



# **EXPLORING THE MIGRATION EXPERIENCES OF MUSLIM YAO WOMEN IN KWAZULU- NATAL, 1994- 2015**

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Of Social Science – Masters in History in the School of Social Sciences,  
University of Kwa-Zulu Natal, Howard College.

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## DECLARATION

I, Joseph YusufuMbalaka, hereby declare that:

(i) The research reported in this dissertation, except where otherwise indicated, is my original work.

(ii) This dissertation has not been submitted, in whole or in part, for a degree at another university or institution.

(iii) Where data, ideas and quotations have been used that are not my own, they have been dully acknowledged as being sourced from other persons.

(vi) This dissertation is submitted in fulfillment of the requirements for the Degree of Social Science – Masters in History in the School of Social Sciences, University of Kwa-Zulu Natal, Howard College.

SIGNED: \_\_\_\_\_

DATE: \_\_ March 2017\_\_\_\_\_

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To my wife, daughters and sons for their tolerance, love and support during the course of my studies.

## **DEDICATION**

This project is dedicated to all Muslim Yao women, Ndapeuli Zakee Y. Mbalaka, and my late father M'balaka Bwanali Ntwana who positively shaped my life through the history book entitled *Wayaowe* by Yohanna Barnaba Abdallah. The book was published in 1919 by the government printers in Nyasaland (now Malawi), which he purchased in 1956 and handed to me as a gift in 1982. This work inspired me to aspire to greatness and have a passion for the history of the Yao people. It is extremely sad that my father could not live to see and reap the fruits of his labour.

## **LIST OF ACRONYMS**

ANC	African National Congress
BRICS	Brazil, Russia, India, China, and South Africa
FD	FirqatudDawah
KZN	KwaZulu-Natal
MAM	Muslim Association of Malawi
NGO	Non-Governmental Organisation
RDP	Reconstruction and Development Programme
SADC	Southern African Development Community
TIP	Taking Islam to the People
UKZN	University of KwaZulu- Natal

## **ABSTRACT**

There is very little to no research accessible on Muslim Yao women in South Africa; the available literature focuses primarily on Muslim Yao male migrants. This study critically examines the lived migration experiences of Malawian women in South Africa. This research is contextualized within the larger narrative of migration to South Africa in the post-apartheid period and experiences of many migrant communities in recent years. It will interrogate and explore the migration experiences of Muslim Yao women in KwaZulu-Natal between 1994 and 2015. The Yao form the largest proportion of the Muslims of Malawi and have a long tradition of emigrating from their original homeland to other regions, including South Africa. This study aims to historicise their experiences through a life history and narrative approach of the women who have migrated to Durban. These are Muslim Yao women who are engaged in the civic life of their communities and in public participation in various ways. Key themes examined in this dissertation include the reasons for their migration to South Africa, the challenges and constraints they face as immigrants, and how Yao Muslim women are negotiating their identity in multiple contexts – with fellow Malawians, other, predominantly Indian, Muslims, and black South Africans with whom they are in contact in various settings on a daily basis. The complex and complicated triangular relationship between Malawian women, local indigenous peoples (officially designated as “Black African” in the census), and Indians is explored in this study. Currently there is little work of the kind envisaged here, as most existing works on post-apartheid Muslim Yao migrants deal primarily with men. These studies focus on limited aspects of the lives of Muslim Yao women in South Africa. This study will contribute to our understanding of Malawian women migrants in South Africa. The working hypothesis of this study is that in the process of creating a new life in South Africa, Malawian women are contributing to the economy of Malawi through remittances in significant ways, engaging in the civic life of their communities in very public ways and changing perceptions of Islam as being predominantly an “Indian” religion in KwaZulu-Natal. In addition, this study will add to current debates on migration by focusing on issues of gender, identity, and agency in Africa.

### **Key Words**

Gender, Identities, International migration, Muslim, Women, Xenophobia, Yao





# CHAPTER ONE

## Introduction

The history of migrations can be traced to the origins of mankind in what is known as the Rift Valley in Africa from where *Homo erectus* and *Homo sapiens* migrated to Europe and subsequently into other continents.<sup>1</sup> The movement of people to different regions is old as civilization itself.<sup>2</sup> Migration is not a new phenomenon. However, there has been an increase in the number of international migrants in the contemporary period. People from Africa have been migrating to different regions in search of a better life for themselves and families back home. A failed state or natural disaster and food shortages push people to leave their country. Europe, over the past few years, has seen a large number of migrants from war torn countries in the Middle East.

On the other hand, the people from the horn of Africa have been seeking refuge in southern Africa in large numbers. It is not only South Africa which receives a large number of migrants; Malawi too, is a host country to asylum seekers, refugees, and economic migrants from different countries in Africa, Europe and Asia.

Different ethnic groups in Malawi have been migrating to other regions of the world. The Yao people who constitute a large percentage of Muslims in Malawi which was previously called Nyasaland before it became independent in 1964, have a protracted tradition of emigrating from their motherland to other regions. Migration and travelling are some of the traits of the Yao. They believe that knowing other countries through travelling is part of enlightenment.<sup>3</sup>

The earliest Yao migration and long- distance trade expeditions to be recorded are those of going to Kilwa.<sup>4</sup> In the course of their history they dispersed to Tanzania and in the early nineteenth century they settled in Malawi in large numbers. Later on they spread themselves to other southern African countries through trade and work. Muslim Yao men have always migrated to Zambia, Zimbabwe and South Africa either to work or trade. Since the late nineteenth century Muslim Yao men have been working abroad as wage earners in the said countries. They normally migrated alone without being accompanied by their spouses and children. They would migrate to Zambia, Zimbabwe, and South Africa in search of employment and worked in the copper mines in Zambia, while in Zimbabwe they took up jobs in the gold mines and farms.

The history of Yao immigrants in South Africa stretches from the late nineteenth century when the Makuwa and the Yao were 'liberated' from slavery in the 1870s. The Yao and Makuwa indentured labourers were known as the Zanzibari. The Makuwa are a people found in northern Mozambique while the Yao are a people settled in northern Mozambique, southern Tanzania,

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<sup>1</sup> Khalid Koser, *International Migration: A very Short Introduction* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2007), p. 1.

<sup>2</sup> Khalid Koser, *International Migration: A very Short Introduction*, p. 4.

<sup>3</sup> Yohanna Abdallah, *The Yaos* (London: Frank Cass, 1973), p.8 and p.28.

<sup>4</sup> Yohanna Abdallah, *The Yaos*, pp. 26-27.

and parts of central and southern Malawi. Both the Makuwa and the Yao settled in Natal in 1870s as indentured labourers and later made their home at the Bluff in Durban where they began to attract other Yao and Makuwa from Malawi and Mozambique.<sup>5</sup>

Another migration stream of the Yao to South Africa was that of the migrants who went to work on the diamond and gold mines in Kimberly and the Witwatersrand. The discovery of diamonds and the mining industry in 1867<sup>6</sup> reshaped the history of southern Africa. The dawn of gold mining in the Witwatersrand in 1886<sup>7</sup> was the starting point of the migrant labour policy which attracted a number of Malawians.<sup>8</sup>

The documented relationship between Malawi and South Africa stretches back to the early mining of gold and diamonds. Regardless of the rigid migrant labour system many Yao men found employment in other industries. Some of the Yao went to Durban which had a substantial Muslim population. In Durban, some Yao Muslims settled among the Zanzibari community. First they assimilated into the Zanzibar community at Kings Rest and later on in Clairwood and Chatsworth, former Indian townships. The intermingling between the Zanzibaris and Indians was permitted by those in power because the religion of Islam was contemplated as an ‘Indian’ religion.<sup>9</sup> The perception that Islam is an “Indian” religion was ingrained among the indigenous people till the arrival of Black Muslim women in KZN in large numbers. Their arrival led to changing perceptions of Islam both within a racial, ethnic and religious context.

After the demise of apartheid, South Africa has attracted a number of migrants who come to work, study or trade. Changing immigration policies in the 1990s also caused changes in migration, as there were rapid movements of people from Southern Africa into the Republic. During apartheid, immigration policy was used as a tool for sustaining racial supremacy. An immigrant was supposed to acculturate into white citizenry. By clarification, it meant that Africans were not deemed immigrants. More precisely, Africans came to South Africa as temporary contract migrants subject to bilateral agreements between the apartheid regime with her neighbours covering Lesotho, Mozambique, and Malawi.<sup>10</sup>

The democratisation of South Africa in 1994 and the opening up of borders saw an influx of many labour migrants to the country. A surging movement of female migrants to South Africa has been taking place between 1994 and 2015. The gender proportions of migrants are now balancing out. During this period, a new wave of Malawian Yao women has been noted in South

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<sup>5</sup>Ashwin Desai and Goolam Vahed (eds.), *Chatsworth: The Making of a South African Township* (Scottsville: University of KwaZulu-Natal Press, 2013), p.84.

<sup>6</sup> Stace Greer, “South African Diamond Mines, 1870s”.[http://historyproject.ucdavis.edu/lessons/view\\_lesson.php?id=21](http://historyproject.ucdavis.edu/lessons/view_lesson.php?id=21) [Accessed 11/07/2016].

<sup>7</sup>Trewhella Cameron (ed.), *An Illustrated History of South Africa* (Johannesburg: Southern Book Publishers, 1988), p.184.

<sup>8</sup> Jonathan Crush, “Contract Migration to South Africa: Past, Present and Future.”<http://www.capetowndiamondmuseum.org/about-diamonds/south-african-diamond-history/> [Accessed 17/08/2016].

<sup>9</sup> Shahid Vawda, “Identities, Livelihoods and Transnational Migration: Muslim Malawians in Durban, South Africa”, <http://www.tandfonline.com/doi/pdf/10.1080/02582470902804464> [accessed 24/11/2015].

<sup>10</sup> Jonathan Crush, "South Africa: Policy in the Face of Xenophobia", July 28, 2008, p. 1".  
<http://www.migrationpolicy.org/article/southafricapolicyfacexenophobia> [Accessed 18/08/2016].

Africa. These migrations have a growing impact on households, families and communities in Malawi.

This study is contextualized within the larger story of migration to South Africa in the post-apartheid period and experiences of many migrant communities in recent years. It will investigate the lived experiences of Muslim Yao women migrants who came to South Africa after the 1994 political dispensation.

Dobson argues that “Migration has played a central role in the history and economic development of Southern Africa...After 1994, movements of people expanded and became more complex, as the stable, middle-income South Africa opened its borders and acted as a magnet for numerous migrants from socio-economic and politically unstable neighbouring states. Countries in the Southern African Development Community (SADC) have been intrinsically linked, with South Africa as the main economic and political power.”<sup>11</sup> Furthermore, female migration from outside the country appears to have undergone a significant increase since 1994.<sup>12</sup> For example, the 2001 census “...showed that the migrant stock included 687,678 migrants from other Southern African developing countries (SADC) and 228,318 from Europe. Other source areas of growing importance included the rest of Africa (41,817) and Asia (40,889). In all, immigrants constituted 2.3 percent of South Africa's total population in 2001.”<sup>13</sup> In 2011, official population statistics noted, that there were 2 199 871 people living in South Africa who were born outside the country. They constituted 4.2% of the population - which then stood at 51 770 560. Seventy-one percent of those born outside of South Africa were African. Many immigrants acquired citizenship since their arrival and therefore the number of non-citizens resident in South Africa is lower. In addition, according to the census 1 692 242 people – or 3.3% of South Africa’s population then – were not citizens in 2011. Similar figures were recorded the year following the census in the 2012 General Household Survey.<sup>14</sup> During this period, a number of Malawian Yao women have been noted in South Africa although their figures are unavailable.

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<sup>11</sup> Celine Mazars et al, “The Well-Being of Economic Migrants in South Africa: Health, Gender and Development”, working paper for the World Migration Report 2013 (Switzerland: International Organization for Migration, 2013), p.9.

<sup>12</sup>Belinda Dodson, “Women on the Move: Gender and Cross- Border Migration to South Africa”, <http://www.queensu.ca/samp/sampresources/samppublications/policyseries/policy9.htm> [Accessed 11/05/2016]. (See also BotshabeloMaja (ed.), *Labour Migration and South Africa: Towards a fairer deal for migrants in the South African Economy*, Labour Market Review 2007 (Pretoria: Department of Labour, 2007), p.22 and “Labour Migration to South Africa in the 1990s”, Polity Paper Series No. 4 (February 1998), International Labour Office Southern Africa Multidisciplinary Advisory Team Harare, Zimbabwe which state that “ The 1990s have seen a marked rise in the flow of labour migrants to South Africa from the Southern African region, in the wake of political liberalisation within South Africa and continued deterioration in the economies of many neighbouring states...”

<sup>13</sup>Jonathan Crush, “South Africa: Policy in the Face of Xenophobia”, July 28, 2008”. <http://www.migrationpolicy.org/article/south-africa-policy-face-xenophobia> [Accessed 19/07/2016].

<sup>14</sup> Kate Wilkinson, “Do five million immigrants live in SA?” Mail & Guardian, 06 May 2015 09:49”, <http://mg.co.za/article/2015-05-06-do-5-million-immigrants-live-in-sa> [Accessed 20/ 07/ 2016].

## **Aims and Objectives of this Study**

Whilst presenting a radio programme titled “Hidden Stories”<sup>15</sup> on which I was discussing the history of the Yao of Malawi, a listener posed a question; he wanted to know why the Yao Muslims have a tendency of travelling and believed that a ‘real’ Yao was a person who had travelled to different regions.

The answers I gave did puzzle and I suppose frustrated the listener. The conversation had a great impact on the future queries about the Yao and the need to explore their migrations in Southern Africa. Taking the conversation into consideration, I began to contemplate the relevance of my research topic in contemporary South Africa. I believe that the proposed topic would suit the contemporary history of the Yao in South Africa. Being an emerging historian and visionary, I am keen that my research has an impact on society.

It was at this point of pondering when I thought of examining and exploring the Yao migration to South Africa which has been taking place for centuries. This study was motivated by concerns over (lack of) literature which deals with Muslim Yao women migrants to South Africa. Women who had been previously depicted as non-participative, passive, docile, ‘victims’ of male migration and lacking communal status are now breaking the barriers and challenging male centred migration.

Malawian women are now seeking to highlight their gendered experiences in different eras, time and space. The long underestimation of female migration to South Africa is now disappearing due to the construction of ‘history from below’ through oral testimonies.

The study’s central aim is to document the history and lived migration experiences of Malawian women in KwaZulu-Natal (KZN) between 1994 and 2015. The migration experiences of Muslim Yao women immigrants are largely absent.

This study will alter this historiographical trend both within the African and global context by incorporating and documenting the migration experiences of Muslim Yao women in KZN.

Key themes in this dissertation will include: the early history of the Yao people in terms of their origins and settlement. The Yao originally came from Yaoland in Niassa province of northern Mozambique. From the area encompassing Yao hill, “the Yao tribe originated, and it is the birth-

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<sup>15</sup> Radio Islam (Malawi, 2010). I was interested in the skill of writing, delivering news and informing the people about the past events. I used to analyse the history of Malawi. The most important of all was the responsibility of presenting and interviewing special guests as well as acting as moderators for discussions. For a radio presenter, it was imperative to be responsible in preparing a script. In this case, a good writing skill was important to me. With this background, I had asked management to introduce a radio programme on Radio Islam which could reflect on subjects which were concealed in Malawi. In 1998 up to 2010, topical issues on the history of Malawi were the main focus. I had to choose the history of the Yao in Malawi because it was recorded that the histories of the Yao cry out for attention. (See Roland Oliver (ed.), *The Cambridge History of Africa, Volume 3 from C. 1050 to C. 1600* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1977), p. 64.) I was interested in studying the hidden stories of the Yao Muslims. It is understood that the history writing of the Yao in southern Africa is still noted to be in its infancy. Few studies have been done on Yao Muslims. This study will contribute to our understanding of the Yao in South Africa.

place of all the Yaos.”<sup>16</sup> They left Yaoland in the 9<sup>th</sup> century.<sup>17</sup> In the subsequent centuries, they dispersed and spread to Malawi. The study will also explore the different waves of Yao migration to South Africa.

Secondly, this thesis will address the ‘pull’ and ‘push’ factors that influenced Yao women to migrate to KZN. It will investigate factors that shaped and defined their decision to migrate. It will explore how political, socio-economic (poverty, unemployment) and personal factors (divorce) played an important role in the migration process.

Thirdly, the study will identify and explore the challenges and constraints Yao women experience as immigrants. Foreign nationals migrating to South Africa are often perceived in a negative manner and this places constraints on their ability to find employment and settle in the host country. Many women immigrants were subject to labour exploitation, abuse and discrimination in the job markets and were victims of xenophobic attacks in KZN.

The other key themes to be explored in this study will be how Muslim Yao women construct and perform their cultural and religious identity in transnational settings. Many old cultural practices among the Muslim Yao women are diminishing in Durban. There are some religious practices that have changed since they came to South Africa. For example, women are no longer accommodated in several mosques. They are also neglecting initiation ceremonies once they settled in Durban. As will be observed in this study, the contemporary Muslim Yao women are losing some of their Yao identity.

An important feature of this study is how the women are navigating their identity in multiple contexts – with fellow Malawians, and with other, predominantly Indian, Muslims, and black South Africans with whom they are in contact in various settings on a daily basis. Subsequently, the complex and intricate triangular relationship between Malawian women, local indigenous peoples (officially designated as “Black African” in the census), and Indians constitutes an important aspect of this study.

There is little work of the kind envisaged here, as most existing works on post-apartheid Muslim Yao migrants deal primarily with men. Existing studies focus on limited aspects of the lives of Muslim Yao women in South Africa.

This study will contribute to our understanding of Malawian women migrants in South Africa. The working hypothesis of this study is that in the process of creating a new life in South Africa, Malawian women are contributing both to the economies of South Africa (through employing indigenous women in their small scale businesses such as hair salons and restaurants) and Malawi (though remittances in the form of money sent home, but also to the new ideas and patterns of behaviour that migrants convey) in significant ways, engaging in the civic life of their communities in very public ways, and changing perceptions of Islam as being predominantly an “Indian” religion in KwaZulu-Natal. In the past there was a problem as Islam failed to penetrate in the townships. “...a great deal of misunderstanding was prevalent about Islam and Muslims at

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<sup>16</sup> Yohanna Adallah, *The Yaos*, p. 7.

<sup>17</sup> Molefi Kete Asante and Ama Mazama (eds), *Encyclopedia of African Religion* (California: Sage, 2009), p.734.

that time, for some Africans identified Islam as only an Indian religion...”<sup>18</sup> The Yao had to penetrate the townships and marry the local women. By doing so, their offspring became Muslims. This is one way how Islam was spread by the Yao Muslims in South Africa. The Yao have shown that Islam is a universal religion and it is not an “Indian” religion which has been an assumption by many black South Africans.<sup>19</sup> The Yao movements and migrations in southern Africa have a great impact on the spread of Islam among the black people of Zambia, Botswana, Zimbabwe, and South Africa.

The study will also examine methodological relevance which encompasses the use of oral history modus operandi and their implementation in formulating historical accounts which demonstrate the importance of uncovering history of ordinary Muslim Yao women. The subjectivity of oral history is strength of this methodology. As Alessandro Portelli, points out, oral sources “tell us not just what people did, but what they wanted to do, what they believed they were doing, what they now think they did... Subjectivity is as much the business of history as the more visible ‘facts’”.<sup>20</sup> Like all historical sources, oral history also has problems in terms of being biased, due to deliberate distortion or memory lapses, or being partial due again to memory problems,<sup>21</sup> and must be subjected to tests of rigour as with written documentation. Abrams make a key point:

Oral historians are not psychoanalysts or psychotherapists who aim to discover the obstacles to a person’s memory and, by analysing these, to effect a cure. Neither are we trained to understand why a person has repressed particular memories or to react appropriately when uncomfortable memories rise to the surface. The best we can do is to create an environment in which a respondent can call up memories in a state of comfort, to provide the cues to the recall of memories which aid us in our research. Most respondents ... come to the interview prepared to remember in a helpful way. The interviewer’s task is to facilitate their remembering and then, in our analysis, to consider the various influences that have shaped their recall. The important point here is that memory is not just a source; it is a narrator’s interpretation of their experience and as such it is complex, creative and fluid.<sup>22</sup>

Furthermore, the research will be premised within the feminist writings which are challenging migration literature. For a very long period, migration discourses have been biased towards women. In a broad context, women have been deemed as passive agents of migration. This study will make an effort to document the history and lived migration experiences of Muslim Yao women. These approaches will intensify current debates on migration by focusing on issues of gender, identity, and agency in Africa. Women migrants are changing the face of Malawi in terms of women’s dependence on males. These migrations have a growing impact on

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<sup>18</sup> Michael Mumisa, “Islam and Proselytism in South Africa and Malawi”, *Journal of Muslim Minority Affairs*, 22: 2 (2001), p.288.

<sup>19</sup> Al-Qalam Reporter, “Zulu king to host thousands as Mkhize family declares Islamic faith”, *Al-Qalam Newspaper*, Durban, / July 2016, p. 3.

<sup>20</sup> Alessandro Portelli, “The Peculiarities of Oral History”, *History Workshop Journal*, 12 (1981): 96-107, p. 99.

<sup>21</sup> See Lynn Abrams, *Oral History Theory* (London: Routledge, 2010), 78-105 for discussion of memory.

