belonging in Zanzibar, I stress a contextual approach and theoretical framework that situates the production of Pentecostal belonging in relation to, and in terms of effects of, other sites of belonging. Assessing manifestations of Pentecostal belonging hence means considering its intersection with other social locations such as nationality, origins, sex, and race. This approach also examines identifications with, and emotional attachments to, collectivities, and the ethical and political values which people attach to their own or others' belonging (Yuval-Davis 2011, 12). The main focus in this paper is on how identification with, and emotional attachments to, Pentecostal Christianity—that is, religious belonging—are produced through the narration of the experiences of being healed of illness and the event of deliverance; in other words, on how identities are formed in the retelling of who the narrators were and who they are becoming (Ammerman and Williams 2012, Mishler 1986). Here healing not only suggests identification with a community of fellow Christians but also the emotional aspect of longing to become closer to God. From this perspective healing serves as a locus for examining how Christian belonging is re-defined in relation both to other Christian communities and the Muslim majority society: to processes whereby CCC members' own positions, practices, and actions are valued in relation to the norms, habits, and customs of other sites of belonging in local society.

### **CHRISTIANITY IN ZANZIBAR**

As one of many mercantile thresholds that developed between the African continent and the Indian Ocean, contemporary Zanzibar is shaped by Islamic influences and transcultural interactions and exchanges. Historically, this created a unique Swahili cultural setting which came to distinguish the East African coastal trade centers from cultures on the African continent (Horton and Middleton 2000, Middleton 1992). Such historical cultural distinctions remain important, as religious belonging is increasingly linked to the ways in which ethno-national identities are manifested in connection to the disputed and contested Union partnership between the archipelago and Mainland Tanzania (earlier Tanganyika) (Glassman 2011, Keshodkar 2013, Sheriff 2001, Shivji 2008).<sup>3</sup> With Islam remaining a major unifying component in the archipelago's social make-up, Muslim belonging has become a major signifier in the production of a Zanzibari national identity. Christian belonging, on the other hand, has increasingly been connected to the mainland despite a small, yet growing and visible, Christian presence on the islands in tandem with a Union political agenda of increasing mainland influence in the archipelago (Glassman 2011, 297-298).

Considering that Christians constitute fewer than two percent of Zanzibar's population of 1.3 million people, the Christian community in Zanzibar is diverse. The largest churches are the Roman Catholic (RC) and Anglican churches, which have been present from the 15<sup>th</sup> and 19<sup>th</sup> century respectively, but since the 1960s there has been an influx of Protestant and Pentecostal churches including the Evangelical Lutheran Church of Tanzania (Sundkler and Steed 2000, 519-526, von Sicard 1970). According to the local Zanzibari community the Christian churches can be divided into two main strands: the first group, locally referred to as original Christians (*wakristo wa asili*), includes the Anglican and the RC church which, as their long-term presence brought adaptation to the local socio-cultural norms of civility (*ustaarabu*) (Middleton 1992), are widely regarded as part of a cosmopolitan narrative of peaceful coexistence between religious traditions on the islands. The second group, (newly) arriving Christians (*wakristo wa kuja*), consists of churches that were established, primarily by African missionaries, after the revolution in the 1960s. Since the early 1980s Christian missions have intensified along with the increase in labor migrants from Mainland Tanzania seeking economic

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<sup>3</sup> Officially the two entities are referred to as "Mainland Tanzania" (*Tanzania bara*) and "Island Tanzania" (*Tanzania visiwa*).

opportunities in relation to the emerging international tourist industry. In the course of this development a new range of Pentecostal and Charismatic churches started to emerge across the islands, which today consists of more than seventy congregations including the Free Pentecostal Church of Tanzania, the Tanzania Assemblies of God, the Evangelical Assemblies of God Tanzania, the Church of God Tanzania, the Redeemed Gospel Church, the Christian Mission Fellowship, the Pentecostal Evangelistic Fellowship of Africa, the Victory Church International, EFATHA, and the Calvary Assemblies of God, to mention some of the most prominent examples. There are also Seventh Day Adventist and Baptist churches. A common feature of all is that their members are from Mainland Tanzania (and, to minor degree, other East African countries).