<sup>22</sup> Abrams, *Oral History Theory*, p.105.

households, families and communities in Malawi. For a long time women in Malawi depended upon their husbands who worked in South Africa. As will be seen in this study, some men married in South Africa and forgot their wives back in Malawi. Poverty prevailed in those unstable families. Economic hardships in Malawi forced some women to leave the country and migrate to South Africa. Muslim Yao women's cultural experiences and perceptions of what it denotes to be a Malawian in South Africa is unlike the earlier Yao immigrants' experiences.

## Literature Review

This study is undertaken in the context of “international migration”, and the more general rise of women migration in many parts of the world.<sup>23</sup> The movement of people within and across national boundaries has been a long-lasting part of human history.<sup>24</sup> International migration has become a prime subject of general interest, and a number of outstanding comparative writings on the theme have been published.<sup>25</sup> However, James states that “The images of migrancy yielded by literature in southern and other parts of Africa portray a world peopled almost exclusively by men...no attention has been paid to the role of female migrants as actors in their own right...”<sup>26</sup> Tienda et al. state that the distribution of female migrants in Africa has built up more steadily and swiftly than at the world level.<sup>27</sup> “In Africa, widespread poverty, disease, land degradation and high male unemployment that pushes women to take on the responsibility of providing family income are all contributing to a steady increase in female migration, and at a faster rate than the global average...Most African women migrate within the region, but they are also moving to North America and Europe...”<sup>28</sup> In this context, the migration of women has been a significant part of international migration in the contemporary period.<sup>29</sup>

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<sup>23</sup> Khalid Koser, *International Migration: A Very Short Introduction* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2007), p.6.

<sup>24</sup> Charles Stahl (ed.), *International migration today, Volume 2: Emerging issues* (Nedlands: Unesco, University of Western Australia, 1988), p.5.

<sup>25</sup> Stephen Castles and Mark J. Miller, *The Age of Migration: International Population Movements in the Modern World* (New York: The Guilford Press, 1998), p.ix.

<sup>26</sup> Deborah James, *Songs of the Women Migrants: Performance and Identity in South Africa* (Johannesburg: Witwatersrand University Press, 1999), p. 46.

<sup>27</sup> Marta Tienda et al. *Africa on the Move: African Migration and Urbanisation in Comparative Perspective* (Johannesburg: Wits University Press, 2006), p.31.

<sup>28</sup> The Caritas Foundation, “The Female Face of Migration”, Background paper, p. 4.  
<http://www.caritas.org/includes/pdf/backgroundmigration.pdf> [Accessed 19/ 07/ 2016].

<sup>29</sup> Women and International Migration, “Division for the Advancement of Women Department of Economic and Social Affairs United Nations The World Survey on the Role of Women in Development”, p. 27.  
[http://www.un.org/en/development/desa/population/migration/events/coordination/3/docs/P01\\_DAW.pdf](http://www.un.org/en/development/desa/population/migration/events/coordination/3/docs/P01_DAW.pdf) [Accessed 19/ 07/2016].

The contemporary literature indicates that women are now migrating independently in search of jobs, rather than as —family dependents travelling with their husbands or joining them abroad.<sup>30</sup> Further, research shows that for a “...long time women have remained invisible in studies on migration. Their socio-economic contributions and unique experiences have not been taken into account. In the 1960s and 1970s migration theories often assumed that most migrants were male, and that women were merely wives and dependents who followed their husbands. Consequently, migration was portrayed as purely a male phenomenon. Yet, women have always been present in migratory flows, traditionally as spouses, daughters and dependents of male migrants. Moreover the past decades have seen an increase in women’s autonomous migration as the main economic providers or —breadwinners for their families.”<sup>31</sup>

Ruby Dhar points out that “migration literature for very long was biased towards women as they were considered as passive agents of migration. The impact of international migration on women, both those migrating and those left behind has been a sorely neglected issue in international migration research and that the male bias in this research is undoubtedly based on the assumption that most women migrated for reasons of family reunification.”<sup>32</sup>

Anjal Fleury argues that only since the 1980s has research begun to focus on women and migration.<sup>33</sup> A feminist perspective has been seeking to correct the bias present in our academic disciplines by uncovering and questioning the hidden assumption about men and women that have shaped and informed standard academic subjects.<sup>34</sup> In a broad context, “...Male

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<sup>30</sup> The Caritas Foundation, “The Female Face of Migration, Background paper”, p. 2.  
<http://www.caritas.org/includes/pdf/backgroundmigration.pdf> [Accessed 19/ 07/ 2016]

<sup>31</sup> The Caritas Foundation, “The Female Face of Migration, Background paper”, p. 2.  
<http://www.caritas.org/includes/pdf/backgroundmigration.pdf> [Accessed 19/ 07/ 2016] (see also Monica Boyd, “Women and Migration: Incorporating Gender into International Migration Theory”, University of Toronto. Elizabeth Grieco, Migration Policy Institute March 1, 2003, p. 1.  
<http://www.incedes.org.gt/Master/boydgriecodiez.pdf> [Accessed 19/ 07/ 2016] who states that “In the 1960s and early 1970s the phrase "migrants and their families" was a code for "male migrants and their wives and children." The women's movement, however, with its emphasis on the situation of women, caused some to question the near-invisibility of women as migrants, their presumed passivity in the migration process, and their assumed place in the home. Research in the 1970s and the 1980s began to include women, but did not cause a dramatic shift in thinking about who migrated, how immigration was explained, or the likely consequences. One of the central questions about women during this period was whether migration "modernized" women, emancipating them from their assumed traditional values and behaviors...”

<sup>32</sup> Ruby Dhar, “Women and International Migration: A Cross-cultural Analysis”, Centre for Research on Nationalism, Ethnicity and Multiculturalism (CRONEM) University of Surrey Guildford, UK 2007,  
<https://www.surrey.ac.uk/cronem/files/6F5BB7DBd01.pdf> [Accessed 19/ 07/ 2016].

<sup>33</sup> Anjali Fleury, “Understanding Women and Migration: A Literature Review”, Knomad Working Paper 8,  
[http://www.knomad.org/docs/gender/KNOMAD%20Working%20Paper%208%20final\\_Formatted.pdf](http://www.knomad.org/docs/gender/KNOMAD%20Working%20Paper%208%20final_Formatted.pdf) [Accessed 19/ 07/ 2016].

<sup>34</sup> Elizabeth Langland and Walter Grove (eds.), *A Feminist Perspective in the Academy: The Different It Makes* (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1983), p.3.

experiences and perspectives that derive from them have traditionally defined the normative in the academic curriculum; female experience, when it has appeared at all, has been treated as inferior, irrelevant, insignificant, or even aberrant. The study of women from a feminist perspective denies such assumptions...”<sup>35</sup>

Moya pinpoints that “...Large scale female participation in global migration is hardly new. It is true that women make up about half (49%) of all international migrants today. But they made up a similar proportion (47%) half-a-century ago...”<sup>36</sup> Globalisation is forcing more women around the globe to move to different regions than before. A substantial number of international migrants are seeking greener pastures and a better life for themselves and their families back at home. Wars, unemployment, and disasters are also some factors which are forcing women to migrate to different countries.

As already noted above, there are shifts in migration debates. Recently scholars have introduced the theory of feminization of international migration. Gender is the core to any debate on the stimulants and effects of legal and illegal migration. In the contemporary history, scholars have set forth feminization to be a nucleus feature of the new age of international migration and globalization. The number of female migrants has increased between 1960 and 2015. Also the figures of male migrants have multiplied while the female proportions doubled only to a certain extent from 46.6 percent in 1960 to 48 percent in 2015.<sup>37</sup> For the past years scholars failed to regard or consider a significant increase in female migration that took place well before 1960. Research on global examples of migration over the past years ushered a better apprehension of the meaning of feminization, and indicates that scholars did not take note of an increase in female migration that took place well before 1960. Women have always migrated, often in considerable numbers. The prominent test or problem facing migration researchers is to understand the roots, grounds, and repercussions, effects, which changes over time and varies significantly across cultures and nations.<sup>38</sup>

Women are more and more migrating as the leading economic providers, or “breadwinners” for their households. “...Women constituted 49.6 per cent of global migratory flows, though the proportion varied significantly by country and could be as high as 70 to 80 per cent in some cases. The “feminization of migration” had also produced specifically female forms of migration...Migrant women had become central to women’s freedom in the developed world, but

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<sup>35</sup> Elizabeth Langland and Walter Grove (eds.), *A Feminist Perspective in the Academy: The Different It Makes*, p.3.

<sup>36</sup> Jose C. Moya, Professor of History at UCLA and Barnard College, Columbia University and Director, Forum on Global Migration, “Gender and Migration: A Global Perspective”, <http://www.eila.univ-paris-diderot.fr/media/recherche/ict-civi/che/gender-migration-global-perspective.pdf> [accessed 07/11/2016].

<sup>37</sup> Katharine M. Donato and Donna Gabaccia, “The Global Feminization of Migration: Past, Present and Future”, June 1. 2016 <http://www.migrationpolicy.org/article/global-feminization-migration-past-present-and-future> [accessed 07/11/2016].

<sup>38</sup> Katharine M. Donato and Donna Gabaccia, “The Global Feminization of Migration: Past, Present and Future”, June 1. 2016 <http://www.migrationpolicy.org/article/global-feminization-migration-past-present-and-future> [Accessed 07/11/2016].

their contribution was undervalued”<sup>39</sup> Gender identity determines every juncture of migration experience. It influences rationale for migrating. It motivates who will migrate, the social networks that are utilized by women migrants in order to relocate to new regions, assimilating different cultures and tracing employment possibilities available in the foreign country, and connections with the country of origin. Males and females experience migration differently as gender, impacts on all facets and kinds of migration. This includes on how gender shapes an approach to communal services, economic development, competence, proficiency, uncertainties, fear, and prone to exploitation. The point is that migration determines gender roles and gender equality.

The history of migration to South Africa is very broad. Records indicate that people have migrated from Europe and settled in South Africa in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries. However, when foreign migrants settled in the country, lived experiences of women did not secure analytical consideration in South African historiography.

Migration accounts of foreign migrants were heavily male-biased.<sup>40</sup> In the past years large volumes of literature had been filled with the history of male migrants only. Recently, there have been some attempts to challenge male centred migration accounts in South African migration literature. This will assist in uncovering the lost histories and voices of immigrant women in the context of race, class and geographical origin. It will also challenge Eurocentric accounts that migration constituted only of Europeans immigrants.

Historically African male and females immigrants from neighbouring countries had migrated and settled in the country since 1800s.<sup>41</sup> For example, “For more than a century the circular migration of younger men to the South African mines has profoundly affected the economies, political relations, and social structures of the countries of southern Africa...”<sup>42</sup> The 1904 Chinese labour migration to the Witwatersrand is well documented. It is recorded that over 64,000 Chinese were brought in colonial South Africa between 1904 and 1910 as indentured

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<sup>39</sup> “Feminization of Migration, Remittances, Migrants’s Rights”, Brain drain Among Issue, as Polpulation Commission Concluded Debate <http://www.un.org/press/en/2006/pop945.doc.htm> Thirty-ninth Session 5th & 6th Meetings [Accessed 07/11/2016].

<sup>40</sup> “Immigrants from Europe do well in SA”

All the immigration advice and information you'll need for a new future.

<https://www.immigrationsouthafrica.org/blog/immigrants-europe-south-africa/> [Accessed 07/11/2016].

<sup>41</sup> Vivence Kalitanyi and Kobus Visser, “African immigrants in South Africa: job takers or job creators?” South African Journal of Economic and Management Sciences, Vol. 13. No. 4, Pretoria Ja. 2010.

[http://www.scielo.org.za/scielo.php?script=sci\\_arttext&pid=S2222-34362010000400001](http://www.scielo.org.za/scielo.php?script=sci_arttext&pid=S2222-34362010000400001) [Accessed 07/11/2016].

<sup>42</sup> Robert E. B. Lucas, “Emigration to South Africa's Mines”, *The American Economic Review*, Vol. 77, No. 3 (Jun., 1987), pp. 313-330 Published by: American Economic Association Stable URL:

<http://www.jstor.org/stable/1804097> [Accessed: 04-07-2016] ( See also Francis Wilson, “Minerals and Migrants: How the Mining Industry Has Shaped South Africa”, Vol. 130, No. 1, Why South Africa Matters (Winter, 2001), pp. 99-121 Published by: The MIT Press on behalf of American Academy of Arts & Sciences Stable URL:

<http://www.jstor.org/stable/20027681> [Accessed: 04-07-2016].

laborers to work in the gold mines<sup>43</sup> and that originally a small number of Chinese women also entered South Africa as the brides of young male migrants. According to census data, in 1936 there were over 1,000 Chinese women in South Africa and 1,000 children were born in South Africa of Chinese parents. Over the next decade, these numbers doubled.<sup>44</sup>

There is also much literature related to historical migrations to South Africa, in particular indentured Indian labour along the coastal districts of Natal. “The nineteenth century saw the greatest demand for unskilled migrant labour in tropical and subtropical colonial regions engaged in sugar plantations. The demand was met significantly in the form of indentured labour...”<sup>45</sup>

Bhana and Brain point out that “Between 1860 and 1911 152 184 indentured migrants from India arrived in Natal: non-indentured Indians followed their brethren in search of opportunities for petty entrepreneurship...”<sup>46</sup> Hiralal argues that when Indians resettled in Natal as both indentured and passenger Indians, females were a pivotal part of the new arrivals. Traditional accounts have largely ignored the narratives of women’s experiences and the migration narratives of both indentured and free Indians in Natal had been heavily male-biased.<sup>47</sup> Hiralal further asserts that the incorporation of female accounts into historical events of Indian South Africans will de-masculanise migration histories and make women an important subject of historical analysis.<sup>48</sup>

Studies on gender and migration in sub-Saharan Africa have also sought to challenge the dominant narrative discussing male migrants. Feminist analysis has sought to highlight gendered experiences in different eras, time and space. Dodson observes that “the traditional pattern of cross-border migration in the Southern African region has been one of impermanent (if long-term) labour migration of black *males* to South Africa from other Southern African countries. Yet it is likely that parallel *female* migration to South Africa has been underestimated, being of tenuous legality and therefore deliberately covert.”<sup>49</sup>

Dodson further states that “in terms of who migrates, it is apparent that migration to South Africa is still heavily male-biased, with a far lower incidence of migration experience among female

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<sup>43</sup>Yoon Park, “Living In Between: The Chinese in South Africa”, January 4, 2012.

<http://www.migrationpolicy.org/article/living-between-chinese-south-africa> [Accessed 11/07/2016].

<sup>44</sup> Yoon Park, “Living In Between: The Chinese in South Africa”, January 4, 2012.

<http://www.migrationpolicy.org/article/living-between-chinese-south-africa> [Accessed 11/07/2016].

<sup>45</sup> SurendraBhana (ed.), *Essays on Indentured Indians in Natal* (Yorkshire: Peepal Trees Press, 1988), p.5.

<sup>46</sup> SurendraBhana and Joy B. Brain, *Setting Down Roots: Indian Migrants in South Africa 1860-1911* (Johannesburg: Witwatersrand University Press, 1990), p.15.

<sup>47</sup> KalpanaHiralal, “Women and Migration in South Africa- historical and literary perspectives”, (University of KwaZulu-Natal, March, 2014) [www.kznass-history.net/files/seminar/HiralalK%20HASS%202013.pdf](http://www.kznass-history.net/files/seminar/HiralalK%20HASS%202013.pdf) [Accessed 17/05/2016].

<sup>48</sup> KalpanaHiralal, “Women and Migration in South Africa- historical and literary perspectives”, (University of KwaZulu-Natal, March, 2014) [www.kznass-history.net/files/seminar/HiralalK%20HASS%202013.pdf](http://www.kznass-history.net/files/seminar/HiralalK%20HASS%202013.pdf) [Accessed 17/05/2016].

<sup>49</sup> Belinda Dodson, “Women on the Move: Gender and Cross- Border Migration to South Africa”, <http://www.queensu.ca/samp/sampresources/samppublications/policyseries/policy9.htm> [Accessed 11/05/2016].

respondents.”<sup>50</sup> And that the migration experience in Southern Africa is deeply and profoundly gendered.<sup>51</sup> Kihato argues that previous “...literature focuses on instances of overt exploitation; portraying women as passive participants or victims without individual or collective agency or social status...”<sup>52</sup>

Recent feminist scholars have shown that women are creating a new history- using their own voices and experiences within the African context.<sup>53</sup> Oral interviews as a source are used by researchers in order to uncover women’s lived experiences. For example, Caroline Wanjiku Kihato’s *Migrant Women of Johannesburg: Life in an in-between city* provides interesting narratives and images on the lives of women from Cameroon, the Democratic Republic of Congo, Congo Brazzaville, Nigeria, Rwanda, Burundi, Kenya, Tanzania, Uganda and Zimbabwe, living in Johannesburg. Guided by narratives of love, illness, fears, children, violence, family and money, she explores women’s relationships with host and home communities, the South African state, economy and the city of Johannesburg.

Monica Kiwanuka’s work is a significant attempt to understand migration and gender violence. Her study examines women’s migrants’ gender violence in the context of immigration policies and unequal power relations.<sup>54</sup>

Whilst the above studies are significant, there still appears to be a literature gap on the narratives of Muslim Yao women migrants to South Africa. There is an absence of Malawian women in historiography in Africa and South Africa in particular. Existing studies on Muslim Yao immigrants have largely focused on male migrants. For example, scholars like Shahid Vawda adopted a life history approach of Malawian and Senegalese Muslims in Durban.<sup>55</sup> His focus is primarily men from Mangochi district (where the Yao predominate) in the post-apartheid period.<sup>56</sup> Michael Mumisa’s work entitled “Islam and Proselytism in South Africa and Malawi” is another outstanding article which deals with Muslim Yao male migrants to South Africa. The work discusses the history of Islam and how the Yao spread it to the southern part of Africa through their movements and migrations.

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<sup>50</sup> Belinda Dodson, “Women on the Move: Gender and Cross- Border Migration to South Africa”, <http://www.queensu.ca/samp/sampresources/samppublications/policyseries/policy9.htm> [Accessed 11/05/2016].

<sup>51</sup> Belinda Dodson, “Women on the Move: Gender and Cross- Border Migration to South Africa”, <http://www.queensu.ca/samp/sampresources/samppublications/policyseries/policy9.htm> [Accessed 11/05/2016].

<sup>52</sup> Kihato, CW, “Invisible Lives, inaudible voices? The social conditions of migrant women in Johannesburg”. In NombonisoGasa (ed.), *Basus ’iimbokodo, bawael’imilambo/ they remove boulders and cross rivers –Women in South African History*, Cape Town: HSRC Press, 2007, pp. 397.

<sup>53</sup> Susan H. Armitage et al. *Women’s Oral History* (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 2002), p.3.

<sup>54</sup> Monica Kiwanuka, “For love or survival: migrant women’s narratives of survival and intimate partner violence in Johannesburg” In I. Palmary, E. Burman, K. Chantler and P. Kiguwa, (eds). *Gender and Migration – Feminist Interventions*. (London: Zed Books, 2010), pp. 163-179.

<sup>55</sup> Shahid, Vawda, “Migration and Muslim Identities: Malawians and Senegalese Muslims in Durban, South Africa”, Department of Anthropology School of Social Sciences University of Witwatersrand Presented at the University of Johannesburg, Department of Anthropology/Sociology Anthropology/Sociology Seminar, 17 February 2010, p. 6; and Michael Mumisa, “Islam and Proselytism in South Africa and Malawi”. *Journal of Muslim Minority Affairs*, 22: 2 (2001): 275-298.

<sup>56</sup> Shahid Vawda, “Migration and Muslim Identities: Malawians and Senegalese Muslims in Durban, South Africa”, p. 6.

This study adds to the limited literature on Yao women immigrants to South Africa. It adopts a feminist analysis by exploring and documenting the lived experiences of Yao women. Malawians in general are migrating to different regions due to globalisation. International migration has been both prompted and facilitated by globalization.<sup>57</sup> Koser argues that it is very hard to actually count migrants.<sup>58</sup> The reliable figures of Malawians living in Europe, Americas, Asia and Africa are unknown. Malawians, as a source of labour live in large numbers in Namibia, Botswana, Mozambique, Zambia, Tanzania, Zimbabwe, and South Africa. The exact figures of Malawians and other nationals living in South Africa are unknown. Sometimes it argued that that "...There are about 100000 Malawians living and working in South Africa."<sup>59</sup>

On the other hand, Sarah Meny-Gibert and Sintha Chiumia point out that correct or error-free details or statistics on migrants in South Africa is difficult to get as there is insufficient data collection structures or methodologies and uneven or inconsistent migration arrangements, and owing to the fact that both governments and non-governmental organisations have placed attention in overestimating or magnifying immigrant figures, either to give grounds for rigorous or rigid immigration regulations or get enlarged donor funding. These external circumstances where tales or narratives rather than facts gravitate in making headlines – like assertions spread by South African media declaring or putting across that more than 1.5-million Zimbabweans live in South Africa, or that almost a third of Malawi's population reside and have careers in South Africa, are not necessarily true. If the figures were true then the population of migrants would be near six million people.<sup>60</sup>

Meny-Gibert and Chiumia do not believe that there are close to six million Zimbabwean and Malawian migrants. This is based on what they call "anecdotal rhetoric" which may play a part in adverse labels around foreign nationals in South Africa and deepen or intensify agitations whereby migrants are regarded as the ones who are "stealing" South African jobs.<sup>61</sup> What is known is that "...The 2011 census reported that more than 75% of foreign-born (international) migrants living in South Africa came from the African continent. African migrants from SADC countries contributed the vast majority of this, making up 68% of total international migrants." On the other hand, "Immigrants from African countries outside of the SADC region made up just 7, 3% of all international migrants..."<sup>62</sup> According to a Stats SA report on migration dynamics,

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<sup>57</sup> Kristof Tamas and Joakim Palme (eds.), *Globalizing Migration Regimes: New Challenges to Transnational Cooperation* (Hants: Ashgate, 2006), p.84.