Today, the Roman Catholic and Anglican Churches still remain the largest Christian denominations with 13,000 and 2,500 members respectively while the total number of Pentecostals is around 4,500 (2,700 attending TAG congregations). This study takes place in the largest of the Pentecostal churches, the TAG's City Christian Center (the CCC), situated in one of Zanzibar Town's residential areas on the site of an old Anglican graveyard; it has a weekly attendance of around 800-900 people, about 90% of whom are migrants from Mainland Tanzania. The congregation originated in a small group within the army led by a former Muslim evangelist. One of the soldiers participating in the group later became a pastor and developed the congregation to its present complement. Affiliated to the global body of World Assemblies of God, the church is rooted in Pentecostal theology and displays classical Pentecostal features such as *glossalia*, emphasis on the active work of the Holy Spirit, divine healing, and the use of spiritual gifts (Anderson 2004). The members of the CCC, define themselves as "saved" Christians—in Swahili *kuokoka*, in English often referred to as "born again"—stressing the new life in the spirit.<sup>4</sup> *Kuokoka* theologically implies activity in order to remain saved and thus incorporates the rhetoric of "continuous conversion" (Coleman 2003) which is often used to distinguish members of Charismatic revival churches from others, including other Christians. Despite its classical roots and outlook, the CCC, however, displays features associated with third wave Pentecostal Christianity (often referred to as Neo-Pentecostalism), such as an emphasis on spiritual warfare and certain elements of prosperity teachings.

## METHODS

Empirical research for this study took place in Zanzibar Town during four months of intense fieldwork in 2012 and was part of my doctoral work (Olsson 2016). Data were produced in interaction with members and staff at the CCC using standard ethnographic methods (participant observation) including 27 life story interviews and two focus group interview sessions. The fieldwork was conducted prior, during, and after a series of violent events in which political tensions connected to the contested political partnership of the Tanzanian Union rocked Zanzibar Town. During these tensions attacks were directed against the political offices of the ruling party *Chama cha Mapinduzi* (CCM) as well as Christian church premises, including the CCC church building. The attacks highlighted links between religious belonging, political affiliations, and origins. The Zanzibar-born Pentecostal members of the CCC church, the subjects of this article, in many ways stand in the middle of all these contestations as their double belonging (Zanzibari and Pentecostal Christian) contradicts discourses in Zanzibar that pit the notion of a Muslim Zanzibar against a Christian Mainland. Although Zanzibar-born CCC members make up less than ten percent of the CCC congregation they provide a window onto how healing is

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<sup>4</sup> In many Pentecostal-Charismatic churches, being born again refers to the second birth in the spirit found in the Bible passage John 3:3ff. In Swahili, born again literally translates as *kuzaliwa ya pili*. This concept is however never used in Swahili. Among Pentecostal and Charismatic churches in Tanzania (termed *makanisa ya kiroho*, spiritual churches, or *makanisa ya wokovu*, salvation churches) being born again is discussed in terms of *kuokoka*, to be saved. To be saved could be translated to both *kuokolewa* and *kuokoka* with *kuokolewa* connoting passiveness while *kuokoka* refer to a process of activity in order to remain saved, i.e. something one continuously has to work on.

rationalized in relation to this wider social contestation. Moreover, Zanzibar-born CCC members generally share two traits: (1) they primarily come from a Roman Catholic background; and (2) despite being born on the archipelago, are often descendants (second or third generation) of migrants from what today is referred to as Mainland Tanzania. The aspect of Christian identity and mainland heritage points to two sites of belonging with which their narrative of healing and ongoing commitment to Pentecostal faith intersects.

#### A NARRATIVE OF HEALING

Raheli, whose story began this article, has a background few of her fellow churchgoers in the CCC share. In that Zanzibar is her home, the place where she was born and raised. However, within the context of Zanzibar-born CCC members Raheli is in many ways a typical representative. Firstly, Raheli's parents were not born in Zanzibar but, just before the revolution in the early 1960s, shifted to Zanzibar from Morogoro (then Tanganyika) in search of better economic prospects. Secondly, she has a Christian background, with her parents belonging to the Roman Catholic Church. The aspects of mainland origins and Roman Catholic belonging are important to bear in mind while I now turn to the significance of healing in Raheli's narrated recollection of how she became a saved Christian.

When telling the story of her life Raheli stresses that she is a true local of the island by using the auto designation *mzanzibari*. She does not emphasize her mainland heritage by calling herself *mzanzibara*, a term increasingly used in Zanzibar to differentiate between (1) Zanzibar origins and mainland origins and (2) those promoting increased Zanzibar political sovereignty and those loyal to Tanzania (the Union). While stressing her authenticity as a Zanzibari, Raheli grieves that this is something that often has been questioned. As the last-born of seven siblings she attended school in the middle of Stone Town, standing out as the only Christian in a class of more than 30 pupils. She was often mocked for being born in Zanzibar yet looking and behaving like a "mainlander" (*mbara*). Being called a mainlander was derogative, and reflected the strong social norm connecting Zanzibari belonging to Islam. Raheli felt that this often surfaced and served as a hindrance to being fully accepted into the society, something that affected the whole family. As an adult, her own brother eventually gave in to the social pressure to become a Muslim and converted to Islam in order to land a good job.

Nevertheless, when Raheli's retells the story of her path to the Pentecostal church of the CCC she starts with a place where she felt that she was accepted and valued. During her teenage years she was a good netball player, and her defensive skills were of great importance to her team. It was somewhere she felt cherished, at least until she was forced to stop playing due to health problems. The team pledged to have her back, because she was important to the team's success, but Raheli's problems got worse. Her illness intensified, and she started experiencing trouble with sleeping mixed with terrible nightmares, meanwhile experiencing pain that felt as if something was stabbing her. She consulted hospitals and visited several doctors without getting effective treatment or help. As time passed she and her family started to fear that the people disappointed with her for not playing netball had put a spell on her, causing her to be possessed by a spirit (*pepo*) that was making her increasingly unwell. Growing desperate for help Raheli consulted a traditional Muslim healer (*mganga wa kienyeji*). It was a natural step, almost a habit. Despite their Roman Catholic belonging, her parents had frequently attended and sent their children to such healers for treatment in times of sickness, and also in order to improve their chances of financial success. The traditional healer Raheli consulted confirmed that she was afflicted by a more powerful spirit than she had first thought (*a jini*), and she received a medicine (*dawa*) in which Qur'anic verses written with saffron had been soaked; this she was to drink before going to bed every night. She took the yellow potion as instructed, but as time passed and she did not recover she began to question what she was doing. Should she, as a Christian, seek help from a Mus-

lim healer? Was not Jesus the healer of life par excellence? Should her own God not help her? Raheli's parents had by this stage passed away, yet she had continued their habit of consulting the traditional healer for help. Why? She eventually voiced her doubts and concerns to her sister who had become a saved Christian (*aliyeokoka*), and was now regularly attending a Pentecostal church. The sister, confident that the traditional medicine was making her sister sicker, urged Raheli to follow her to a prayer session at the church where she worshipped. The sister assured Raheli that prayers would deliver her from her troubles. More and more desperate for help, Raheli agreed and followed her sister to the CCC.

When the pastor made the altar call during the prayer session Raheli burst into tears and collapsed on the church's concrete floor. As the fierce intercession prayers of the rest of the congregations washed over her Raheli experienced what she in retrospect described as a release from pain and trouble. She was delivered (*funguliwa*); healed from her spiritual affliction. It was the beginning of a new path and life of commitment, where Raheli, now a member of the CCC church herself, engages in prayer for those suffering and afflicted by spirits.

### **Healing and change**

Raheli's conversion story serves as an idiomatic example of what today is seen as characteristic of Pentecostal and Charismatic Christianity globally; namely, an experience of transformation and change that generates new habits and breaks with those of the past life (Meyer 1998, Robbins 2004b). In Raheli's case, her healing from sickness served as the event—the starting point—of an ongoing review of her past deeds and actions in order to generate what Raheli describes as a positive change in her present life. As such, healing does not only mark the release from pain and hardship, it is a practice in which malevolent forces causing sickness in relation to interactions with the social sphere are identified, named and defeated. While this points to that illness gets rationalized in relation to what is seen as a spiritually charged Zanzibar society, it also stresses the precedence of “third wave” Pentecostal ideas of healing as deliverance from spiritual affliction in the CCC church. Raheli's healing narrative actually reaffirms the presence of malicious spiritual forces—thereby maintaining a worldview accepting the ongoing possibility of (evil) spiritual influence—while at the same time rejecting them (Robbins 2004b). While the question if a Christian could be demon possessed has created debates among Christians in Africa (e.g. Haustein 2011) the spiritual hazards connected to Zanzibar by the CCC stress the every-day risk CCC members' face of attracting unwanted spiritual influence. It presupposes the common theme in Africa more generally that healing is predicated upon a worldview where “healing and health are inextricably connected to social behavior, moral conduct and spiritual forces” (Clarke 2014, 71, see also Gammelin this issue). Using Raheli's healing narrative as a case study, let us turn to the kind of reinterpretations of her past life, and therefore reevaluation of religious belonging in the Zanzibar socio-cultural setting, generated by commitment to this victory from suffering.