<sup>58</sup> Khalid Koser, *International Migration: A Very Short Introduction*, p.16.

<sup>59</sup> Owen Khamula, "Envoy tells Mutharika to tame illegal immigrants to South Africa", 10 Feb 2017 <http://www.nyasatimes.com/envoy-tells-mutharika-tame-illegal-immigrants-south-africa-malawi-sign-mou-sa-migration-economic-development/> [Accessed 07/03/2017].

<sup>60</sup> Sarah Meny-Gibert and Sintha Chiumia, FACTSHEET: "Where do South Africa's international migrants come from?" <https://africacheck.org/factsheets/geography-migration/> [Accessed 07/11/2016].

<sup>61</sup> Sarah Meny-Gibert and Sintha Chiumia, FACTSHEET: "Where do South Africa's international migrants come from?" <https://africacheck.org/factsheets/geography-migration/> [Accessed 07/11/2016].

<sup>62</sup> Sarah Meny-Gibert and Sintha Chiumia, FACTSHEET: "Where do South Africa's international migrants come from?" <https://africacheck.org/factsheets/geography-migration/> [Accessed 07/11/2016].

the consistently high rate of migration from SADC countries is due to a colonial and apartheid-era regional “history of labour migration, especially from Mozambique, Lesotho, Malawi, Zimbabwe and Swaziland.”<sup>63</sup> With this background, it is impossible to know the exact figures of Muslim Yao women in South Africa because there are no correct or error-free details or statistics on migrants in South Africa.

## Theoretical Framework

This study engaged four key theoretical frameworks: feminist analysis, identities, social network theory, and social history. Nevertheless, the theoretical premises of this study sit precisely within the tradition of ‘social history’ or what Geoff Eley calls ‘the history of society’<sup>64</sup>

This thesis is situated in the theoretical frame work of writing history ‘from below’<sup>65</sup> or the conception identification with ‘common people.’<sup>66</sup> Writing history from below is an attempt to discover ordinary people as its subjects, and focus on their experiences and perspectives, diverging itself from conventional image of traditional political history and its emphasis on the deeds of ‘great men’.<sup>67</sup>

Historians who have undertaken the examination of ordinary men and women, rather than studying only the histories of ministers, generals and kings owe a great debt to the pioneers of ‘history from below’. Most notable amongst them must be E.P. Thompson, who published his epic *The Making of the English Working Class*.<sup>68</sup>

Before E. P. Thompson introduced the concept of writing history from below, long-established traditions considered history as expositions of the deeds of the great men.<sup>69</sup> Burke explicitly states that “...the main subject matter of history remained the unfolding of elite politics...to what might be termed ‘top person’s history’.”<sup>70</sup>

E. P Thompson’s work, *The Making of the English Working Class* recognised the importance of restoring the experiences of ordinary people in the context of their own experience and their own reactions to that experience.<sup>71</sup> In this respect, the writing of history from below is a programme which has demonstrated its extraordinary usefulness. Recording history from the frame of mind of women, or as expected, of children, would impart different perceptions into what inferiority

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<sup>63</sup> Sarah Meny-Gibert and Sintha Chiumia, FACTSHEET: “Where do South Africa’s international migrants come from?” <https://africacheck.org/factsheets/geography-migration/> [Accessed 07/11/2016].

<sup>64</sup> Stefan Berger et al. (eds.), *Writing History: Theory and Practice* (London: Hodder Arnold, 2003), p.63

<sup>65</sup> Joan Wallach Scot, *Gender and the Politics of History* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1988), p. 69

<sup>66</sup> Stefan Berger et al. (eds.), *Writing History: Theory and Practice*, pp. 68-69.

<sup>67</sup> “History from Below”, [http://www.history.ac.uk/makinghistory/themes/history\\_from\\_below.html](http://www.history.ac.uk/makinghistory/themes/history_from_below.html) [Accessed 11/07/2016].

<sup>68</sup> “History from Below, The Future of History from Below”: An Online; E. P Thompson, *The Making of the English Working Class* (New York: Vintage Books, 1966). Symposium, <https://manyheadedmonster.wordpress.com/history-from-below/> [Accessed 11/07/2016].

<sup>69</sup> Peter Burke (ed.), *New Perspectives on Historical Writing* (Cambridge: Polity, 2001), p.26.

<sup>70</sup> Peter Burke (ed.), *New Perspectives on Historical Writing*, p. 26.

<sup>71</sup> Peter Burke (ed.), *New Perspectives on Historical Writing*, p. 27.

might imply.<sup>72</sup> The focus on recovering the experiences of little explored and/or marginalised groups of people like Muslim Yao migrant women will reinstate their own history to social groups who may have thought that they had lost it, or who were ignorant that their history existed.<sup>73</sup>

Jim Sharpe says that "...History from below helps to convince those of us born without silver spoons in our mouths that we have a past, that we come from somewhere..."<sup>74</sup> Thus there has been a shift from writing history of the deeds of 'great men,'<sup>75</sup> the elite and nationalist movements to the writing of history of ordinary people. Lerner calls it a "...truncated version of past reality, which described the activities and values of men and called them history, while keeping women invisible or at best marginal..."<sup>76</sup>

Muslim Yao women were unnoticed in the history of migrations to South Africa. This study is attempting to uncover their lived experiences in KZN through the application of social network theory, social history, multiple identities, and feminist analysis.

The study's central aim is to document the history and lived migration experiences of the Yao women in KZN, South Africa. A feminist analysis will also be used in this research in seeking to achieve these aims. Several scholars have argued the usefulness of gender as a category analysis in unearthing the lost histories of women.<sup>77</sup> This research examined gender in relation to other social categories such as race, class, ethnicity and identity. Whilst women are oppressed as women in gendered society, it is important to recognize that not all women are positioned in the same way. Their identity is constructed at the "intersection of different social positions and, the relevance of which changes across time and space".<sup>78</sup> Rather than examining gender, race, class, and nation as distinctive social hierarchies, intersectionality examines how they mutually construct one another.<sup>79</sup> Crenshaw argues that "Intersectionality is an analytic sensibility, a way

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<sup>72</sup> Peter Burke (ed.), *New Perspectives on Historical Writing*, p. 36.

<sup>73</sup> Peter Burke (ed.), *New Perspectives on Historical Writing*, p. 37.

<sup>74</sup> Peter Burke (ed.), *New Perspectives on Historical Writing*, p. 39.

<sup>75</sup> "History from Below", [http://www.history.ac.uk/makinghistory/themes/history\\_from\\_below.html](http://www.history.ac.uk/makinghistory/themes/history_from_below.html) [Accessed 11/07/2016].

<sup>76</sup> Gerda Lerner, "The Necessity of History and the Professional Historian," *The Journal of American History*

Vol. 69, No. 1 (June 1982), p. 9.

<sup>77</sup> J. Butler, *Gender Trouble: Feminism and the subversion of Identity*. (New York: Routledge, 1999 reprint 2010); J. W. Scott, "Gender: A Useful Category of Historical Analysis". *The American Historical Review*, Volume 91, Number 5, 1986:1053 – 1075; D. Haraway, *The Haraway Reader*. (New York & London: Routledge, 2004).

<sup>78</sup> S. Scuzzarello, *Caring Multiculturalism: Local Immigrant Policies and Narratives of Integration in Malmo, Birmingham and Bologna* (Lund: Lund university, 2010), p.27.

<sup>79</sup> Patricia Hill Collins, "It's All in the Family: Intersections of Gender, Race, and Nation", *Hypatia*, Vol. 13, *Border Crossings: Multicultural and Post Colonial Feminist Challenges to Philosophy* (Part 2) Summer, 1998, pp 62- 82 [accessed: 22/05/2011].

of thinking about identity and its relationship to power...<sup>80</sup> This approach enabled this study to treat social categories as “articulating or intersecting together to produce specific effects”<sup>81</sup> and hence, uncover “complex and intersecting ways to constitute” women’s experience.<sup>82</sup> This theory is important because it is “about how an individual can face multiple threats of discrimination when their identities overlap a number of minority classes, such as race, gender, age, ethnicity, health and other characteristics.”<sup>83</sup> Using this theory will make us be mindful of the overlapping and interdependent structures of oppression, prejudice, unfairness, inequity, favouritism, intolerance, and racism experienced by Muslim Yao women in Durban. Bias, preference or bigotry results from the overlapping of identities of Muslim Yao women migrants. Through realization of this theory, human beings will grasp and understand that individuals are equal regardless of our social categories such as race, gender, class, ethnicity and identity. This theory will highlight the heterogeneous experiences of Malawians who are facing marginalisation and discrimination in Durban.

Scholars such as Choldin and Mohlathe have highlighted the significance of *social network* in the migration process. They argue that social networks of kinship and friendship provide channels for the migration process facilitating and sustaining migration.<sup>84</sup> According to Massey et al., the role of migrant networks “links potential migrants at the community of origin and migrants at the place of destination.”<sup>85</sup> They define migrants as “sets of interpersonal ties of kinship, friendship and shared community of origin”,<sup>86</sup> and how “people, organizations or groups interact with others inside their network.”<sup>87</sup> This theory was useful in understanding the ways in which Yao women migrants made decisions regarding their settlement and assimilation and adapting to their new environments, and the role played by friends, husbands, uncles, cousins and nephews in the process. In this respect, Muslim Yao women in KZN are still connected through *social network* which previously helped them in the migration process. Social networks of kinship and friendship furnish a way of harnessing a sense of Muslim Yao community in a foreign land. It links them through bonds of kinship, friendship and shared community of origin

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<sup>80</sup> Kimberle Crenshaw, “Why Intersectionality can’t wait”, The Washington Post, September 24, 2015, <https://www.washingtonpost.com/news/in-theory/w> [Accessed 18/04/2016].

<sup>81</sup> Yuval-Davis, *Gender and Nation*, p.100.

<sup>82</sup> CF, Nash, “Re-thinking intersectionality”. *Feminist Review* 89, 2008, p. 13.

<sup>83</sup> “What Is Intersectionality and Why Is It Important?” <http://www.care2.com/causes/what-is-intersectionality-and-why-is-it-important.html> [Accessed 12/12/2016].

<sup>84</sup> J.S.Choldin, 1973 Kinship Networks in the Migration Process. *International Migration Review*, 7(2), 1973, pp.163-175; AM, Mohlathe, “The Role of Social networks in student migration: The Case of Basotho Students in South Africa” Unpublished MA thesis University of Johannesburg, 2010.

<sup>85</sup> Cited in AM, Mohlathe, “The Role of Social networks in student migration: The Case of Basotho Students in South Africa” Unpublished MA thesis University of Johannesburg, 2010, p. 21.

<sup>86</sup> Cited in AM, Mohlathe, “The Role of Social networks in student migration: The Case of Basotho Students in South Africa” Unpublished MA thesis University of Johannesburg, 2010, p. 21.

<sup>87</sup> “What Is Social Network Theory?” [http://socialnetworking.lovetoknow.com/What\\_is\\_Social\\_Network\\_Theory](http://socialnetworking.lovetoknow.com/What_is_Social_Network_Theory) [Accessed 12/12/2016].

which helps them emotionally, socially, economically, psychologically, and religiously.

This study also incorporated the social identity theory to in order understand Muslim Yao women's evolving identity in the host country. McLeod points out that social identity is a person's sense of who they are based on their group membership(s).<sup>88</sup> As far as social identity is concerned, one has to concur with Sunderland and Litosseliti that:

Identities also come from the *attributions* or ascriptions of others- though ascription may contribute to resulting identity very different in nature to that intended by the scribe. Identities can thus be seen as emerging from an individual's different sorts of relationships with others (perhaps within a Community of Practice...), and (at least potentially) changing as their relationships change. Accordingly, (gender) identity can be seen as multiple and fluid, and never complete: "the emergence and re-emergence of the self."<sup>89</sup>

On the same note, Alcoff argues that "...Individuals make their own identity, but not under conditions of their own choosing..."<sup>90</sup> Identities that come up with individuals with determined positions as social individuals, are flexible and changeable.<sup>91</sup> As stated by Hall, identities are often compromised through having an effect upon an individual and the community. As a result, identities 'shift according to how the subject is addressed or represented' in the environment.<sup>92</sup> In this respect, the social identity theory was useful in exploring how Muslim women are interacting between themselves and society.

## **Research Design, Methodology and Methods**

In this research, I used qualitative research methods. This is mainly because qualitative methods provide an access to "the lived world of the subjects, who in their own words describe their activities, experience and opinions".<sup>93</sup> The phenomenological approach was used to guide this study. This approach "...emphasizes a focus on people's subjective experiences and interpretations of the world. That is, the phenomenologist wants to understand how the world appears to others."<sup>94</sup> Lester states that "The purpose of the phenomenological approach is to illuminate the specific, to identify phenomena through how they are perceived by the actors in a situation...this normally translates into gathering 'deep' information and perceptions through

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<sup>88</sup> Saul McLeod, "Social Identity Theory", [www.simplypsychology.org/social-identity-theory.html](http://www.simplypsychology.org/social-identity-theory.html), 2008 [Accessed 10/05/2016].

<sup>89</sup> Lia Litosseliti and Jane Sunderland (eds.), *Gender Identity and Discourse Analysis* (Amsterdam: John Benjamins, 2002), p. 7.

<sup>90</sup> Linda Martin Alcoff and Eduardo Mendieta (eds.), *Identities: Race, Class, Gender, and Nationality* (Malden, Oxford: Blackwell Publishing, 2003), p. 3.

<sup>91</sup> Lia Litosseliti and Jane Sunderland (eds.), *Gender Identity and Discourse Analysis*, p. 7.

<sup>92</sup> S. Hall, 'The Question of Cultural Identity', in *Modernity and its Futures*, eds. S. Hall *et al.*, Cambridge: Polity Press, 1992), pp. 279-280.

<sup>93</sup> SteinarKvale, *Doing interviews*. (London: Sage, 2007 reprinted 2009), p.9.

<sup>94</sup> "Qualitative Approaches" <http://www.socialresearchmethods.net/kb/qualapp.php> [Accessed 11/07/2016].

inductive, qualitative methods such as interviews...”<sup>95</sup> This approach assisted my study in gathering facts and understanding them through qualitative methods such as interviews, analysis and participant scrutiny, and epitomize it from the viewpoint of the individual. This approach is compelling for understanding subjective experience, securing insights into ordinary Muslim Yao women’s hidden voices.

Qualitative research methods (interviewing and storytelling) to understand the perspectives of women gives voice and a platform to ordinary Muslim Yao women migrants to air their views regarding their migration and settlement in South Africa. Interviews enabled me to take into account “people’s biographies, experiences, opinions, values, aspirations, attitudes and feelings”.<sup>96</sup> In my research, interviews were used as resources for understanding how immigrant women make sense of their social world and act within it. In-depth interviews try to “understand the world from the subject’s point of view, to unfold the meaning of people’s experience, to uncover their lived world.”<sup>97</sup> Semi-structured interviews which contain elements of both a structured and unstructured questions were used to elicit responses.<sup>98</sup>

This study was based on interviews with 33 Malawian women who are Muslim from the Yao ethnic group. I decided to interview 33 women because it is an appropriate number; in addition, I belong to a civic organisation known as Fiqartud Dawah, a non-governmental organization (NGO) run by South African Muslims of Malawian origin. This organisation is familiar with Muslim Yao women in Durban. This provided me with an opportunity to network and access participants. The number of 33 Muslim Yao women helped to mitigate some of the bias and validity possibilities in the research. Oral history has problems in terms of being one-sided, due to intentional, wilful distortion or lapses in the ability to remember.

Participants were also enlisted through the snowballing method. Due to my involvement in civic organisation, it was not difficult to locate respondents. I have an excellent network of informants that I could call upon and did not have any problems in identifying and locating interviewees. Also Malawian women community groups which Muslim Yao women have formed in KZN undoubtedly did lend a helping hand to gather comprehensive information for this study. They are still connected through *social network* which previously helped them in the migration process.

The women interviewed were between 30-35 years of age from various social strata (self-employed, maids, valets, hawkers, housewives, and matron). All the respondents came from the Yao ethnic group and speak the Chiyao language. They originated from different districts of Malawi. The majority of Muslim Yao women came from Mangochi, Machinga, Zomba, Mulanje, Balaka, Blantyre, and Dedza districts.

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<sup>95</sup> Stan Lester, “An introduction to phenomenological research” <https://www.rgs.org/NR/rdonlyres/F50603E0-41AF-4B15-9C84-BA7E4DE8CB4F/0/Seaweedphenom> [Accessed 11/07/2016].

<sup>96</sup> Tim May, *Social Research: Issues, methods and process*. New York: Open University Press, (2001 reprinted 2010), p.120.

<sup>97</sup> Kvale, *Doing interviews*, p.17.

<sup>98</sup> Donald A. Ritchie, *Doing Oral History* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2015), pp. 73-102.

Of the 33 women interviewed, 30 were divorced; 11 were married mothers and nine single mothers. In terms of their occupation, only one woman worked as a matron at a private secondary school, 15 were self-employed, while ten respondents were working as house maids. The remaining seven women were housewives. The majority of Muslim Yao women who come to South Africa are unskilled migrants.

In-depth interviews were conducted for approximately 90 minutes. The interviews were held in Chatsworth, Overport, Sydenham, Clare Estate, Parlock, Newlands West, Lindelani, Ispingo, Malukazi, Mawelewele, Savannah Park, Marianhill, Reservoir Hills, and Pinetown.

I have restricted myself to the Yao women because the history of Yao women is not given the required attention as already outlined. I have been struck by the large scale of emigration and it is an interesting study seeing how the Yao have been spreading Islamic and Yao identity in South Africa. Although the majority of Muslim Yao women are unskilled migrants, they are making a significant contribution to the country's economic development through job creation: hair salons, restaurants, growing vegetables and paying taxes. Yao women form a larger portion of Malawian migrants to South African than any other ethnic group in Malawi. I am also aware of my positionality as a researcher whose own identity is Malawian of the Yao tribe and how it constructs the discourse in terms of objectivity and biases. However, I adopt and support the view of Virginia Yans-McLaughlin called "indigenous ethnographers" who reject imperialist investigators and begin to study their own culture from the inside."<sup>99</sup>

Key questions which guided this dissertation were:

1. Who are the Yao? When did they first arrive in South Africa?
2. What were the 'pull' and 'push' factors that influenced Yao women to migrate to KZN?
3. What were the challenges and constraints of Yao women in KZN in the context of race, gender, finance, language, xenophobia and class?
4. How do Yao women construct and perform their cultural and religious identity in transnational settings?
5. What lessons can be learnt from the lived experiences of Yao women in the context of gender, migration and identity?

The above five questions were identified and discussed in order to find commonalities and differences across the respondents.<sup>100</sup> Interview data was triangulated, that is, compared with relevant archival and scholarly sources in the bibliographic survey of existing literature. Like all historical sources, oral history also has setbacks in terms of being distorted through intentional or

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<sup>99</sup> Virginia Yans-McLaughlin, "Metaphors of Self in History: Subjectivity, Oral Narrative, and Immigration Studies" in *Immigration Reconsidered: History, Sociology, and Politics*, ed. Virginia Yans-McLaughlin (New York: Oxford University Press, 1990), p. 260.

<sup>100</sup> Ritchie, *Doing Oral History*, 176-177, 211-212, 239-240; Lynn Abrams, *Oral History Theory* (London: Routledge, 2010), pp. 144-151.

having slips in the ability to keep things in one's mind<sup>101</sup> and must be subjected to tests of rigour as with written documentation.<sup>102</sup> Information gathered was taken into ethical consideration. A cell phone was utilised to record the interviews. Voice recording and note taking were done with permission of the respondents.

The interviewees used fictitious Islamic and Yao names in order to conceal their identities. The respondents were assured anonymity and confidentiality in as far as the information they provide will be used for scientific research purposes only.

### **Problems encountered during the field work and Limitations of this research**

The overall objective of the study is to examine and explore the history and migration experiences of Yao women who reside in Durban, KwaZulu-Natal (KZN). It seeks to examine the reasons for their migration, their settlement patterns, the challenges, constraints they experienced in the context of social adaptation and cultural assimilation from 1994 to 2015.

The research took place within Durban KZN and does not claim to represent the views of all Muslim Yao women in South Africa. It only illustrates lived experiences of 33 Muslim Yao women. Some women who were on the list of the people to be interviewed could not fathom the significance of this study and subsequently declined to be part of the interview process.

Other respondents suggested that the matter in question (immigration) is a delicate, tricky, precarious issue and were fearful of the authorities. They were not keen on being interviewed. Some women who migrated independently and peddling goods along the streets of Durban opted not to be interviewed. They were scared to be interviewed for fear of losing their livelihood. They were of the view that the study will expose their pursuit and make them vulnerable to police harassment. Unexpectedly, a number of Muslim Yao women who are working in good jobs were also fearful of their bosses and they preferred not to be interviewed. Whilst I respected the decision of those women who had certain misgivings about being part of this project, I do believe that their input could have further enriched this study. It is assumed that these women have vital information which they did not want to divulge to the researcher.

Another important point to take into consideration is that this research was undertaken in Durban whereby some Muslim Yao women move around as they do not have a permanent place to stay. They rent small houses or small rooms. The researcher experienced some predicaments on many occasions in course of the fieldwork. Some women who told the researcher that they were living in Newlands East left for Mariannhill, they vacated the former house; while others had returned to Malawi. In this situation, the researcher could do nothing but to abandon the meeting. It was also difficult to interview some women who are working as domestic servants. A number of them work from 8am up to 9pm from Monday to Saturday and even Sunday. It is these domestic workers who have been exploited, abused, underpaid, and overworked. Being foreigners, they do not know the basic requirements laid down by the Labour Relations Act of 1995; and the Basic

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<sup>101</sup> See Lynn Abrams, *Oral History Theory* (London: Routledge, 2010), 78-105 for discussion of memory.

<sup>102</sup> Abrams, *Oral History Theory*, p. 105.

conditions of Employment Act of 1997. For those women who are overworking, it was hard for them to have free time to be interviewed.

The interview schedule was planned between August and September. Health issues were another impediment. As the researcher was prepared to interview women, some women succumbed to influenza.

On the other hand, some husbands did not allow their spouses to be interviewed by a male researcher. They gave their own interpretation of Islamic theology which asserts that women should play a low profile and lead a private life. These men observed that the wife should desist, abstain from all acts and gestures that might kindle or arouse the passion, ardour of people other than her legitimate husband or cause evil suspicion of her morality.

Nevertheless, other husbands were cooperative; they allowed their wives to be interviewed by stating that acquiring *ilm* (knowledge) is an important component of Islam. Islam teaches that one should seek knowledge from the cradle up to the grave yard. In this circumstance, this researcher is seeking and spreading *ilm* (knowledge).

Another problem encountered during the field work was how to access University of KwaZulu-Natal (UKZN) libraries and other archival depots on campuses. This research and write up process was undertaken during the 2016 Fees Must Fall student protest which at times seriously hindered the write up process.

On the other hand, Malawian women community groups which Muslim Yao women have formed in KZN undoubtedly did lend a helping hand to gather comprehensive information for this study. They are still connected through *social network* which previously helped them in the migration process. They argue that social networks of kinship and friendship furnish a way of harnessing a sense of Muslim Yao community in a foreign land. It links them through bonds of kinship, friendship and shared community of origin which helps them emotionally, socially, economically, psychologically, and religiously.

### **Relevance of this Research**

The narrative material gathered from Yao women in KwaZulu-Natal will offer a basis to understand the role of women in migration which has been neglected for some time. It will also help to track broad social changes in the gendered worlds of the Yao women.

The envisaged research will adopt a life history and storytelling approach of Yao women. It will contribute to the broader understanding of Malawian women migrants in South Africa. It will focus on the multiple aspects of the Yao women's lives, including their reasons for leaving Malawi, as well as the settlement issues and constraints they experienced.

This study is significant for the following reasons: firstly it brings to the fore the lost voices of Yao immigrant women, in other words it de-masculinises migration histories of Malawian immigrants.

Secondly, by integrating a feminist analysis it highlights Yao women's agency in the migration process and that women were far from docile or passive. It challenges the absence of Muslim Yao women in international migration literature. The studies of migration should not portray males as the only people who make the decision to leave their countries and women follow. Females are no longer dependent beings as they have their own choices and decisions to make regarding migrations. Rather than depicting women as passive victims who are always submissive, this research attempts to frame an account of feminist empowerment. It is hoped that women migrants' narratives are now attaining analytical consideration in South Africa historiography.

Thirdly, this study intends to show the importance of writing history 'from below' which discovers ordinary people as its subjects. The study will centralise on the Muslim Yao women's experiences and perspectives, diverging itself from the conventional image of traditional political history and its emphasis on the deeds of great men.

### **Organisation of the Dissertation**

Chapter 1 is an introduction, which encompasses the literature review, background of this study, methodology, and theoretical framework within the confines of this study. In Chapter 2, the research will focus on The Yao, their origins, migration, and settlement as well the interconnections of Islam and Yao Muslim identities. Chapter 3 focuses on the Muslim Yao women's reasons for their migration to KZN, particularly the "push" and "pull" factors that shaped their decision to migrate. Chapter 4 deals with Settlement in South Africa: Assimilation, Challenges and Constraints. And Chapter 5 consolidates the study with a critical conclusion.

## CHAPTER TWO

### The Yao: Origins, Migration, and Settlement in Malawi

The Yao are originally from Yaoland in Niassa province of northern Mozambique. In northern Mozambique the Yao were confined to the north by the Luuma River, to the south by Luwambala River, to the east by Lujenda River and to the west by Luchilingo River. Bounded by the said physical features, there is a hill called Yao; “treeless and grass grown”<sup>103</sup> a round Chiconono area in Muembe district. They left Yaoland in Muembe in the 9<sup>th</sup> century.<sup>104</sup> In the subsequent centuries, they dispersed and spread, some to the East, others to the West; some North, others South. From Lake Malawi they stretched themselves near the Indian Ocean up to Kilwa.<sup>105</sup>

The Yao in Malawi are mostly found in central and southern regions of the country. Malawi is bounded on the east by Lake Malawi, on the south and east by Mozambique; on the west by Zambia and on the north by Tanzania.

The Yao form a major Bantu ethnic and linguistic group and are found in significant numbers in Mozambique, Tanzania and Malawi with many more scattered in Southern African countries such as Zambia, Zimbabwe and South Africa. In Malawi the Yao are found in Mangochi, Machinga, Balaka, Zomba, Mulanje, Dedza, Salima, Chiladzulu, Blantyre and some parts of Nkhotakota district.<sup>106</sup> In Tanzania the Yao are scattered in the districts of Songea, Tunduru, Masasi, Mtwara, and Newala in Mtwara region<sup>107</sup>, while in Mozambique they are spread in Mawago, Majuni, Lichinga, Mwembe, Ngauma, Mandimba, Sanga, Lago, Mekula and within the city of Lichinga.<sup>108</sup>

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<sup>103</sup> Yohannah Abdallah, *The Yaos*, (London: Frank Cass, 1973), p.7.

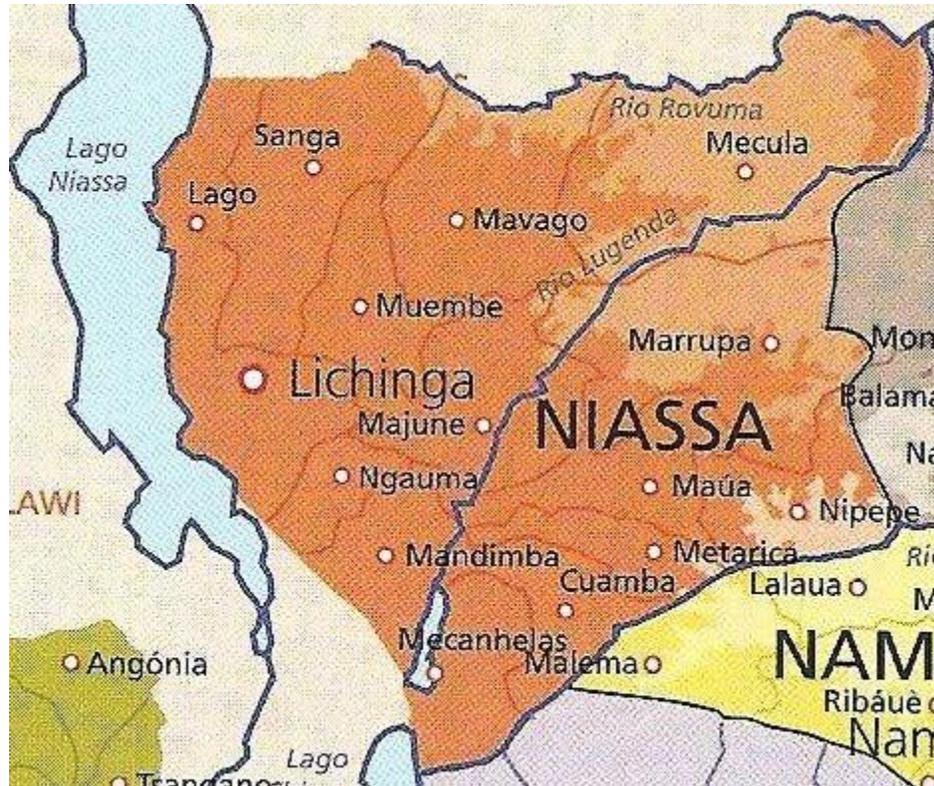
<sup>104</sup> Molefi Kete Asante and Ama Mazama (eds), *Encyclopedia of African Religion* (California: Sage, 2009), p.734.

<sup>105</sup> Yohannah Abdallah, *The Yaos*, p.7.

<sup>106</sup> Interview with Habiba Ashima (Marianhill, 12 September, 2016).

<sup>107</sup> Interview with AsiyaMwamadi, (Lindelani, 26 July, 2015).

<sup>108</sup> Paulo AlifaN’suenene, *Vocabulario de Ciyao: Linguas de Mocambique* (Nampula: Sociedade Internacional de Linguistica, 2009), p. i.



*Figure1: Map of Niassa Province in northern Mozambique where the Yao originated also showing the districts of Mawago, Majuni, Lichinga, Mwembe, Ngauma, Mandimba, Sanga, Lago, Mekula and within the city of Lichinga where the Yao settled.<sup>109</sup>*

<sup>109</sup> “Map of Niassa Province”, <http://google.co.za/webhp?sourceid=instant&ion=1&espv=2&ie=UTF-8#q=map+of+niassa+province> [Accessed 17/11/2015].



Figure 2: Map of Mozambique<sup>110</sup>

<sup>110</sup> [http://www.nationsonline.org/oneworld/map/mozambique\\_map.htm](http://www.nationsonline.org/oneworld/map/mozambique_map.htm) [Accessed 12/12/2016].



Figure 3: Map of Tanzania with Mtwara region in the south where the Yao settled in Songea, Tunduru, Masasi, Mtwara, Newala, Lindi, and Kilwa.<sup>111</sup>

<sup>111</sup> <http://www.mapsofworld.com/tanzania/> [http://www.nationsonline.org/oneworld/map/malawi\\_map.htm](http://www.nationsonline.org/oneworld/map/malawi_map.htm)

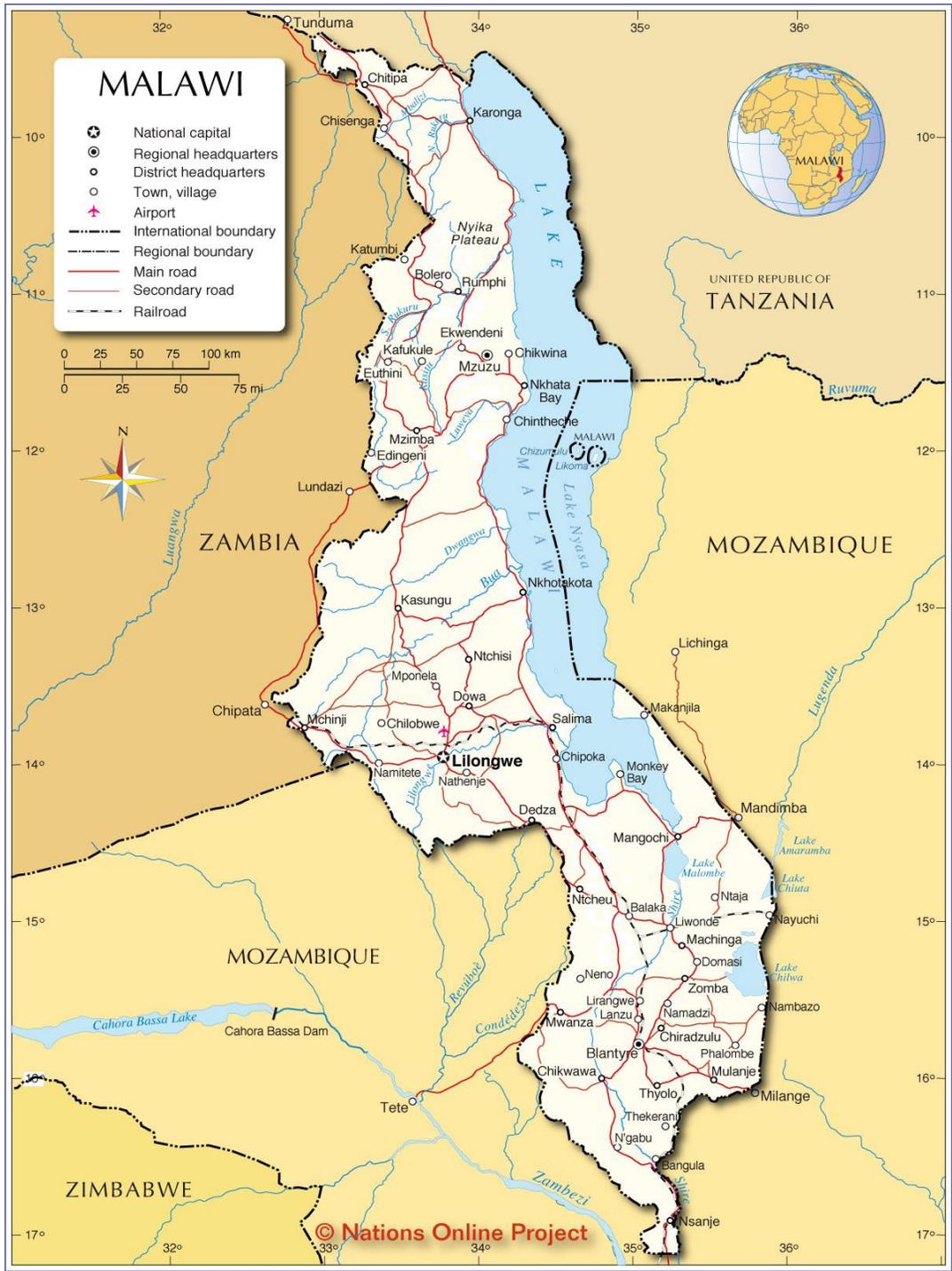


Figure 4: Map of Malawi \_showing some districts where the Yao settled.<sup>112</sup>

<sup>112</sup> [http://www.nationsonline.org/oneworld/map/malawi\\_map.htm](http://www.nationsonline.org/oneworld/map/malawi_map.htm) [Accessed 12/12/2016].

The Yaos are matrilineal and matrilocal whereby descent and inheritances are traced through the female. Yao men live in their spouses' village. Yao women live amongst their kinsfolk next to the homestead of her parents or grandmother. Yao men live in their partner's village. In this case, women seem to possess the right to family land. Once *ulombela/ndowa* (traditional Yao marriage) or *nikah* (Islamic wedding) has taken place, the husband unites with the wife to live in the women's village and supports her to till her field. The man also builds a house near her mother's or grandmother's residence. Maliyam John a 45 years old single mother of four children who came to South Africa in 2010 argues that matrilocal<sup>113</sup> and uxoriocal<sup>114</sup> are important in the Yao culture because the house which was built in the village by the husband will be hers once she is given *twarraq* (the right to divorce in Islamic societies).<sup>115</sup>

A woman's relationship with her mother-in-law is far more decisive for the permanence or solidity of her marriage than in her relationship with her husband. Among the Yao, a bride does not come into the household of the mother-in-law; rather the husband is the one who resides at the habitation of the wife's family. The establishment of rapport with his mother-in-law is done by the husband. In this respect, the Yao women have not been subordinate to their mothers-in-law as in patriarchal families. In patriarchal families a bride is expected to be subservient, lower herself to her mother-in-law, and executes all the more degrading household assignments. The stability of the relationship in patriarchal families depends upon how the wife is expected to subordinate herself to the mother-in-law and all the relatives in the homestead. Khadija Godilifa a 37 year old mother of five children who came to South Africa in 2008, states that, "it does not mean that in matrilineal families we do not respect our mothers in-law, most often, a warm feeling of affection, attachment and teamwork develops. However, squabbles, arguments and stress, anxiety, pressure do not often come from our mothers-in-law because the Yao women do not live in the husband's village."<sup>116</sup>

### **.Early History of Migration**

The Yao have a long history of migrating and a tradition of engaging in a long- distance trade. They are still called "...*negociantes*, that is travelling salespersons by the Mozambicans. This is because historically the Yao also travelled to the Indian Ocean coast to negotiate with Chinese, Indian, Portuguese, and Arab traders."<sup>117</sup> It is believed that they had contact with the Arabs of Mozambique and Kilwa since about, 1000 A.D and acted as 'middlemen' for in trade along Lake Malawi.<sup>118</sup> Harris asserts that the Yao initiated commercial connections at least by the sixteenth century and probably earlier.<sup>119</sup> Other accounts say that the Yao came out as a forceful trading

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<sup>113</sup> Matrilocal refers to the matrimonial home structure pertaining to residence at the habitation of the wife's family or tribe.

<sup>114</sup> Uxorilocality refers to the cultural rule that a man after marriage moves to his wife's residence.

<sup>115</sup> Interview with Maliyamu John (Pinetown, 11 September, 2016).

<sup>116</sup> Interview with Khadija Saiti (Pinetown, 11 September, 2016).

<sup>117</sup> Molefi Kete Asante and Ama Mazama (eds), *Encyclopedia of African Religion* (California: Sage, 2009), p.734.

<sup>118</sup> Brian M. Fagan (ed.), *A Short History of Zambia: From the Earliest Times until A.D. 1900*(London: Oxford University Press, 1969), pp. 130-131.

<sup>119</sup> Joseph E. Harris, *Africans and Their History* (New York: Meridian, 1998), p. 69.

nation in the late seventeenth and early eighteenth centuries.<sup>120</sup> Some historians point out that by the early seventeenth century the Yao were executing long-distance expeditions to the coast.<sup>121</sup> *The Cambridge History of Africa* states:

By 1616, when (Gaspar) Bocarro travelled over land from Tete on the Zambezi to Kilwa (in 53 days) off the southern coast of Tanzania, right through the heart of what is now Yao territory, it is virtually certain that the Yao were already developing those impressive commercial skills which were to determine the trade of Southern interior of east Africa until the imposition of colonial rule (in the 19<sup>th</sup> century).<sup>122</sup>

From the sixteenth century onwards the Yao constructed an overland trading network, which enabled them, right into the nineteenth century, to have mastery over the vast commercial hinterland of Kilwa and Mozambique Island.<sup>123</sup> During the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries they were considered the greatest long-distance traders in East and central Africa.<sup>124</sup> As agriculturists they needed iron hoes, implements that only the iron-working Cisi group among them knew how to make. They started to travel about Yao country selling them. At about the same time, during the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries, Arab traders from the coasts started trading in cloth with the Yao and their neighbours.<sup>125</sup>

Yaoland had abundant iron which made the Yao to become chief distributors of iron hoes and other implements that they exchanged for cloth, salt, beads, and other goods available on the coast.<sup>126</sup> Owing to these continuous trade expeditions to the coast, coastal dealers were in need of large stocks of ivory to meet the demand of Asians. The Yao became the major suppliers of ivory to the coastal merchants.<sup>127</sup> In the late 1870s, it had been Yao entrepreneurs associated with the east coast trade who became the principal African agents of the international economy in Malawi<sup>128</sup> until the imposition of colonial rule.

By the mid-eighteenth century the Yao were setting up ivory trading posts west of the Luangwa and also south of the Zambezi. The Yao caravans on a number of occasions comprised as many as one thousand porters, who carried ivory to the coast.<sup>129</sup> From Kilwa the Yao made trade expeditions up to the the Lunda of Mwata Kazembe in Zambia. They are also recorded to have penetrated the Congo. Later on they reached parts of what we now regard as southern and central Malawi from the 1730s when they were long-distance traders.<sup>130</sup> By 1753 Yao traders had

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<sup>120</sup> B.A. Ogot, *General History of Africa V: Africa from the Sixteenth to the Eighteenth Century* (Grosderry: UNESCO, 2003), pp. 311- 312.

<sup>121</sup> Roland Oliver (ed.), *The Cambridge History of Africa Volume 3 from C. 1050 to C. 1600* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1977), p. 214.

<sup>122</sup> *The Cambridge History of Africa*, Vol. 4 1975, p. 254

<sup>123</sup> J. D. Fage (ed.), *Africa Discovers Her Past* (London: Oxford University Press, 1970), p. 81.

<sup>124</sup> Andrew Robert, *A History of Zambia* (London: Heinemann, 1976), p. 110.

<sup>125</sup> Andrew Robert, *A History of Zambia*, p. 94.

<sup>126</sup> Yohanna Abdallah, *The Yaso*, p. 23-24.

<sup>127</sup> Joseph E. Harris, *Africans and Their History* (New York: Meridian, 1998), p. 165.

<sup>128</sup> John McCracken, *Politics and Christianity in Malawi 1875- 1940: The impact of the Livingstonia Mission in the Northern Province* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1977), p.83.

<sup>129</sup> Malyn Newitt, *A History of Mozambique* (London: Hurst and Company, 1997), p. 184.