While her healing had not provided an explanation for her illness, it had affirmed that her troubles were connected to the spiritual realm and therefore had instigated a review of the habits, actions, and customs that might have exacerbated her problems. For Raheli, the most significant reason for her continuing hardships was connected to the habit of consulting and using traditional healing (*uganga*). Rather than helping her, *uganga* became what the Pentecostal theologian Asamoah-Gyadu refers to as one of the “demonic doorways” which prevented Raheli from living a full and prosperous life, materially as well as spiritually (Asamoah-Gyadu 2013, 117). This is by no means a unique interpretation; rather, it is a common framing in Pentecostal theology, where certain activities or even persons can be gateways for evil influences (Warrington 2008).

Her parents, who had themselves regularly consulted with traditional healers in their search for success and prosperity, had introduced Raheli to the practice. Yet, when talking about her interactions with traditional healers Raheli avoids blaming her parents. She instead claims that the reason for their habits was that their souls (*roho*) were infected (*waliambukiza*) by adherence to a cult for which Raheli blames the Roman Catholic Church or, more specifically, the church's inability to bring its members close to God. As a consequence of the church's lack of guidance, she and her parents had been able to "fulfill their duty of going to the church ... but also to the traditional healers" (Raheli, 30 October 2012). Raheli's reinterpretation of her own and her parents' actions as Roman Catholics produces a further comparison with the CCC church:

Over there [in the RC church] we prayed in the name of the Father, Son and the Holy Spirit, but I did not feel or understand who the Holy Spirit was—or what the Holy Spirit could do in your personal life. But here [at the CCC] I have learned something different, that you are able to receive the Holy Spirit, and that the Holy Spirit helps you. I have been empowered. (Raheli, 30 October 2012)

The lack of intimacy and closeness to God, and ignorance about the power of the Holy Spirit, hence provides the reason for Raheli's and her parents' habitual practice. In this characterization, the Roman Catholic Church does not surface as different religion, but rather as an insufficient and powerless form of Christianity which is unable to bring its members into direct communication with God. The depiction suggests a distance from God within the Roman Catholic Church that serves to explain the church's inability to heal Raheli's infected (*ambukiza*) soul, and also her adherence to the evil habits that made her further prone to sickness and hardship. Raheli's critique thus centers on the actual power God has over evil, and the Roman Catholic Church's inability to teach its members how to access this power. When reflecting on its lack of teachings and proper practice Raheli reiterated:

It was like I had not the education of knowing God. I was singing; I prayed but I did not see any change in the spirit ... Now it is like I have opened everything; like "Why do you do this? Just leave it." Now I feel like I have received different objects (*vitu*) inside my body; I have been given different customs that make me deserve to talk with God. (Raheli, 30 October 2012)

It was in the CCC church that her infected soul was healed, and that is also where she can keep it free from future contamination. Her appropriation of different customs (*tabia*) through her Pentecostal belonging also reveals how Raheli has come to (re)value her place vis-à-vis local society. Through the event of her healing, and the ongoing commitment thereafter, she has reached a deeper understanding of what God can actually accomplish and also insights into the negative impact (and dominion) of dark spiritual forces not only on her past life, but continuously and currently on Zanzibar society at large.