<sup>130</sup> B. Pachai, *Malawi The History of the Nation* (Hong Kong: Longman, 1967), p.53.

outstretched themselves to the Chewa chief Biwi of Malawi. By 1766 other Yao traders had arrived at Zumbo (in Tete Province of Mozambique), where they were vending cloth<sup>131</sup> to the Nsenga and Nyungwe at a more affordable price than the Portuguese. By the 1780's, if not earlier, they were carrying ivory to Kilwa and Zanzibar<sup>132</sup> and by 1780 the Yao had penetrated some parts of northern Malawi all the way from Kilwa.<sup>133</sup> Alpers discloses unadulterated Yao names of the people who migrated and opened the trade routes in the land of the Tumbuka. He states,

it seems likely that Mkwinda and Mroka were involved in the opening of the west side of the lake to trade since there can have been few people fitting their description among the Yao or their neighbours to the east of the lake.<sup>134</sup>

The Yao trade expeditions to the east coast made them probably the most affluent Africans in east central Africa. They were the leading light of their Makuwa neighbours and independent of the Arabs who moved inland from Kilwa.<sup>135</sup> The Makuwa are Bantu people who occupied northern Mozambique and southern Tanzania in the course of their history. A substantial number of the Makuwa are Muslims. When the Yao were creating and developing long-distance trade networks from northern Zambia up to Kilwa, the Makuwa were only confined between northern Mozambique and southern Tanzania. The Makuwa had become envious of the wealth the Yao had succeeded in gathering through commercial activities with the Arabs and Portuguese.<sup>136</sup> While the Yao were occupied with commercial activities, their neighbours, the Makuwa-Lomwe were preoccupied with subsistence farming for a number of centuries. They were also hunters who spend most of their time hunting wild animals.<sup>137</sup>

By the time the Yao settled in Malawi in the eighteenth century, they were arguably the wealthiest Africans in the country compared to other ethnic groups. They did imbibe some of the culture and literacy of the Arab and the Swahili people long before the Europeans arrived in this part of Africa.<sup>138</sup> They are known to have imitated the customs of Arabs and the Swahili people<sup>139</sup>, whose literal civilisation they made contact with and adopted many centuries before any other European advancement was introduced in east central Africa. By adopting Arab and Swahili cultures, the Yao were doing it simply for the sake of reconciling to a new environment and trends of the time as they caught up with modernization. The east coast was regarded as their

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<sup>131</sup> See Table 1: *Types of cloth the Yao brought from the east coast before the imposition of colonialism*

<sup>132</sup> Andrew Robert, *A History of Zambia*, pp. 110-111.

<sup>133</sup> John McCracken, *Politics and Christianity in Malawi 1875-1940: The Impact of the Livingstonia Mission in Northern Province* (Cambridge University Press, 1977), p. 3.

<sup>134</sup> John McCracken, *Politics and Christianity in Malawi 1875-1940: The Impact of the Livingstonia Mission in Northern Province* (Cambridge University Press, 1977), p. 3. pp. 164-5

<sup>135</sup> B. O. Ogot (ed.), *Zaman: A Survey of East African History* (Longman: Nairobi, 1974). p.236.

<sup>136</sup> Rangeley, W. (1963), "The Yao." *Nyasaland Journal* 16 (1), p.10.

<sup>137</sup> Edward A. Alpers, *Ivory and Slaves in East Central Africa: Changing Patterns of International Trade to the Later Nineteenth Century* (London: Heinemann, 1975), p. 8.

<sup>138</sup> B. R. Raphael, *A History of Malawi* (Limbe: Popular Publications- MontFort Press, 1980), p.40.

<sup>139</sup> Yohannah Abdallah, *TheYaos*, p. 27.

lode-star, and the arbiter of customs.<sup>140</sup> During the nineteenth century the Yao started converting to Islam.

The history of the Yao and that of African Muslims in many parts of Southern Africa is intertwined; especially in Malawi. Agnew and Stubbs observe that they entered Malawi from East Africa where they had been trade associates of Arabs for a long time. They constitute “the southernmost outpost of the Islamic world in Africa.”<sup>141</sup> All the Yao in Malawi, Mozambique, and Tanzania are likely to be followers of Islam though there are a few Yao Christians. Amongst the Yao, however, those who converted to Christianity are considered to have lost their Yao identity. In 1910 a missionary outlined that “Among the Yao on the lake shore it is becoming the natural thing to be a Mohammedan – they look on it as their natural religion. The Yao who does not accept it will soon find himself a stranger among his own people.”<sup>142</sup> In other words, being Yao and Muslim are considered synonymous.<sup>143</sup> The Yao identity is equivalent to an Islam identity among this ethnic group.

The Yao contributed tremendously in term of mores, traditions, and economy when they settled in Malawi. Sicard asserts that the Muslim Yao contributed in terms of customs and practices such as;

the dress code, which brought about the use of *mkanjo* (Swahili *kanzu*), the *chikofiya* (Swahili *kofia*) and the *malapa*, which clearly came to distinguish Muslims from non-Muslims; the dietary code, which led to the distinction between ‘*halal*’ and ‘*haram*’ foods, but also led to differences between ‘observers’ and non-observers; closely related to the dietary code was the introduction of new foods, e.g. mango, coconut, cassava and rice; terminology influenced by Arabic through Swahili being incorporated in the languages of the country, e.g. *haki* to mean ‘true’, or ‘sure’, *kafiri* to designate a non-Muslim (unbeliever), *sawabu* ‘reward’, *wadi* derived from Sudanese Arabic and *bunn* to designate ‘son of’ (*ibn*); *biti* for ‘daughter of’ (*binti*), etc; and transformation of such customs as marriage ‘*ndowa*’, initiation ‘*jando*’, funerals ‘*sadaka*’.<sup>144</sup>

The long-distance trade and Islam had a great impact on the lives of the Yao. The local communities’ envy and jealousy contributed to the marginalisation and stereotyping of Muslim Yao in the course of their history. The Yao were given labels, some of which were stereotypical and even pejorative. At one time, the Yao were called ‘*Ajawa*’ and the ‘*Achawa*’/ ‘*Machawa*’,<sup>145</sup> particularly in Zambia and Zimbabwe. This lingers to the present. One Yao woman residing in Chatsworth among the Makuwa, Fatima Muhammad a 47 year old mother of three children who

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<sup>140</sup> Yohannah Abdallah, *The Yaos*, p. 27.

<sup>141</sup> Swanzie Agnew and Michel Stubbs, *Malawi In Maps* (London, University of London Press, 1972), p.14.

<sup>142</sup> John McCracken, *Politics and Christianity in Malawi 1875-1940*, pp.55-56.

<sup>143</sup> Interview with Habiba Ashima (Marianhill, 12 September, 2016).

<sup>144</sup> S. V. Scard, The Arrival of Islam in Malawi and the Muslim Contribution to Development, *Journal of Muslim Minority Affairs*, Vol. 20, No. 2, 2000, pp. 302-303.

<sup>145</sup> Judith Listowel, *The Other Livingstone* (Sussex: Julian Friedmann Publishers, 1974), p. 179.

came to South Africa in 1997, stated she was referred to as “*Machawa*” by the Makuwa who are part of the Zanzibari community.

According to Muhammad, “the Makuwa in Chatsworth call us with a derogatory name of *Achawa/Machawa* rather than the proper name of Yao, but the Yao in Chatsworth are part of the people who are still called *Amazizimbane* (Zanzibaris). I wonder why they still call us *Machawa*.”<sup>146</sup> The term *machawa* is used on Muslim Yao women who are residing in Chatsworth. Islam is sometimes referred to as the religion of *machawa*.

The Mang’anja and Nyanja from Malawi and also the Nyanja and Makuwa of Mozambique coined the name ‘*Ajawa*’. When the Yao traded with the Mang’anja and Nyanja, out of expression of fear or delight every time Yao traders arrived in their territories, the Mang’anja and Nyanja used to ‘*aja*’ or ‘*ajawa*’ to mean ‘those’. They used to say ‘*ajawa abwera*’, meaning that those ‘people have come!’ ‘Those traders have arrived!’ The Yao appeared dressed in Arab robes. From the two words, ‘*ajawa abwera*’ a derogatory term ‘*ajawa*’ was coined.

One of the first persons to write about the Yao, Abdallah, explained that the origins of the word Yao lay in the fact that the Yao were from the ‘Yao’ hill in northern Mozambique. And their neighbours such as the Makuwa failed to pronounce the proper tribal name of Yao. It is over these different names in describing the Yao that the Reverend Abdallah wrote,

If you consult books written by early Europeans (you will find them) say ‘the tribes of the Yaos are the Ajawa, Achawa and Angulu.’ Never was such a mistake. But it is not the Europeans who are to blame: no, it is the Anyasa (Mang’anja) and the Amakuwa (Lomwe), and the Europeans went astray in following their lead.<sup>147</sup>

The Portuguese were the first Europeans who used to call the Yao, *Ajaua*. For example, in 1798 the Yao had been called ‘*Ajawa*’ by Lacerda<sup>148</sup> and later on in 1860s David Livingstone, the Scottish explorer while at Magomero called Wayawo the *Ajawas*.<sup>149</sup>

Abdallah proceeded to explain:

The Yao [are] from Yao and when we say ‘Wayao’ the Amakuwa Alolo cannot pronounce it properly but say ‘Ajao’, and hence they say ‘Ajao’wa’ (these or the Ajao), or “Achawa”, this is their misfortune. And this is the mistake, which Europeans made when they imitated the Amakuwa Alolo. Then the term ‘Angulu’ ‘came from the Anyasa; they made a mistake through not knowing about other countries (and other tribes than their own) through not travelling and not learning about them. Mangulu is a hill...Those people who live in that country near that hill, are the Anguru; but they are not Yao. And so the Europeans, in imitating the Anyasa who knew

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<sup>146</sup> Interview with Fatima Muhammad, (Chartsworth, 20 September, 2016).

<sup>147</sup> Yohanna Abdallah, *The Yaos*, p.7.

<sup>148</sup> A. J. Wills, *An Introduction to the History of Central Africa: Zambia, Malawi and Zimbabwe*, p. 51.

<sup>149</sup> T. David Williams, Malawi, *The Politics of Despair*, p. 41.

nothing about other countries (at that time), came to say, 'the Yao are the same as the Anguru', confusing matters as if Mangulu were in Yao country.<sup>150</sup>

On the other hand, there is another version which contends that the word 'Yao' signifies people 'who ate and only eat from what they laboured for. When put in Chiyao language, they say 'wakulya yawo'- those who eat what they sow'. From this expression came the word Yawo (Yao) as we understand it today. If one puts 'wakulya yawo' (who ate and only eat from what they strived for' in Makuwa- Lomwe language it turns to be 'anolya achawa.' This is another reason why the Yao have been called *Achawa* by the Makuwa and the Nyanja. Alpers points out that,

The Makuwa-Lomwe...have been agriculturists for centuries, Whiteley was informed that they 'formely seem to have subsisted almost entirely on hunting. One of the reasons given for the name Acawa, by which the Yao are known, is that they were the people who "ate their own food" (anolya acawa), as opposed to the Makuwa who had to go out and hunt for theirs.<sup>151</sup>

The Yao were a people who "ate their own food" before the imposition of colonialism. They also dressed in long Arab robes with turbans, while Yao females did put on different types of *chitenje* (an artful piece of cloth that Yao women wrap around the waist). In this manner, the Yao appeared as the people from the east coast. Writing in the colonial era, that is 1903, Duff, described the Yao in these words:

The Wayao are particularly fond of dress, and in the neighbourhood of places like Zomba, and Blantyre many of them may be seen parading the roads...clad in the cast off wardrobes of their masters.<sup>152</sup>

In this respect, 'their masters' meant the Arabs or Swahili. On the same note, Ransford wrote in 1966 describing the Yao as follows something that established their identity in those days:

Even today in their long white *khanzu*, and red *fezzes* or beautifully embroidered skull-caps, the Yao stand out sharply from the other people of the lake. They have preserved a remarkable air of dignity; their brown Bantu eyes are brightened a little by the wisdom of the east and there remains a suggestion of arrogance in their bearing. In the heyday of their power, they must have appeared still more striking. All the early missionaries speak of their superior intelligence and physique....the Yao women fitted to cope with the superman for they... 'were large stature, full-fleshed, and sensual looking to the last degree.<sup>153</sup>

The description of the Yao in this manner did not end there. Another observation made by Duff about Yao women in terms of dressing in comparison with others in those days was this:

The Yao women generally cover the upper part of their bodies as far as the division between the breasts.<sup>154</sup>

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<sup>150</sup> Yohannah Abdallah ,*TheYaos*, p. 8.

<sup>151</sup> Edward A. Alpers, *Ivory and Slaves in East Central Africa: Changing Patterns of International Trade to the Later Nineteenth Century* (London: Heinemann, 1975), p. 8.

<sup>152</sup> H. L. Duff, *Nyasaland under the Foreign Office* (London: Negro University, USA, 1903), p.214.

<sup>153</sup> Oliver Ransford, *Livingstone's Lake: The Drama of Nyasa* (London, 1966), p. 41.

<sup>154</sup> H. L. Duff, *Nyasaland Under the Foreign Office*, p. 215.

The Yao were a people who were selling different types of cloth to other ethnic groups in east-central Africa before the imposition of colonialism. Muslim Yao women have been selling different types of cloth in the markets of Zambia, Malawi, and Mozambique

**Types of cloth the Yao brought from the east coast:**

<b>Description</b>	<b>Name</b>
1. Blue with coloured fringe	<i>Masikati</i>
2. Blue with silver or other fringe	<i>Chilewani</i>
3. Red with coloured stripes	<i>Sasali</i>
4. Silk	<i>Ulaja</i>
5. Woven blue and white threads	<i>Mkoko/Subaila</i> (with long fringe)
6. Red with white stripes	<i>Chitambi</i>
7. Blue with short fringe	<i>Sumaila</i>
8. Bright red of good quality (similar to <i>Subaila</i> )	<i>Ndeule</i>
9. Plain bright red	<i>MlesowaUlungu</i>
10. Plain blue or red cloth	<i>Chiwambepo</i>
11. Good quality blue calico	<i>Mtamba</i>
12. Similar to <i>Chikungulu</i> (striped blue)	<i>Lilamba</i>
13. A bright red blanket	<i>Likapa</i>
14. Striped blue	<i>Chikungulu</i>
15 Ordinary and unbleached calico	<i>Mlekano</i>
16. Plain red or pink	<i>Mlesowamba</i>
17. Plain blue calico	<i>Chinyong'onyo</i>
18. Plain red calico	<i>Mlangali</i>
19. Similar to <i>Chikungulu</i>	<i>Chigwena</i>
20. Striped brick red	<i>Mbalasati</i>
21. White with red stripes	<i>Chikoja</i>
22. Plain black	<i>Chilopa</i>

*Table 1: Types of cloth the Yao brought from the east coast before the imposition of colonialism*

Abdallah published a book in 1919, titled *Chiikala Cha Wayao: The Yaos* states that “Those are the names of cloths which our forefathers wore and donned for dances long ago and which they obtained from the coast.”<sup>155</sup>

Muslim Yao women are now importing to South Africa different types of Malawian cloths. The imported materials are known as *Chitenje*. South African men and women buy Malawian fabrics and make the designs known as ‘African attires’ which are becoming popular in Durban.



*Figure 5: A sample picture of chitenje material.*



*Figure 6: A display of women designs made from chitenje material.*

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<sup>155</sup> Yohannah. Abdallah, *The Yaos*, p. 32 Also *The Cambridge History of Africa*, Vol. 4, 1974, p. 11.

It is important to note that the Yao were the first people to introduce cloth in Malawi at the time when the wearing of animal skins (*mapende*) or bark cloth (*mawondo*) was common. The introduction of cloth in Malawi happened after the Yao from the eastern side of Lake Malawi started to travel to the Indian Ocean. In modern times it has been Muslim Yao women who have been importing *chitenje* materials to South Africa before Congolese, Tanzanian, and Nigerian women began to bring them.

### **The Nineteenth Centuries Yao Movements in Southern Africa**

The history of Yao immigrants in South Africa stretches from the late nineteenth century when the Makuwa and the Yao were 'liberated' from slavery in the 1870s. They settled in Natal as indentured labourers and later made their home on the Bluff in Durban where they began to gather other Yaos and Makuwa together. Subsequently, the 400 'liberated' Makuwa and Yao were known as Zanzibaris in Durban. All this took place after the Sultan of Zanzibar signed a treaty in 1873 consenting to stop the slave trade in his domain; other traders went on with the trade. The British set free some of the slaves from raiders.<sup>156</sup> All emancipated slaves were considered as a people who came from Zanzibar only. Mumisa argues that "The term 'Zanzibar' is a misnomer since these slaves were brought not only from Zanzibar but from northern Mozambique, Portuguese East Africa and Malawi. They were primarily Muslims."<sup>157</sup>

Kaarsholm asserts that the original group of 508 liberated slaves included a significant minority whose native languages were Ngindo and Yao rather than Makua.<sup>158</sup> The Makuwa and the Yao have kept intact their languages since the 1870s. Chimakuwa and Chiyao languages have been silently spoken in South Africa.<sup>159</sup> They have preserved their languages although the dialect has changed in the course of their history. The two languages have acquired a Zulu accent due to their mingling and acculturation.

The 'liberated' slaves who became to be known as Zanzibaris came from the Yao, Ngindo and Makuwa tribes. Subsequently, the Yao continued to integrate within the original community of Zanzibaris.<sup>160</sup> Later on the Zanzibari term "...became a model for other African Muslim groups

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<sup>156</sup> Ashwin Desai and GoolamVahed (eds.), *Chatsworth: The Making of a South African Township* (Scottsville: University of KwaZulu-Natal Press, 2013), p.84.

<sup>157</sup> Michael Mumisa, "Islam and Proselytism in South Africa and Malawi", *Journal of Muslim Minority Affairs*, 22: 2, p.280.

<sup>158</sup> Preben Kaarsholm, "Zanzibaris or Amakhuwa? Sufi Networks in South Africa, Mozambique, and the Indian Ocean", *The Journal of African History* / Volume 55 / Issue 02 / July 2014, pp 195 DOI: 10.1017/S0021853714000085, Published online: 29 May 2014.

<sup>159</sup> ZubeidaKassim Seedat, "The Zanzibaris in Durban: A social anthropology study of Muslim descendants of African freed slaves living in the Indian areas of Chats worth", Masters of Arts in the Department of African Studies (Durban: University of Natal, 1973), p. 74. (Unpublished).

<sup>160</sup> Gerhardus C. Oosthuizen "Islam among the Zanzibaris of South Africa", *History of Religions*, Vol. 31, No. 3 (Feb., 1992), pp. 307 Published by: The University of Chicago PressStable, p.194.<http://www.jstor.org/stable/1062865>[ Accessed: 16-03-2015]

in the greater Durban area, and from the 1930s, African Muslims, mainly from Malawi, began to establish 'Zanzibari' societies in settlements like Mariannhill and Amaoti.<sup>161</sup> In this respect, the Yao migration to South Africa had also further reinforced and played a part in the root of an ethnic group and the making of the history of the Zanzibari people of Durban. The integration of the Makuwa and Yao Muslims of the Shafi order in Durban is the genesis of the society called Zanzibaris. These people belong to the Shafi order which emanated from Muhammad ibn Idris al-Shafi who was born in 767 C.E in Gaza- Palestine. Al-Shafi was the founder of the Shafi School of thought. He was the founding father of the science of *Fiqh* (legal theory; systems of interpretation; sources of Islamic law). He improved the maxim of *Ijma'a* (consensus of opinion).<sup>162</sup> Shafi is one of the Islamic schools of thought which the Yao and Makuwa adhere to in South Africa. Shafi order constitutes a significant part of the Makuwa and Yao identity. It has a hand in the Makuwa and Yao sense of community in South Africa. It binds the Makuwa and the Yao in the republic. Many of the Makuwa and Yao Islamic activities in Durban constitute legal theory based on the principles of Shafi order.

Another migration stream of the Yao to South Africa was that of the migrants who went to work on the diamond and gold mines in Kimberly and the Witwatersrand. The discovery of diamonds in South Africa and the mining industry when diamonds were discovered in 1867<sup>163</sup> reshaped the history of southern Africa. The dawn of gold mining in the Witwatersrand in 1886<sup>164</sup> was the starting point of the migrant labour policy which attracted a number of Malawians. Lucas argues that "For more than a century the circular migration of younger men to the South African mines has profoundly affected the economies, political relations, and social structures of the countries of southern Africa..."<sup>165</sup> On the same note, Crush says that,

The large-scale employment of non-South African labour from the region by the South African mines goes back 150 years. Then migrants from Mozambique, Malawi and Lesotho came on foot to work on the Kimberly diamond mines. When the Witwatersrand gold mines opened in the 1890s, migrants from these areas were joined by migrants from many other parts of the region - Swaziland, Botswana, Zimbabwe, Zambia and Angola. Migration for work preceded the drawing of colonial boundaries and cross-border migration continued after those borders were established.<sup>166</sup>

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<sup>161</sup> Gerhardus C. Oosthuizen "Islam among the Zanzibaris of South Africa", *History of Religions*, Vol. 31, No. 3 (Feb., 1992), pp. 307 Published by: The University of Chicago Press Stable, p. 194. <http://www.jstor.org/stable/1062865> [Accessed: 16-03-2015]

<sup>162</sup> Muhammad A. Vahed, *An Introduction to the Principles of Islamic Law* (with a brief comparison with Western Law), (Durban: Al-Noor Publishers, 2011), p.95.

<sup>163</sup> Stace Greer, "South African Diamond Mines", 1870s. [http://historyproject.ucdavis.edu/lessons/view\\_lesson.php?id=21](http://historyproject.ucdavis.edu/lessons/view_lesson.php?id=21) [Accessed 11/07/2016].

<sup>164</sup> Trehwella Cameron (ed.), *An Illustrated History of South Africa* (Johannesburg: Southern Book Publishers, 1988), p.184.

<sup>165</sup> Robert E. B. Lucas, 'Emigration to South Africa's Mines', *The American Economic Review*, Vol. 77, No. 3 (Jun., 1987), pp. 313-330 Published by: American Economic Association Stable URL: <http://www.jstor.org/stable/1804097> [Accessed: 04-07-2016] ( See also Francis Wilson, Minerals and Migrants: How the Mining Industry Has Shaped South Africa, Vol. 130, No. 1, Why South Africa Matters (Winter, 2001), pp. 99-121 Published by: The MIT Press on behalf of American Academy of Arts & Sciences Stable URL: <http://www.jstor.org/stable/20027681> [Accessed: 04-07-2016].

<sup>166</sup> Jonathan Crush, "Contract Migration to South Africa: Past, Present and Future". <http://www.capetowndiamondmuseum.org/about-diamonds/south-african-diamond-history/> [Accessed 17/08/2016].

Vawda concurs with Crush by stating that the documented relationship between Malawi and South Africa stretches back to the early mining of gold and diamonds. Regardless of the rigid migrant labour system many Yao found employment in other industries. Some of the Yao went to Durban which has a substantial Muslim population. In Durban, some Yao Muslims settled among the Zanzibari community. First they assimilated into the Zanzibari community at Kings Rest and later on in Clairwood and Chatsworth, formerly known to have been Indian townships. The intermingling between the Zanzibaris and Indians was permitted by those in power because the religion of Islam was contemplated as an ‘Indian’ religion.<sup>167</sup> Vawda further states that,

Since 1994, Malawians have been ‘free’ to visit South Africa as citizens of a SADC country. Under the guise of a visitor’s visa many Malawians came into the country to engage in short term contract work as target or oscillating migrants. Others, as the structural adjustment programmes dug deep into the Malawian economy, become economic transnational migrants remitting through material goods or money transfers back to Malawi either to invest in business ventures or to support their families. As one respondent put it: “The general reason why Malawians come here is because South Africa is rich ...One can make money here compared to other southern African countries ... It also has strong rules.”<sup>168</sup>

It was Muslim Yao men who got employed in the mines and other industries in South Africa. And it was Muslim Yao men from the Achisi, Amasaninga, and Amachinga clans who settled in South Africa.

### **Yao Clans and their dispersal in Southern Africa**

Due to relocation and settlement in new regions, the Yao are said to have been divided into more than ten sub-clans. As Yao clan groups settled in different parts outside their home cradle, they adopted the names of physical features especially of mountains.

Abdallah states that “We Yaos are of many different kinds, we are divided into tribes, though we are all Yaos. We all had the same origin, and we spread in every direction from the Yao country, some to the north, others to the South; that is how we came to differ somewhat, so as to form sub-tribes. And our speech to differ a little, though we are still very closely related.”<sup>169</sup>

The fragmentation of the tribe was due to migrations which were taking place in the course of their history. As different Yao clans set up home in other regions outside Yao Hill, they assumed the names of the physical features, especially of mountains found in Mozambique and Malawi. All the way from Yao Hill, the Yao moved apart, and ended up shaping different clans according to each family blood relation.

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<sup>167</sup> Shahid Vawda, “Identities, Livelihoods and Transnational Migration: Muslim Malawians in Durban, South Africa”, p. 67. <http://www.tandfonline.com/doi/pdf/10.1080/02582470902804464> [accessed 24/11/2015].

<sup>168</sup> Shahid Vawda, “Identities, Livelihoods and Transnational Migration: Muslim Malawians in Durban, South Africa”, p. 67. <http://www.tandfonline.com/doi/pdf/10.1080/02582470902804464> [accessed 24/11/2015].

<sup>169</sup> Yohanna Abdallah, *The Yaos*, p. 8.

Abdallah records more than ten Yao clans<sup>170</sup> which are as follows:

Name of Clan Group	Area of Settlement
Amasaninga	Settled in a hill called Lisaninga near the Lutwesi river” now in Mozambique
Amachinga	Went to live near Mandimba hills and called themselves Amachinga, so named from the word ‘Lichinga’ meaning ridge with a serrated outline. (The hill is now shared between Malawi and Mozambique in the northern east of Mangochi District).
Amalambo	Settled in the plain near Lisaninga (in Mozambique).
Wambemba	Settled near Mbemba hills who include the Unangu people (in Northern Mozambique).
Amakale	They went to live at Makale, the plateau extending from Mchisi hills including those who live near Lake Malawi (north east).
Amangochi	Settled at Mangochi hill <sup>171</sup> (now in the territory of Malawi).
Wamkula	Settled in the Mkula hills this can be seen from the neighbourhood of Mwembe standing conspicuously near the Ruvuma (Luuma) River on the way from Wela to Mwembe (north east Mozambique).
Wanjese	Inhabit the Njese hill (Mozambique).
ChingoliMbango	They crossed the Ruvuma River to dwell in the hills called Chingoli-mbango. These are the Wamwela who live near the Indian Ocean coast and their speech is mixed with Chindonde (in southern Tanzania)

<sup>170</sup> Yohanna Abdallah, *The Yaos*, pp. 9-10.

<sup>171</sup> See also Cole-King, *Mangochi, The Mountain the People and the Fort*, p. 2 who says “Mangochi is derived from the word *mgoji* meaning a ‘rope’.”

Achingoli	Others settled near Chingoli hills by the Lujenda River and are known as the Achingoli (in northern Mozambique).
Achisi	They became famous as smelters of iron and makers of iron work. They settled at Chisi Hill, near Nangao at Nyaswe. (Some settled in Namwera area of Mangochi District and others in Mandimba District area of northern Mozambique).
Achimkali	Mataka (rolling in the earth) gave rise to this clan. At Ngonde the people of NyambiMataka multiplied and gave rise to the Achimkali clan of Amasaninga. <sup>172</sup> (Northern Mozambique).
Chimatumba	The branch of the Amasaninga. These were Amachemba folk who belonged to the Chimatumba, they settled in southern Tanzania in Tunduru. <sup>173</sup>
AchinaMalweso	In Yaoland, the home of the clan called the AchinaMalweso whose chief was Kuchipile. <sup>174</sup> (Northern Mozambique).
Achingunda	The sixth Mataka, Kumachemba (CheSalanje) belonged to the clan of Achingunda. <sup>175</sup> (Northern Mozambique).
Achisyungule	The Achisyungule clan of the Amasaninga which produced CheNyambi to beomeMataka. The Achimkaliruled the whole Yao country, in the beginning and even unto this day. They are the royal clan of the Yao people. <sup>176</sup> (Northern Mozambique).

Historians suggest that only four of the ten Yao clans entered Malawi. Mitchell, in *The Yao Village*, provides the following list which concurs with Abdallah's *The Yaos*:

<sup>172</sup> Yohannah Abdallah, *The Yaos*, p. 50.

<sup>173</sup> Yohannah Abdallah, *The Yaos*, p. 38.

<sup>174</sup> Yohannah Abdallah, *The Yaos*, p. 50.

<sup>175</sup> Yohannah Abdallah, *The Yaos*, p. 60.

<sup>176</sup> Yohannah Abdallah, *The Yaos*, p. 60.

The *Achisi Yao*, who settled at Mchisi represented in Nyasaland (Malawi) by people under Native Authority (Traditional Authority) Katuli in Fort Johnston (Mangochi) district. The 1945 Census showed that there were 12,187 Yao under this chief, that is, 4.3 percent of the total Yao population of British Nyasaland. However, not all Yao under Katuli are Chisi Yao;

1. The *Amasanninga Yao* represented in British Nyasaland by the people under native Authority Makanjira, and they are roughly five percent of the total Yao of the territory. Makanjira (II Mazombwe<sup>177</sup>) himself is thought be of Nyanja origin. His followers comprised a mix of Amasanninga Yao and Nyanja.
2. The *Amangoche Yao* constitute about half of the Yao population of Malawi. During the early part of the nineteenth century, while this group was at MANGOCH Mountain, it was attacked by the Amachinga Yao and scattered in all directions. Most of the people migrated southwards and settled in the Shire Highlands, where Mlumbe, Chikowi, Kapeni, Matipwiri and other representatives are found in the contemporary period.
3. The *Amachinga Yao* moved from their traditional base at Mandimba on the Lujenda River in Mozambique following attacks from the Lomwe inhabitants in the east. War and famines forced people to migrate. Present day representatives of this group are based in the Fort Johnston [Mangochi] and Zomba districts.<sup>178</sup>

Four Yao clans are documented to have penetrated Malawi and embraced Islam in large numbers. The Achisi, Amasanninga, and Amachinga Yao are predominantly Muslim while the Amangochi Yao are predominantly Christian found in Zomba, Mulanje and Blantyre. Representatives of these four clans are now to be found in many countries of southern Africa, including South Africa.

In times past it was mainly men who migrated but over the past few decades many women have also immigrated to South Africa. The women interviewed for this study originate from the said Yao clans which have a long history of migration. Post-apartheid Yao migrants to South Africa are mainly from the Mangochi, Machinga, Achisi, and AmasanningaYaos.

The movement of the Yao to Malawi was a gradual process that began in the eighteenth century. Northern Malawi was the first area in which the Yao settled in 1780 for commercial purposes, though there was large-scale settlement from the 1860s in southern Malawi, especially the Mangochi and Machinga.<sup>179</sup>

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<sup>177</sup> Samuel Josiah Ntara, *The History of the Chewa* (Wiesbaden: Franz Steiner Vwerlag GMBH, 1973), p. 146.

<sup>178</sup> J. Clyde Mitchell, *The Yao Village* (Manchester University Press, 1956), pp.24-25.

<sup>179</sup> S. S. Murray, *A Handbook of Nyasaland* (Zomba: The Government Printer, 1922), p. 45.

## CHAPTER THREE

### Reasons for Migration

As noted in chapters one and two, the first recorded Yao Muslims in South Africa were the people known as Zanzibaris. They are called *Amazizimbani* by the Indigenous people in Durban. The Zanzibaris arrived in the 1870s and subsequently Yao migrants went to work on the mines in Kimberley and the Witwatersrand. The next waves of migrants were those Yao who came to South Africa during the apartheid period. The third waves were those Yao who came during the post-apartheid era. Through all these movements, the Yao kept on intermingling with earlier Yao groups settled in South Africa. This made their assimilation into the South African society easier.

There are a number of reasons why people migrate which include “**economic migration** - moving to find work or follow a particular career path; **social migration** - moving somewhere for a better quality of life or to be closer to family or friends; **political migration** - moving to escape political persecution or war; **environmental** causes of migration include natural disasters such as flooding.”<sup>180</sup>

Nevertheless, the movement of human beings within and across national boundaries has been a long-lasting part of human history. The more general rise of women migration in many parts of the world is being experienced in modern times. Tienda et al. state that the distribution of female migrants in Africa has built up steadily and swiftly than at the world level.<sup>181</sup> It has also been found that,

In Africa, widespread poverty, disease, land degradation and high male unemployment that pushes women to take on the responsibility of providing family income are all contributing to a steady increase in female migration, and at a faster rate than the global average...Most African women migrate within the region, but they are also moving to North America and Europe...<sup>182</sup>

In this context, the migration of women all the time has been a significant part of international migration.<sup>183</sup>

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<sup>180</sup> “Why people migrate?”[http://www.bbc.co.uk/schools/gcsebitesize/geography/migration/migration\\_trends\\_rev2.shtml](http://www.bbc.co.uk/schools/gcsebitesize/geography/migration/migration_trends_rev2.shtml) [Accessed 13/12/2016].

<sup>181</sup> Marta Tienda et al. *Africa on the Move: African Migration and Urbanisation in Comparative Perspective* (Johannesburg: Wits University Press, 2006), p.31.

<sup>182</sup> The Caritas Foundation, “The Female Face of Migration”, Background paper, p.4. <http://www.caritas.org/includes/pdf/backgroundmigration.pdf> [Accessed 19/ 07/ 2016].

<sup>183</sup> “Women and International Migration”, Division for the Advancement of Women Department of Economic and Social Affairs United Nations The World Survey on the Role of Women in Development, p. 27.

Women are now migrating independently in search of jobs, rather than as —family dependents travelling with their husbands or joining them abroad.<sup>184</sup> They are increasingly migrating as the leading economic providers, or “breadwinners” for their households.

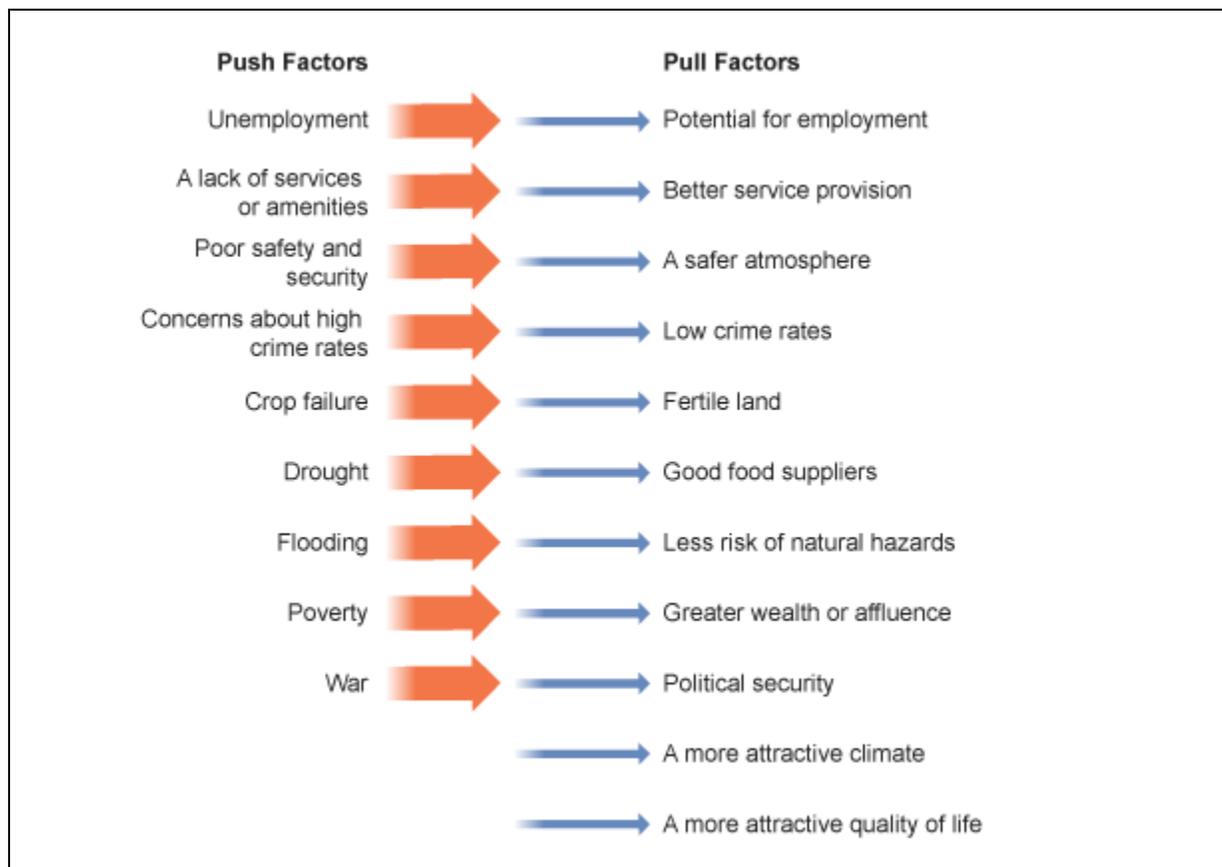


Table 2: Push Factors and Pull Factors<sup>185</sup>

Muslim Yao women have been migrating to South Africa in the post-Apartheid period for a number of reasons as it will be discussed below. Some factors which are contributing to the migration of Muslim Yao women to South Africa as it will be observed later include economic push forces such as high unemployment, economic decline, and underdevelopment in Malawi,

[http://www.un.org/en/development/desa/population/migration/events/coordination/3/docs/P01\\_DAW.pdf](http://www.un.org/en/development/desa/population/migration/events/coordination/3/docs/P01_DAW.pdf) [Accessed 19/ 07/2016].

<sup>184</sup> The Caritas Foundation, “The Female Face of Migration”, Background paper, p. 2. <http://www.caritas.org/includes/pdf/backgroundmigration.pdf> [Accessed 19/ 07/ 2016]

<sup>185</sup> “Why do people Migrate?” [http://www.bbc.co.uk/schools/gcsebitesize/geography/migration/migration\\_trends\\_rev2.shtml](http://www.bbc.co.uk/schools/gcsebitesize/geography/migration/migration_trends_rev2.shtml) [Accessed 13/12/2016].

while pull forces include employment opportunities, search for better livelihood, prosperity and development in South Africa.

### **Push and Pull Factors that Influenced Muslim Yao woman to migrate to South Africa**

As already noted above, there are many factors that motivate people to migrate to new destinations. In Africa socio-economic, environmental (climate change) and political factors play an important role in shaping and defining migratory decisions. These factors also known as “push” and “pull” factors influenced Muslim Yao women’s decisions to migrate to South Africa, particularly post-1994.

#### **Economic Factors**

Interviews conducted with women in this study provide some interesting insights for their reasons for migration. Firstly, Malawi’s declining economy has forced many women to seek a better life elsewhere. The impoverishment of rural Malawi has forced some to migrate to urban areas of the country, such as Lilongwe, Mzuzu, Zomba, Blantyre, and even to South African cities.

Reports in September 2016 which appeared in Nyasatimes indicate that “Malawi has been on a downward spiral characterised by high inflation which stood at 23% and an unemployment rate which has left many school leaving people jobless.”<sup>186</sup> The report further says that “More Malawians continue to trek to South Africa, most of them running away from the continued stunting of the economy, amid reports the authorities in the rainbow nation are throwing the economic migrants into detention centres.”<sup>187</sup> “...Most of Malawians go to South Africa using unchartered roads, unorthodox means of transport and without travel documents...”<sup>188</sup>

Women are moving to South Africa fleeing from the declining economy, impoverishment, and high unemployment rate in the country. These factors force Muslim Yao women to emigrate from Malawi without valid documents. The issue of illegal migration (travelling without visas)

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<sup>186</sup> Nyasatimes Reporter, “More Malawians continue to trek to South Africa for economic reasons as others remain detained, September 26, 2016, <http://www.nyasatimes.com/malawians-continue-trek-south-africa-economic-reasons-others-remain-detained/onomic-reasons-others-remain-detained/#sthash.m9yO7aBW.dpuf> [Accessed 27/06/2016].

<sup>187</sup> Nyasatimes Reporter, “More Malawians continue to trek to South Africa for economic reasons as others remain detained, September 26, 2016, <http://www.nyasatimes.com/malawians-continue-trek-south-africa-economic-reasons-others-remain-detained/onomic-reasons-others-remain-detained/#sthash.m9yO7aBW.dpuf> [Accessed 27/06/2016].

<sup>188</sup> Owen Khamula, “Envoy tells Mutharika to tame illegal immigrants to South Africa”, 10 Feb 2017 <http://www.nyasatimes.com/envoy-tells-mutharika-tame-illegal-immigrants-south-africa-malawi-sign-mou-sa-migration-economic-development/> [Accessed 07/03/2017].

for Muslim Yao women deciding to leave Malawi is an important factor influencing a woman's choice to emigrate from Malawi or to delay her emigration from her home country.

Economic deterioration in Malawi is pushing young and old women out of the country. The report by Villages in Partnership, a non-governmental organization from Allentown, New Jersey in United States of America states that,

By any account, Malawi, in Africa is one of the most impoverished countries in the world—considered by some to be the fourth poorest nation. The problems the people of Malawi face are complex, multi-faceted and inter connected. The statistics are staggering and difficult for those of us who live in countries from the other end of the spectrum to even fathom: A population of 17 million people, 1 million orphans, 4th poorest country in world, Average person earns less than \$1 a day, 70% unemployment, 85% live as subsistence farmers, Average life expectancy is 38, 14% of population infected with HIV/AIDS. Behind those statistics are real people, suffering from the effects of extreme poverty...<sup>189</sup>

The United Nations also reports that,

The Malawi government faces challenges in building and expanding the economy, improving education, health care, environmental protection, and becoming financially independent. According to the Human Development Report of 2013, Malawi's Human Development Index (HDI) is 0.418 which ranks the country at 170 out of 187 countries. Although Malawi has improved the welfare of its citizens, the country still faces a number of challenges including: insufficient energy generation and supply; high transportation costs; inadequate skilled human resource; inadequate financial resources; narrow export base; inadequate diversification; high illiteracy levels; high population growth; over dependence on rain-fed agriculture and HIV and AIDS pandemic.<sup>190</sup>

Moreover the political situation in Malawi further exacerbated its economic woes post 1994. Since the 1994 political dispensation, when the country voted for multiparty democracy the currency (Malawi Kwacha) has not been stable. The devaluation and flotation of the Kwacha has seen many commodities being hiked. Unemployed and single mothers fail to buy necessities which makes their lives difficult. Children with malnutrition are a common occurrence in the rural and sometimes in urban areas. They are suffering from the effects of extreme poverty caused by a myriad of factors,

..Many of these are constraints on the economic productivity of land, labour, capital, and technology. Constraints on the productivity of land include rapid environmental degradation and limited or inadequate access to land. Constraints on labour include generally low levels of education, poor health status, lack of or limited off-farm employment, and rapid population growth. The key constraint on capital is lack of access to credit. All of these factors causing poverty are exacerbated by generally weak institutional capacity within the country...The Southern Region has the highest proportion of poor households compared to the other two regions in the country...<sup>191</sup>

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<sup>189</sup>“Poverty in Malawi” <https://villagesinpartnership.org/poverty/> [Accessed 13/12/2016].

<sup>190</sup> “About Malawi” <http://www.mw.undp.org/content/malawi/en/home/countryinfo.html> [Accessed 13/12/2016].