This appropriation of knowledge is something that surfaced in several interviews with CCC members from Roman Catholic backgrounds. They stressed that the CCC church, and the teachings provided there, enabled them to know God in a different way. Reaching a closeness to God through the guidance of the community served not only to help them understand but also to materialize the ways in which God heals afflictions and continually safeguards the members of the church from harm (Luka, 1 October 2012; John, 25 October 2012). Fundamentally, this describes a process of learning to be closer to God, highlighting that Pentecostal belonging is part of an ongoing process of growth or "continuous conversion" (Coleman 2003). In this dwells the importance of communal relations and the guidance a powerful Christian community able to convict and fend off malevolent spirits.

The process of acquiring knowledge, however, which is most often initiated through the event of healing, also produces a powerful narrative of a realm where God is not close, one in which a lack of knowledge (or experience) of God facilitates the influence of malevolent evil forces. Considering the scarcity of powerful Christian communities in Zanzibar who have this knowledge, Zanzibar is framed as a breeding ground for evil spirits, a place where the dark forces are denser, especially compared to other places in Tanzania—and the main reason for this difference is the predominance of Islam (Olsson 2015, 28). In this light, (Pentecostal) Christianity, practiced and lived in the proper way, is seen as an instrument for reducing the impact of evil forces and providing a community that could change the spiritual equilibrium in Zanzibar society. Such interpretations situate Pentecostal practices in a framework of spiritual warfare in which events occurring in the world are seen in the light of spiritual battle (e.g., Währisch-Oblau 2011, Yong 2010). Seeing Zanzibar as engaged in such a battle also enables Raheli to place her past experiences of discrimination, alienation, and hardship as a Christian in a larger context of meaning. It situates Raheli's experience of healing in a Pentecostal narrative of power in which a fight between good and evil for dominion over people minds, bodies, and well-being, is currently taking place on the island.

Situated in this wider context of struggles between good and evil, Raheli and other Zanzibar-born members of the CCC are of great significance for the church: their knowledge of God is produced via first-hand experiences of Zanzibar society. Not only are they able to assist newly arriving members of the church to navigate this hazardous setting, but their life stories serve as reminders of what a life distant from God encompasses. Moreover, Raheli's emphasis—and that of others like her—on her Zanzibari belonging, also provides the CCC church with local anchoring, and helps attribute authenticity to it as a local church. That a number of Zanzibari are members of, and committed to, the CCC not only becomes a sign (and proof) of its wider mission, but also signifies that the power of God's (and the church's) ability to heal is making waves in local society. Raheli is someone from the inside who can confirm the detrimental outcomes of engaging with a malevolent, and spiritually charged, environment. On the one hand, her narrative serves as an example in a wider context of caution, detailing what could happen without the backing of a strong church; while on the other, it also illustrates how victorious living generates prosperity. With her newly opened business, Raheli symbolizes what a true life with Jesus can generate, indicating that there is hope for those in the church with expectations of success who are struggling to land a good job. If she can succeed, living her whole life in Zanzibar, so may others. Raheli's story is thus one about the power of evil forces and, more importantly, of victory over these forces.

### ***The social significance of healing***

Healing as presented above is not just a feature of the Pentecostal community in Zanzibar. Healing practices acknowledging a potent spiritual world are also widespread in the Muslim majority society (Larsen 2008); indeed, Muslims occasionally arrive at the CCC church in search of healing without conversion. Yet, while their engagements with Christian healing are cherished within the CCC church as a sign that Muslims will eventually become Christians, what they certainly indicate is that healing is an important facet of many people's search for a full and complete life in Zanzibar more generally.

The importance of health and wellbeing could be exemplified in the common greeting in Swahili: *uhali gani?* (lit. what is your condition/status?); to which one responds: *uzima* (lit. life, to be complete, or fulfilled, wholeness, wellbeing, healthiness, vitality). The meaning of *uzima* could be further explained by looking at the wider connotation of being a *mtu mzima* (an adult person, lit. a complete person) which incorporates being healthy, married with children, and materially prosperous, as well as

maintaining good social relationships.<sup>5</sup> Muslims and Christians alike in Zanzibar would stress that these are all important aspects of what it means to be a person (Larsen 2008, Olsson 2016). Yet, as highlighted in Raheli's story, there are tensions surrounding the moral discourse of how to reach *uzima*. When Raheli uses *uzima*, it is used in relation to her deliverance from spiritual affliction and her receiving of Jesus: "I received *uzima*. Jesus is *uzima*. [Through Jesus] I have received the complete life (*uzima kamili*). I have run away from the dead ones (*wafu*); I have received life (*uzima*)" (30 October 2012). Here, acquiring a full life is framed as liberation from death through the acceptance of life (Jesus) and, further, as a promise of health and prosperous living wherein continuous commitment also generates new moral practices. Again, it highlights healing as an ongoing process whereby sickness and poor physical and mental health are explained in relation to habits, customs, and social relationships (Clarke 2014).

The event of healing, therefore, does not just consist of deliverance from pain and suffering but also builds a narrative that situates sickness in relation to moral and social behavior in a spiritually charged environment. It forces the healed to confront past experiences of living a life in sickness, and juxtapose this past to wellbeing in the future, thereby reconstituting one's past and future roles in the social makeup. In Raheli's case it gave rise to a combination of being aware of her own social interactions—including practices of seclusion and avoidance of places, persons, and contexts that could be potentially harmful—and the (spiritually caused) suffering of others. This results in distinctions being made between those considered to be saved, and those who are not,<sup>6</sup> which is then manifested in the will on the part of the saved to save others from suffering and spiritual affliction. This highlights both engagements with, as well as seclusion from, the world (Yong 2010, 172). While the extent to which these different approaches are manifested in the CCC often fluctuates in relation to access to public space and socio-political circumstances, reaching out to others through prayer or public evangelization highlights a final transformation connected to healing as an ongoing practice which I want to emphasize; namely, how the perpetrator is turned into the victim.

Raheli said that she now feels pity for many of those who mocked her due to her Christian belonging, and that she now understands that they are suffering under the yoke of the malevolent spiritual forces that permeate Zanzibar society—a statement that again declares the importance of acquiring knowledge of God and explains what is wrong with Zanzibar society. It also strips Muslims (and former fellow Roman Catholic congregants) of agency; they are behaving wrongly in social and moral terms due to the influence of evil forces. Their lives can only be restored through the active power of God. The acknowledgment of evil also turns Raheli's belonging to a vulnerable Christian minority on its head. As part of a community where the power of God is seen to be accessible she is no longer a victim of spiritual affliction; rather, the people outside this realm of power are the victims. Her emphasis on these people as victims indicates, however, that the line between the saved and the non-saved is blurred. Ultimately, Pentecostal outreach practices have a tendency to produce an imagined community of spiritual kin, in which the other, the not yet saved, is viewed as a potential future fellow (Englund 2011).

Her reluctance to blame her parents for her own bad habits and customs could arguably be a product of the same line of thought. They too were victims of evil powers. Raheli did not immediately break with traditional healers after the death of her parents, however, and, along with the help she ac-

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<sup>5</sup> The concept of *uzima* touches on the notion of abundant life in wholeness and harmony with earth, humans, spirits, and God, which is discussed by African theological scholars such as Magesa (1998, 2013). For a study addressing the concept in the context of Lutheran theology in Tanzania see Vähäkangas (1992, 45-49) and for theological elaboration on wholeness and harmony from the context of the Lutheran Church in Botswana see Pöntinen (2013).

<sup>6</sup> There is no space here to flesh out the wider political ramifications such distinctions generate, but I have elsewhere analyzed how this intersects with national belonging and exaggerates distinctions between Muslim Zanzibar and a Christian mainland (see Olsson 2016).

cepted from her now Pentecostal sister, this suggests that she always placed value on her family relations. The element of Christian belonging, which serves as an important continuation of her family heritage, is important to her. Furthermore, with her brother now a Muslim, Raheli's emphasis on reaching out to Muslims could also be viewed as a way of trying to reunite her "Christian" family. While Raheli's healing event in retrospect could be seen as a break with her past, it could also be seen as an intensification of her Christian belonging. It is not a break from, but rather a realization of, how she, as a Christian, needs to live in order to experience God: paying heed to her heritage by cultivating her Christian identity further.