<sup>191</sup> Chapter 2: “Poverty Analysis and Profile- SARP”,

<http://www.sarpn.org/CountryPovertyPapers/Malawi/PRSPDraft3/chapter2.pdf> [accessed 24/11/2015].

The Muslim Yao women come from the southern region of Malawi which is noted to have a substantial number of poor households compared to central and northern regions of Malawi. Shortage of land in country is a problem. It is not only southern region of Malawi which is facing this problem, rather the entire country. Villagers struggle to acquire land for growing crops due to the high rate of population. Hajeera Bwanali, a 35 year old mother of two children who came to South Africa in 2010 provides the socio-economic context for Yao women leaving Malawi,

Where can you grow crops if you do not have land? Malawians depend upon land to grow crops for food and sale. Poverty strikes those families who do not own a portion of land to farm. We are migrating to this country in order to run away from many hardships in our country.<sup>192</sup>

Loveness Nseula, a 45 year old mother of three children who comes from Blantyre outlines the plight of single mothers,

a number of mothers in southern region of Malawi are single. It is hard to raise children alone. Single household families face many challenges in our country. They are always poor and in some cases their children are undernourished. A substantial number of women whom you see in Durban are escaping from those predicaments. They came to work in South Africa in order to send money to their children back home.<sup>193</sup>

Some Muslim Yao women came to South Africa after seeing how their friends had built good houses in the villages. Namalaka village in Makanjila is a good example of how South Africa has changed the lives of many Malawians in the rural areas. People at Namalaka village are building better houses than before. This is the place in southern Malawi where one can find many houses with corrugated iron sheets. The money to buy corrugated iron sheets come from men and women working in South Africa. These days it is hard to find grass thatched houses at Namalaka.

Asausyeje, a 45 year old widow who came to Durban in 2000 identifies her reasons for immigrating to South Africa,

I came to South Africa due to peer pressure. I admired how my close friends prospered after spending some years in South Africa. I want to accumulate some cash which will be used to build a better house in my village. No one in my family has a good house, all live in depilated buildings. South Africa is the only country which has been developing Malawi in modern times. It has been boosting the economy of Malawi in these years. Previously countries such as Zambia and Zimbabwe were the magnet of Malawian migrants, but their economies shrunk since 1990s.<sup>194</sup>

Others come to South Africa for business reasons. For example, Abiti Adam, a 45 year old single woman came to South Africa in 2010 to sell Malawian products. She is experienced in supplying agricultural products such as peanuts, brown beans, fish, and rice,

I have been selling *Kirombero* rice which is grown in Karonga in northern Malawi. This type of rice is only found in Malawi and it smells nicely. I have a number of customers in South Africa, especially Indians and Malawians. I also bring Malawian peanuts which are different from South African groundnuts. South African peanuts are very small comparing with Malawian groundnuts. I

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<sup>192</sup> Interview with Hajeera Bwanali (Pinetown, 11 September, 2016).

<sup>193</sup> Interview with Loveness Nseula (Pinetown, 11 September, 2016).

<sup>194</sup> Interview with Asausyeje (Overport, 2 September, 2016).

have also customers who place orders for Malawian brown beans which are different from South African brown beans.<sup>195</sup>

She states that the demand for Malawian products in South Africa influenced her decision to migrate.

## Political Factors

Since Malawi attained independence in 1964, it has never experienced war. Malawians are not moving to escape political persecution or war; rather bad politics in the country is playing a role in displacing people. People are migrating to different regions due to unsatisfactory politics prevalent in Malawi. Poor political governance prevails these days in Malawi. Between 2009 and 2016, Malawi has seen nepotism shooting to high levels. The government favours one ethnic group in southern region of the country. Job opportunities in government are provided for the Lomwe people because the president is from that tribe. For example, “There is a general perception in the country that since 2014 when Mutharika was elected as President, a number of appointments to public office have unfortunately been tainted with nepotism and regionalism.”<sup>196</sup>

Farida Mtengula, a 45 year old mother of three children who came in South Africa in 2010 says, “Everyone knows this trend of politics in our country. It breeds tribalism and discrimination amongst the citizens”.<sup>197</sup>

Maladministration, corruption, nepotism, and misuse of funds have hindered economic growth and social development programmes. For example, international donor communities have reduced their aid to Malawi since 2011. Dependence syndrome is a stumbling block to the country’s development. The dependence of the Malawian government on the donor communities to sustain its annual budget contributed to fluctuation of the Malawi kwacha. In 2011 the government of the United Kingdom withheld almost £19m of aid to Malawi because of failures in economic management in the country. The World Bank, the European Union, African Development Bank, Germany and Norway, amongst others, all suspended or ended financial aid to the country for this very reason.

The following table reflects Malawi’s progress in each of the UN Human Development Index between 1980 and 2012:

	<b>Life expectancy</b>	<b>Expected years of</b>	<b>Mean years of schooling</b>	<b>(2005 PPP\$) GNI per</b>	<b>HDI value</b>

<sup>195</sup> Interview with Abiti Adam (Sydenham, 4 September, 2016).

<sup>196</sup> Wanga Gwede, “Nepotism in Mutharika’s govt, the worst in Malawi’s history: Catholic bishop speaks out”, Sep 1, 2016, <http://www.nyasatimes.com/nepotism-mutharikas-govt-worst-malawis-history-catholic-bishop-speaks/> [Accessed 01/09/2016].

<sup>197</sup> Interview with Falida Mtengula (Pinetown, 11 September, 2016).

	<b>at birth</b>	<b>schooling</b>		<b>capita</b>	
1980	44.4	4.8	1.8	0,628	0,272
1985	46.1	4.6	2.1	0,617	0,283
1990	47.1	5.2	2.5	0,554	0,295
1995	46.7	7.5	2.7	0,602	0,322
2000	46	11	3	0,654	0,352
2005	49	9.7	3.4	0,640	0,363
2010	53.5	10.4	4.2	0,775	0,413
2011	54.2	10.4	4.2	0,763	0,415
2012	54.8	10.4	4.2	0,774	0,418

*Table 3: the UN Human Development Index between 1980 and 2012<sup>198</sup>*

Andrew Mitchell, then UK international development secretary, stated in 2011 that the UK provided development assistance in order to help communities “lift themselves out of grinding poverty, whether that's through getting children into school, ensuring women survive childbirth or helping farmers grow enough food to feed their families and communities, but poor people in Malawi and British taxpayers alike have been let down.”<sup>199</sup> Mitchell further says “Funds allocated for social engineering projects for the poor were channeled for other purposes. The government imposed VAT on basic items like salt, flour, cooking oil, bread and milk, and increased taxes. Moreover, government cabinet ministers were allocated luxury cars (Mercedes and 4x4 vehicles) and the country’s president had his own personal jet.”<sup>200</sup>

This misuse of funds forced many donor countries in 2011 to cut back their aid to Malawi. Germany, Norway, Britain, and International Organizations such as the European Union, World Bank and the African Development Bank cut financial aid. It is this grinding poverty and the government’s measure to sustain its budget by taxing the poor in various ways that is challenging ordinary Malawians of which underlies the decision of some of Muslim Yao women to emigrate.

Between 2011 and 2015 Malawi has not received any promising aid to sustain its budget. Foreign aid agencies cut off their support when the former president Dr. Bingu Wa Muthalika’s

<sup>198</sup> Malawi- Human Development. Reports, [http://int.search.tb.ask.com/search/GGmain.jhtml?searchfor=Un+human+development+index-malawi&tpr=hpsb&p2=Y6^xdm010^YYA^za&n=781c0822&st=hp&ptb=EB6819BD-F3AE-44A6-8AAF-D88B77F1D2E2&q=si=CLCekM\\_d6cgCFWXnwgodqOgO2Q&ts=1448358508312](http://int.search.tb.ask.com/search/GGmain.jhtml?searchfor=Un+human+development+index-malawi&tpr=hpsb&p2=Y6^xdm010^YYA^za&n=781c0822&st=hp&ptb=EB6819BD-F3AE-44A6-8AAF-D88B77F1D2E2&q=si=CLCekM_d6cgCFWXnwgodqOgO2Q&ts=1448358508312) [accessed 24/11/2015].

<sup>199</sup> “Britain suspends aid to Malawi”- the Guardian Jul 14, 2011, Malawi’s President, Bingu wa Mutharika. Britain has suspended part of its budget to his government, [www.google.co.za/webhp?sourceid=chrome-instant&ion=1&espv=2&ie=UTF-8#q=the%20guardian%20britainsuspendsaid%20to%20malawi](http://www.google.co.za/webhp?sourceid=chrome-instant&ion=1&espv=2&ie=UTF-8#q=the%20guardian%20britainsuspendsaid%20to%20malawi) [accessed 24/11/2015].

<sup>200</sup> <sup>200</sup> “Britain suspends aid to Malawi”- the Guardian Jul 14, 2011, Malawi’s President, Bingu wa Mutharika. Britain has suspended part of its budget to his government, [www.google.co.za/webhp?sourceid=chrome-instant&ion=1&espv=2&ie=UTF-8#q=the%20guardian%20britainsuspendsaid%20to%20malawi](http://www.google.co.za/webhp?sourceid=chrome-instant&ion=1&espv=2&ie=UTF-8#q=the%20guardian%20britainsuspendsaid%20to%20malawi) [accessed 24/11/2015].

administration was accused of abusing of funds on the part of the government when it enlarged the cabinet which comprised forty members, each of whom had his or her own Mercedes, 4x4 vehicle and the country's president had his own jet.<sup>201</sup>

It is a fact that donor withdrawal of budgetary support obviously cripples the government of Malawi's ability to manage the needs of the country. 40% of the country's budget comes from foreign support. When the aid is reduced/ withheld there are many implications which people experience. For example, the currency of the country becomes unstable. Business persons hike their commodities. Many hospitals in the country face a shortage of drugs. The government fails to buy medicine. Civil servants also experience pay-day delays as the government is short on cash.

Since 2011 the government of Malawi has been struggling to sustain its annual budget. Local foreign currency has been paralysed which aggravated or worsened Malawi's economic deterioration, and forthwith affected people in need. The solution to this situation was for the people to migrate. With this background, Muslim Yao leave the country and migrate to South Africa in search of a better life or to be closer to family or friends. In return they send remittances which help to sustain the economy of the country. The local foreign currency in Malawi is being influenced by the South African Rand through remittances transferred by women migrants.

## **Socio-Cultural Factors**

Another, often unnoticed push factor is the high rate of divorce in Malawi over the past decades. Divorced women wanting to be independent and have authority in their own right are seeking employment in South Africa. According to Emery, "Malawi has one of the highest divorce rates in Africa...divorce is especially high in several districts in the south of the country. In Balaka, for example, two-thirds of all first marriages end in divorce. More so in Malawi's other regions, men from the relatively poor South Region spend extended time in cities which contributes to the fragility of unions..."<sup>202</sup>

The Southern Region in Malawi has a high rate of population, illiteracy, and divorce. All these factors contribute to "...the highest proportion of poor households compared to the other two

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<sup>201</sup> <sup>201</sup> "Britain suspends aid to Malawi"- the Guardian Jul 14, 2011, Malawi's President, Bingu wa Mutharika. Britain has suspended part of its budget to his government, [www.google.co.za/webhp?sourceid=chrome-instant&ion=1&espv=2&ie=UTF-8#q=the%20guardian%20britainsuspendsaid%20to%20malawi](http://www.google.co.za/webhp?sourceid=chrome-instant&ion=1&espv=2&ie=UTF-8#q=the%20guardian%20britainsuspendsaid%20to%20malawi) [accessed 24/11/2015].

<sup>202</sup> "Robert E. Emery (ed.), "Cultural Sociology of Divorce: An Encyclopedia", p.739. [https://books.google.co.za/books?id=ix9zAwAAQBAJ&pg=PA739&lpg=PA739&dq=latest+divorce+rate+in+mali&source=bl&ots=wQ9PCsjJ1t&sig=N9dcIAqAH1hret2efNU4oio7E6g&hl=en&sa=X&ved=0ahUKEwid\\_sL6iabJAhUCwhoKHdHSAAnAQ6AEIwzAJ#v=onepage&q=lates](https://books.google.co.za/books?id=ix9zAwAAQBAJ&pg=PA739&lpg=PA739&dq=latest+divorce+rate+in+mali&source=bl&ots=wQ9PCsjJ1t&sig=N9dcIAqAH1hret2efNU4oio7E6g&hl=en&sa=X&ved=0ahUKEwid_sL6iabJAhUCwhoKHdHSAAnAQ6AEIwzAJ#v=onepage&q=lates) [accessed 23/11/2015].

regions in the country...”<sup>203</sup> Sheikh Muhammad Uthman, a marriage Counselor at the Muslim Association Of Malawi (MAM) is recorded to have said that “...high divorce rate among couples in southern African country was disturbing and that Muslim community valued the sanctity of marriage based on the teaching of the Holy Quran...Gender-based violence has been singled out as one of challenges fueling divorce in southern African country.”<sup>204</sup>

The socio-cultural status of women in Malawi has further influenced women to migrate. Malawi is a patriarchal society which has been slow to value the critical role that women play alongside men in the economy. Many tribes in Malawi are patriarchal apart from the Yao who are matrilineal.

Women have been kept in total subjugation in all patriarchal societies. Cultural and religious norms in terms of being subjected by patriarchal authority have influenced males to discriminate women in the process of migration. In some societies it has been a ‘natural law’ that females are subordinate to males and must capitulate to the latter’s dominance for a steady family life. It has been difficult for men to break out from espousing such a way of thinking or behaving. Many men in such societies have capitalized on the inferiority of women and laid down rules on migration or farming. It has been always men who have migrating to other regions while women are always left to grow crops. It is women who spend many hours growing crops. In those families a woman cannot be independent but helps the husband to grow crops.

Many women in Malawi are farmers and grow crops together with their husbands. After harvesting the crops they sell some and keep the remainder for the family’s use. The money realised from crop sales is used by the husband to apply for a passport and also to pay for a trip to South Africa on the understanding that the wife will follow. In this respect, patriarchal societies permit men and repudiate women the right to determine their future. They are denied the support that is required for women to migrate independently. On many occasions, in patriarchal societies wives are required to say yes to their husband’s migration decisions. They are left behind to take care for the children and must remain abstinent while conducting the daily running of domestic sphere.

Male centered migration has an impact on marriages. Consequently, women are left behind in the migration process which is one of the contributing factors of high divorce rate among couples in the Muslim community in Malawi.

Malawian men marry in South Africa while their wives suffer and strive to survive. These types of men do not even bother to send remittances back home in order to support their families. Women from these unstable families react by independently migrating to South Africa after divorcing their husbands in their absence. They pay back a certain portion of money which they

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<sup>203</sup> Chapter 2: “Poverty Analysis and Profile- SARP”,

<http://www.sarpn.org/CountryPovertyPapers/Malawi/PRSPDraft3/chapter2.pdf> [accessed 24/11/2015].

<sup>204</sup> “Xenophobia violence in democratic South Africa” /South African history Online, <http://www.sahistory.org.za/article/xenophobic-violence-democratic-south-africa> [accessed 23/11/2015].

call (*cheswela*). It is easy to get advice from their relatives regarding the issue of their unstable families. Sometimes women are advised by their uncles or brothers on matters of divorce. After paying back a certain portion of money Muslim Yao women embark on a long journey to South Africa in search of work and to escape social ostracism in Malawi. Most women are usually received by male relatives such as uncles, brothers, fathers, or cousins. It is this type of network that makes it easier for Malawian women to penetrate South Africa. It is relatively easy to trace relatives who are living far away from Malawi.

Social network is important in the migration process. In some cases Muslim Yao women use networks based on religious and ethnic identities. They migrate to Durban because the city has a number of Muslims and it is well known to many Malawians who have brothers, sisters, uncles, aunts, nieces, aunts, cousins and friends in South Africa. Hashima Habiba a 48 year old mother of three children who came to South Africa in late 1993 outlined how social networks assisted her during her initial arrival and settlement in South Africa,

My husband had promised me that once he got employment in South Africa he would call me. He was communicating with me on the daily basis. When time came to migrate to Durban, my husband provided transport money. It is now over two decades ago and I cannot remember precisely how much I paid for transport money. I think it was less than a thousand rand from Blantyre. These days I am told that it is more than a thousand rand from Blantyre to Johannesburg. All what you should know is that when we come in South Africa we have someone we know who came long time before us. In my case, I live with my husband who showed me the way to Durban others are staying with their relatives or friends. Malawians are connected in many ways. They are attached to each other through religion and customs.<sup>205</sup>

Maliyamu John, a 45 year old single mother of four children who came to South Africa in 2010 says that “she was shown the way to Durban by her uncle who came in 1990.”<sup>206</sup> After Maliyamu John had divorced her husband she was given some money by her uncle to apply for a passport. Once the passport had been issued by the authorities she connected with her relatives who were in South Africa. In this manner the relatives who are in South Africa send some transport money to their sisters, daughters, and nieces.

Social network plays a crucial role in the undertaking of migration to South Africa. Relatives and friends are connected in helping married or divorced women who want to come to South Africa.

In the Yao culture women are allowed to divorce a husband who has spent extended time in cities or abroad. These are well founded reasons for dissolution of a marriage. It is justifiable in the Yao custom to end a marriage with one’s husband in this manner. Also Islam allows a wife to divorce the husband if he is cruel. In modern terms this is called gender-based violence. The husband can also be divorced if he has gone for good and does not support the wife or he is impotent. Vahed explicitly states that dissolution of a marriage at the instigation of the wife can be permitted. This is sanctioned “...due to cruelty, ill-treatment or desertion by the husband and

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<sup>205</sup> Interview with Hashima Habiab (Marainhill, 12 September, 2016).

<sup>206</sup> Interview with Maliyamu John (11 September, 2016).

he refuses to amend his ways...Divorce where the husband is declared missing and his whereabouts are unknown...”<sup>207</sup>

Ajangale Mbaba a 45 year old single mother who came to South Africa in 2013 faced this predicament. She had no other option but to divorce her husband for he had gone to South Africa and never dared to return home. He forgot his family’s situation in Malawi. He could not remember that family was poor and they needed his support. As the years passed her husband married another woman in South Africa. He paid no attention to the needs of the family in Malawi and could no longer communicate with them. The family was indeed suffering and some of the wife’s relatives were not supportive and she ended up divorcing the husband. In the Yao culture when a woman divorces a man in his absence if he had gone permanently is known as *kupeleka cheswela*.

After the divorce Ajangale was free to travel to South Africa and find work. She was fortunate that her sister and sister’s husband were already in South Africa. They had come in the mid-1980s and were aware of her plight and provided her with transport money to get to Durban from Mangochi.

Ajangale points out that “this network of Malawians is pivotal in securing housing and work as some of them know potential employers, who are mainly Indian Muslims”.<sup>208</sup> According to Ajangale, her story is not an exception. Many men remarry in South Africa and fail to return home. The wives feel abandoned and regard the husbands as “dead people” (*machona*).<sup>209</sup> The people at home categorise them as dysfunctional or no more. Literally the term *mchona* refers to a person who forgot his country and does not want to return home.

These days some women are of the view that it is the right of a divorced woman or widow to migrate and seek employment in any country. Che Ngonji a 48 year old widow who came to South Africa in 2000 says that “there are no jobs available in Malawi.”<sup>210</sup> Enifa Nyasa a 40 year old married woman with four children who came to South Africa in 2008 adds that,

it is only South Africa which is the hub of an African economy. We cannot go to Europe these days; they have strict immigration laws which hinder many Africans to penetrate that continent. We pray that God must continue blessing South Africa. Without South Africa, Malawi will economically be nothing. Many people in Malawi buy goods from South Africa. Others sell agricultural products such as brown beans, rice, fish, and peanuts at the flea markets and along the streets of Durban.<sup>211</sup>

Through social networks some divorced Muslim Yao are connected with their friends where they sell Malawian products. These are the women who were pushed out of Malawi because of socio-cultural factors. They wanted to empower themselves by migrating to South Africa and open up

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<sup>207</sup> Muhammad Vahed, *Islamic Family Law* (Durban: Regent Business School, 2012), p.60.

<sup>208</sup> Interview with Ajangale Mbaba (Overport. 20 September, 2016).

<sup>209</sup> *Mchona* is a singular word which is a borrowed from isiZulu (*ukushona*- to die).

<sup>210</sup> Interview with Che Ngoni (Newlands West, 10 September, 2016).

<sup>211</sup> Interview with Enifa Nyasa (Pinetown 11 September, 2016).

a small scale business. They are experienced in supplying agricultural products such as peanuts, brown beans, fish, and rice (*kilombera*). This type of rice is only found in Malawi and it smells fragrantly. They also bring Malawian peanuts which are different from South African ones. South African peanuts are very small compared with Malawian groundnuts. “Malawian customers in Durban place order for brown beans (*mbwanda*), fish (*usipa*), peanuts (*mtesa*) which are different from South African ones.”<sup>212</sup> They also like to eat dried tilapia (*makumba*) and mudfish (*makambale*).



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<sup>212</sup> Interview with Abiti Adam (Sydenham, 4 September, 2016).