Raheli's emphasis on not blaming the individual for attracting evil, and instead seeing people as victims, highlights a wider moral discourse that places the role of the community at the center. In relation to the emphasis placed on how Pentecostal and Charismatic Christianity fosters individualism (Keane 2007, Robbins 2004a) within a wider paradigm of modernity (Meyer 1998), Raheli's narrative suggests that the major responsibility for the individual's wellbeing lies in the hands of those guiding and teaching believers how to conduct their lives. It also highlights the importance given to the social context and communal relations in rationalizing the presence of both illness and health. However, the socio-cultural interpretation such narratives of healing generate also emphasizes the importance of wider social transformation. It is only through long term participation and commitment to God that the effects of God's power (and healing reign) can grow. Raheli's case emphasizes that healing in the context of Zanzibar gives rise to interpretations of the social sphere in which healing becomes a sign of Christianity's supreme spiritual power over a suffering, yet morally weak society. Her fierce critique of the Roman Catholic Church's inability to teach people about how to utilize this power thus makes it part of what is seen as a detrimental adaptation to the wider social context.

## **DISCUSSION & CONCLUDING REMARKS**

This paper has analyzed how Pentecostal healing is narrated and rationalized in relation to Christian belonging in the Muslim majority context of Zanzibar. I have done this by examining the healing narrative of a Zanzibar-born member of the CCC church, Raheli, and how the event of healing generated a reevaluation of her own and others' moral actions and social relationships in light of a potent spiritual world. Raheli's retelling of her experience suggests that the effects of healing go beyond relief from a state of sickness and spiritual affliction, becoming a transformative act that generates social change in which one's Christian belonging and place in the society are given new meaning. Yet, considering Raheli's strong Christian identity prior to being saved (*aliyeokoka*), her healing could in this light be seen as a homecoming, part of a process of getting to know the powerful God she had cherished, but never experienced. The acquired knowledge of God situates her history of being mocked, discriminated against, and alienated in Zanzibar society in the light of this return. Healing hence not only becomes connected to a wider liberation from a life of oppression but also a reconfirmation that maintaining a Christian identity is the right thing to do. It is a revitalization of her Christian belonging. As a Pentecostal Christian, she has experienced what she always knew, but was never able to access—that there is no greater power than that connected with a life in Jesus.

So, what does healing in the story of Raheli illuminate in relation to the production of Pentecostal belonging in Zanzibar? Healing first of all serves as the starting point, the opening, for experiencing a powerful transformation from suffering to wellbeing. Yet the narrative of liberation from sickness (and evil) on which healing builds, is situated in her past experiences in Zanzibar. Committing to a community that rejects the moral foundation of the majority society therefore intersects with her experiences of already being alienated and rejected. As such, entering a process of knowing and experiencing God helps to alleviate tensions created by Raheli's double belonging as a Zanzibari and as a Christian by encouraging outright rejection of the norms present in the Muslim majority society,

especially those that connect Zanzibarness with accommodation to Islamic values. In other words, Raheli's narrative of healing situates the socio-cultural pressure of adapting to Islamic values in tandem with illness and malevolent spiritual forces. It also illuminates the power of the Pentecostal narrative to rationalize troubles, suffering, and wellbeing in the social world as utterly spiritual in nature. While this is expressed in terms of being released from pain, the emotional attachment of experiencing God's goodness is also stressed. Shared and reproduced in the CCC church, stories like Raheli's coalesce to create a collective narrative wherein the hazards of Zanzibar society are constantly confirmed. Situated against Raheli's adherence to the Roman Catholic Church and prior experiences of consulting traditional healers, her story also highlights how Pentecostal belonging is evaluated in relation to other sites of belonging. As part of this re-narration of her place in Zanzibar, malevolent spiritual forces are now seen as characteristic of Muslim society. Yet she sticks with her Zanzibari identity, and by doing so also commits to the work of liberating her fellow islanders from evil influences.

The discussion of Raheli's narrative of healing in the context of contemporary, Muslim majority Zanzibar has suggested that it was more than an event; rather, it was part of an ongoing process wherein the perils of a life distant from God remain at the forefront; a process in which the acquisition of new insights does not necessarily transform how the world is constituted but revalues sites of belonging in relation to social norms and moral actions. The story stresses the importance of closeness to God's healing power. Healing is thus a part of a powerful narrative of change that not only restores the well-being of individuals but also promises change for the society at large. In order to understand the wider social significance, this paper has stressed that we need to acknowledge healing as an ongoing transformative act and carefully situate it in relation to the socio-cultural setting in which it takes place. Doing so would provide new openings for assessing the wider social, economic, and political ramifications practices of Pentecostal and Charismatic healing generate in local communities across the world.

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