*Figures 7 and 8: Sample pictures of Malawian agricultural products such as brown beans (mbwanda), rice (kilombera), fish (usipa), and peanuts (mtesa) sold at the flea markets and along the streets of Durban.*



*Figure 9: A Malawian woman dressed in a blue artful piece of cloth known as chitenje. She is selling agricultural products: brown beans, rice, fish, and peanuts along one of the streets of Durban.*

Some Muslim Yao women do not take chances of divorcing their husbands who have overstayed in South Africa, instead of splitting with them they opt to follow them. Women, such as Ajangale's sister Asiya stated that "I came here when my husband called me. I did follow my husband who came in the early 1990s."<sup>213</sup> These women do follow their husbands to South Africa. Habiba Ashima, a 48 year old women stated, that she followed her husband who has been working at the *Masjid* (mosque).<sup>214</sup> According to Habiba, "There were few black Muslims from South Africa who could work at the mosque. Malawians with an Islamic background could be employed by Indian Muslims to work at different mosques. South Africa is not far from home and it is easy to come here than one going to Europe".<sup>215</sup>

A number of Muslim Yao women follow their husbands in Durban. In the case of Habiba, it was her husband who made a decision for her to come to South Africa and it took almost one and half years to plan her trip as it was very hard to get a passport in those days. When she arrived in Durban she was greeted by Indian Muslims. She met Indian Muslims before the Zulus. She recalls that the Zulus treated her differently because of the way she was dressed. They regarded her as being half Indians who belonged to the religion of Indians. These days things are changing as a number of South Africans do understand that Islam is a religion for all races.

### **Environmental Factors (drought)**

Aisha, a 40 year old widow left Malawi after she experienced the 2014 crop failure. The drought which has recently affected southern African countries has also contributed to an influx of migrants to South Africa. Maize is the staple food of Malawians. White maize which is grown by subsistence farmers is used mainly for human consumption. If there is poor production of maize in the family then there is no food security at all. The family will need more money to buy the product from other farmers. The prices of maize are hiked by farmers who had a bumper harvest the previous year. When maize is scarce some farmers and scrupulous merchants hike the prices of maize in order to make more money. It is always difficult for unemployed persons to buy maize from merchants.

Aisha states that,

the hardships and uncertainties faced by our family throughout 2012 and 2013 continued to 2014. This prompted me to leave my village and migrate to South Africa to seek employment so that I can manage to keep some money and send back home. Since I came to Durban I have been sending some money. I am supporting my old mother who is taking care of my four children. The

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<sup>213</sup> Interview with Asiya Mwamadi (Lindelani, 26 September, 2016).

<sup>214</sup> Interview with Habiba Ashima (Marianhill, 12 September, 2016).

<sup>215</sup> Interview with Habiba Ashima (Marianhill, 12 September, 2016).

father of my children died four years ago. It is my responsibility to take care of my children. They need love and support.<sup>216</sup>

However, when these desperate women arrive in South Africa, they encounter a number of problems such as receiving low wages. They also face abuse, in some instances violent attacks from some indigenous people who claim that they are taking away their jobs and houses. Sometimes employers abuse Muslim Yao women by forcing them to work till odd hours.

As it will be observed later, there are a number of challenges which confront Malawian women migrants. These include crime, lack of education opportunities, and scarcity of jobs, police harassment, inadequate healthcare, exacerbating inequality, spiritual disorientation, housing, and different cultural traditions. These women prefer to live in an area surrounded with a culture which is similar to the one they know. In this case, Durban with its Islamic influence has a pulling factor for many Malawian Yao women as will be observed later.

Malawian women located within the greater Durban and the surrounding areas such as Overport, Sydenham, Clare Estate, Parlock, Newlands West, Lindelani, Ispingo, Mawelewele, Marianhill, Reservoir Hills, Savannah Park, Pinetown, Chatsworth, and Malukazi stated that they are not migrating to South Africa because of armed conflicts or political turmoil; rather they are driven by factors such as poverty, socio-cultural factors and economic hardship. They are leaving their country in order to find a better quality of life. South Africa is perceived as a country which provides better jobs and it has more jobs. They migrate to seek better wages and working conditions than they had in Malawi. They are driven to seek employment (economic migration).

### **Why do Muslim Yao Women choose Durban?**

Muslim Yao women are attracted by Durban's racial, religious and cultural diversity and in particular Durban's large Muslim population. Vahed states in this regard:

Durban is the most cosmopolitan city in South Africa in racial and cultural terms...Muslims are far more conspicuous and have a much more public profile than their number suggest. This is partly due to the fact that large mosques dominate the skyline of every major South African city, while men adorning traditional Arab dress and Muslim women in *hijab* (veil) are found everywhere.<sup>217</sup>

Durban is the preferred choice of destination/migration by Muslim Yao women because of the strong and visible presence of Islam. Writing in 2000, Vahed stated that there were 79,630 Indian Muslims in the Greater Durban area. In addition, there were 3117 African Muslims, 3497 Malay Muslims and 269 white Muslims in Durban.<sup>218</sup> By 2016 the above figures have either doubled or

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<sup>216</sup> Interview with Aisha (Clare Estate, 5 September, 2016).

<sup>217</sup> Goolam Vahed, Changing Islamic Traditions and Emerging Identities in South Africa, *Journal of Muslim Minority Affairs*, Vol. 20, No. 1, 2000, p.44.

<sup>218</sup> Goolam Vahed, Changing Islamic Traditions and Emerging Identities in South Africa, *Journal of Muslim Minority Affairs*, Vol. 20, No. 1, 2000, p.44.

tripled. The Brics report indicates that Durban has a total population of 3,468,086. Out of that figure Muslims constitute only 3%.<sup>219</sup> While SA statistics, 2012 under 2.3.12 Population by religion and population demonstrate that there are 654,064 Muslims in South Africa.<sup>220</sup> Migrant Muslims from different regions of the world flock to Durban which makes it the most cosmopolitan city in Africa in racial and culture terms.<sup>221</sup> In addition, Durban is experiencing an increasing number of women who are fully veiled.<sup>222</sup> Apart from the veil, women are also more prominent participants in public worship. In the past years it was hard to see a woman attending mosques.<sup>223</sup> Muslim Yao women like Durban because of the availability of many *halaal* outlets (the preparation of food which is eaten according to Muslim law). There is an increased emphasis on consuming *halaal* foods in this city.<sup>224</sup>

Durban has also stronger economy/economic opportunities as a substantial number of Indians often run a significant portion of the local economy. They own either shops or factories which employ foreign nationals. Malawians work in Durban as shop attendants, waiters, tailors, housemaids, and drivers. On the other hand, it is hard to get employment in Durban due to a large influx of black Africans from the East and West Africa. Indigenous people and foreign nationals are competing for the menial jobs available at their disposal.

Durban has also a good market for Malawian products. Foreign nationals and Indians like products from Malawi such as rice (*kilombera*), peanuts, and brown beans. One will find the said products in the shops along Berta Mkhize Street (Victoria Street).

It will be understood that religious identity is a pulling factor which attracts Muslim Yao women to concentrate themselves in Durban and the surrounding areas. These women come to South Africa every year in search of a better life as South Africa is a large economy in Southern Africa. South Africa has been the largest economy not only in southern Africa rather the whole continent till 2014 when “Nigeria’s rebasing saw it overtake South Africa as the continent’s biggest economy...”<sup>225</sup>

Although Nigeria is now the continent’s biggest economy, South Africa is still an attraction for many African migrants. Some African and European countries are promulgating rigid laws against immigrants; creating unbearable barriers and baffle zones in order to curb an influx of

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<sup>219</sup> “About Durban”, <http://brics5.co.za/durban/about-durban/> [Accessed 13/12/2016].

<sup>220</sup> “South Africa Statistics, 2012”, [www.statssa.gov.za/publications/SASStatistics/SASStatistics2012](http://www.statssa.gov.za/publications/SASStatistics/SASStatistics2012) [Accessed 13/12/2016].

<sup>221</sup> Goolam Vahed, Changing Islamic Traditions and Emerging Identities in South Africa, *Journal of Muslim Minority Affairs*, Vol. 20, No. 1, 2000, p.44.

<sup>222</sup> Goolam Vahed, Changing Islamic Traditions and Emerging Identities in South Africa, p. 50.

<sup>223</sup> Goolam Vahed, Changing Islamic Traditions and Emerging Identities in South Africa, p.51.

<sup>224</sup> Goolam Vahed, Changing Islamic Traditions and Emerging Identities in South Africa, p. 51.

<sup>225</sup> Staff Writer, “Africa’s 10 biggest economies”- Business Tech, October 6, 2014, <http://businesstech.co.za/news/general/70237/africas-10-biggest-economies/>. [Accessed 23/11/2015].

migrants, "...South Africa finds that it is still a largely involuntary magnet for economic migrants from many parts of Africa when it is trying to cope with unemployment of its own..."<sup>226</sup>

- Many Muslim Yao women believe that it is their right to migrate to South Africa. The relation between Malawi and South Africa has a long history. For example, Capital Hill in Lilongwe, the government administration centre was built by the South African government in the 1970s when Dr. Kamuzu Banda was the president of the country. South Africa has been the recipient of labour migrants from Malawi for many years.

Sigele who came to South Africa in 2010 is of the view that "South Africa is Malawi's economic backbone. The remittances sent to our families help to alleviate poverty in our village. What we send back home in form of remittances is developing rural areas".<sup>227</sup> Richard H. Adams Jr. and John Page concur with Sigele by stating that "...both international migration and remittances significantly reduce the level, depth, and severity of poverty in the developing world..."<sup>228</sup> In this way, Muslim Yao women's remittances have become a major source of income in Malawi. A good number of women in Durban send money to their parents, children and relatives.

Durban is the preferred choice of destination because of its political and economic stability. They cannot go to Zimbabwe to work. The economy in that country is poor because of political upheavals. In the past fathers of the Yao used to go to Zimbabwe to work in the mines and farms. However, the economy of Zimbabwe has been deteriorating since the 1990s.

In modern times Zimbabwe is also a major exporter of migrant labour to South Africa just like Malawi. Malawian women would rather go to Durban than wasting time seeking employment in Zimbabwe. Muslim Yao women's favourite destination is Durban. When they arrive in Durban, they do not feel lost. Their lives become easier due to an Islamic environment which is prevalent here. They can dress in Islamic attire and also put on *chitenje*.<sup>229</sup> Sigele observes that "when they are faced with problems they can go to ask assistance from Muslim organisations or burial societies. Durban has a large number of mosques and Islamic centers. All these factors make our life easier in Durban comparing to other cities."<sup>230</sup> They collectively assist in making Durban a preferred site of destination Muslim Yao migrants.

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<sup>226</sup> Guy Anorld, *Migration: Changing the World*, p. 184.

<sup>227</sup> Interview with Sigele (Pinetown, 11 September, 2016).

<sup>228</sup> Richard H. Adams Jr. and John Page, "Do international migration and remittances reduce poverty in developing countries?" *World Development* Volume 33, Issue 10, October 2005, Pages 1645–1669, <http://www.sciencedirect.com/science/article/pii/S0305750X05001270> [Accessed 11/03/2017].

<sup>229</sup> *Chitenje*- A Malawian textile worn by women wrapped around the waist also served as common female attire in the country.

<sup>230</sup> Interview with Sigele (Parlock, 8 September, 2016).

According to several respondents, they do not feel out of place when, for example, they are dressed in *hijab* (veil). The appearance of black Muslims in *hijab*, on the other hand, has meant that Islam is no longer regarded as an Indian religion in this part of the world but the women's "blackness" also signifies that they are foreigners. The only time one sees a good number of indigenous (or local) African women in public in *hijab* is on Thursdays when many go house-to-house or shop-to-shop begging. Many Muslims are not sure whether these women are genuinely Muslim or donning the *hijab* in order to ask for charity. Fatima Muhammad said that she feels "sad" when she is in *hijab*. When she attempts to greet a fellow Indian Muslim woman with an Islamic greeting of '*assalam alaykum*' (peace be upon you), she is met with silence or a "grumbling" reply. According to Fatima:

This comes to my mind that the greeted woman is not responding because she thinks and believes that I am a beggar who is dressed in Islamic attire just for the sake of begging. However, Islam encourages sharing and giving but it discourages begging. Malawians are hard workers they do not like begging. When we come here we do not go house-to-house or shop-to-shop begging. We work or sell some products.<sup>231</sup>

### **Occupation of women**

Respondents prefer working for Indian Muslims rather than being employed by the indigenous people. The interaction between Malawian women and Indian women is recorded to be cordial and many Malawian women have even learnt how to prepare an Indian cuisine popularly known as *biryani* and the presence of a number of Indian Muslims as possible employers attracts Malawian Muslims. In this way it can be said that there is a network of old Malawians who know the potential Indian employers in Durban and this makes it easy for the new women to live in South Africa.

Many Yao were trained at *jando* (circumcision ceremony) and *msondo* (initiation for girls) to be hard workers and this custom has empowered them to be trusted in many countries although there are a number of Malawians who are tarnishing the image of the Yao by engaging themselves in criminal activities. In the past it was easy for the Yao to be employed by Indian Muslims because they are hard workers. But things are changing now. Jobs are scarce in Durban. However, the interaction between Malawian women and Indian women is pleasant. According to Asiya, "there are few incidents whereby Malawians complain of over working while receiving low wages. Domestic workers are abused/ ill-treated in many ways such as forced to work on Sundays or without being offered an annual leave."<sup>232</sup>

However, not all Muslim Yao women work as domestic workers. There are a good number of women who are self-employed. There are tailors and hawkers who peddle small items in the

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<sup>231</sup>Interview with Fatima Muhammad (Chatsworth, 20 September, 2016).

<sup>232</sup>Interview with Asiya Mwamadi (Lindelani, 26 September, 2016).

streets of Durban. They sell Malawian and South African products at affordable prices. These Muslim Yao women are independent from men. They are striving to sustain their living in Durban by engaging themselves in different types of works.

Asiya continues by pointing out that “Muslim Yao women have started growing different types of vegetables which they sell to both Malawians and South Africans. South African women buy from Malawians and resale it along the streets and also at the Early Morning market in Durban. But I know one Yao who is a nurse and another one is a matron of an Islamic girl’s secondary school. This means that Muslim Yao women are engaged in different types of jobs”.<sup>233</sup>



*Figure 10: Asiya Mwamadi’s vegetable garden in Lindelani.*

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<sup>233</sup>Interview with Asiya Mwamadi (Lindelani, 26 September, 2016).



*Figure 11: Chinese cabbage grown by foreign nationals being sold at early morning Market in Durban.*

Many Malawian women are no longer interested in working as domestic workers as they are often exploited, overworked, and underpaid. They want to break free from the shackles of ill-treatment and assault. Many domestic workers have been accused of stealing property that went missing in the house without concrete evidence or charge. Abuse, exploitation, underpaid, and overworking is prevalent in South Africa. Some employers forget that the underprivileged are dependent on affluent societies for their livelihood, whilst the rich are also dependent on the poor for their labour.

Asiya states that,

Wealth people must not exploit the impoverishment of the poor, but rather they must make use of their skills. This interdependence expedites the smooth flow of oneness. Both the employer and employee must supplement each other in order to achieve the common good of both the poor and rich people.<sup>234</sup>

Muslim Yao women prefer to do a small scale business or work rather than going in the city asking for donations. Fatima Muhammad, stated,

I prefer working although we receive peanuts but those low wages are better than what women receive in Malawi. For example a person who receives more than two thousand Rand in Malawi is the one who matriculated. I have noted that in South Africa some maidservants receive one

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<sup>234</sup>Interview with Asiya Mwamadi. (Lindelani, 20 September, 2016).

thousand and five hundred Rands a month or more than that amount depending on the heart of the employer. The majority of us just get one thousand Rands a month but the work is very hard.<sup>235</sup>

Receiving low wages is a big challenge to Malawian women. Sometimes women fail to meet their basic essentials and requirements when they receive low wages. An old adage says ‘education is a key to success.’ Another, often unnoticed push factor of Muslim Yao migrations is the high rate of illiteracy amongst them. There are few educated Muslim Yao women in Malawi. Many Muslim Yao women who come to Durban are illiterate in western education and lack professional skills which could have helped them to be employed in better jobs and receive good salaries. Anjangale Mbamba points out that “there are concrete reasons why Muslim Yao failed to acquire secular education. It was because of our Yao and Islam identities which have been regarded as a threat to the authorities in the educational department and political cycles”<sup>236</sup>.

It will be noted that out of the 33 women it was found that there was one matron of a girl’s secondary school. Fifteen women interviewed in this study were self-employed. They were engaged in hair salons, peddling goods, waitresses, and sewing clothes. Ten Muslim women worked as house maids, and the remaining seven women are house wives; they are not engaged in any type of work. Those who are working acquired employment through social network with their families and friends. A substantial number of women interviewed found the job already waiting for them. Fatima Dano states,

in the past many people had been trusting Malawians. There were no incidents of criminality among Malawians. It is only now when stories of criminal activities among Malawians are being heard in South Africa. It was easy to get employed in South Africa before criminal activities emerged alleging that some Malawians were dishonesty, untruthfulness, untrustworthiness, and undependability.<sup>237</sup>

The following chapter will focus on Muslim Yao women’s settlement in South Africa, challenges and constraints they endure in the context of settlement and assimilation. It will also locate the discussion in the context of race, class, gender, ethnicity to highlight the heterogeneous experiences of Muslim migrant women in Durban.

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<sup>235</sup>Interview with Fatima Muhammad. (Chatsworth, 20/09/2016).

<sup>236</sup> Interview with Ajangale Mbamba (Overport, 20 September, 2016).

<sup>237</sup> Interview with Fatima Dano (Pinetown, 11 September, 2016).

## CHAPTER 4

### Settlement in South Africa: Challenges and Constrains

The previous chapter examined a wave of migrants who came to South Africa after the 1994 political dispensation. It explored the multiple reasons why Muslim Yao women chose to migrate to South Africa. In examining this development, the chapter followed the rise in global mobility whereby a number of women are migrating to different regions. A substantial number of Muslim Yao women have been noted in South Africa since the 1990s. This movement from one country to another by women is what this study is attempting to analyse in a context of female migrations.

In recent years feminist scholars have sought to challenge the dominant narrative discussing male migrants and their experiences. Feminist analysis has sought to highlight gendered experiences in different eras, and space. Women in many countries are part of the struggle against violence and gender discrimination.

In this chapter the focus will be on Muslim Yao women's settlement in South Africa, challenges and constraints they endure in the context of settlement and assimilation. It also locates the discussion in the context of race, class, gender, ethnicity to highlight the heterogeneous experiences of Muslim migrant women.

#### Common African identity

The post-1994 influx of foreigners such as the Congolese, Malawians, Nigerians and Zimbabweans mean that South Africa is experiencing a shift from being isolated from the continent to integrating diverse African cultures such as clothing, art, food, ideas, norms, languages, beliefs, mores, music, dance, and drama. The styles of people's clothing and the type of food they eat are showing a new diversity of cultures. Exchange of cultures is a two-way process and leads to syncretism. The integration of different beliefs or principles can be noted in the modern South Africa.

There is an assimilation process which is taking place among the Muslim Yao women and the Zulu women. Zulu women are seen dressed in what is known as 'African attire' made from *chitenje* materials.

As it will be noted later, Zulu women have also learnt how to cook Malawian food. On the other hand, Muslim Yao women are now learning how to speak isZulu. Although an assimilation process is taking place in Durban, Muslim Yao women are experiencing problems with some individuals who have a tendency of discriminating against others based on the notion of nation and ethnic group. The issue of race is still problematic in South Africa. According to some Yao immigrant women, foreigners are discriminated against or marginalized based on the concept of race and place of location.

Che Mbumba, a 45 year old mother of two sons who came to South Africa in 2010 feels justified in migrating to South Africa. She argues that those different ethnic groups scattered in southern Africa share a common historical identity. She adds that Malawians have a history of migrating from the Democratic Republic of Congo, while the Nguni people of South Africa are recorded to have left the Great Lake regions many years ago.<sup>238</sup> On the same note, Andimbeje a 40 year old single mother of three children who came to South Africa in 1998 states that,

...migration has a long history. It is not a new phenomenon. In this case, the Bantu people are one. It is not strange coming to South Africa. It is part of an African continent. The boundaries were demarked by the colonialists. Our forefathers used to walk from Malawi to South Africa without carrying any travel document. In those old days they were not carrying passports. They were free to travel to any country in southern Africa”<sup>239</sup>

Muslim Yao people have been migrating to Southern Africa for a long period. They have spread Islamic identity through movements and migration, trade and proselytizing.<sup>240</sup> They have been working in South Africa for many years. Some Muslim Yao married and died in this country. For example, in Limpopo province, one will find some Venda Muslims who speak broken Chiyao. As Mumisa rightly observes:

...Malawian Muslims who have settled in South Africa in large numbers even from the apartheid era and have intermarried with the South African women who have converted to Islam and their children are invariably Muslims. The immigrants from Malawi are mainly Muslim men and an interesting example of such marriages between the Malawians and South African women is in Venda and Louis Trichardt where almost 60% of the population in some areas is Muslim as a result of marriages to Malawians.<sup>241</sup>

This shows that Yao and Islamic identity have retained in those areas. It is not only in Limpopo where you will trace the Yao legacy but it can also be felt in some townships of Durban such as KwaMashu, Chatsworth, Malukazi, Mariannhill and Amaoti.<sup>242</sup>

Laila a 48 year old mother of four children who came to South Africa in 1998 states that individuals residing on the continent of Africa, should embrace their common identity and heritage. This aspect of Africa’s history must be taught in schools so as to dispel hostile perceptions against immigrants,

the Ngoni people who are scattered in Zambia, Mozambique, Tanzania, and Malawi came from KZN after Shaka Zulu waged wars on different clans. In northern Malawi there are names of places such as Elangeni, Umtwalo, Edingeni, and Umzimba which have a historical connection with the Zulu people. I do not see any convincing reason why South Africans should hate fellow black Africans. If one attacks the Ngoni from Malawi it means that one is striking a fellow Zulu. It is obvious that the Ngoni of Malawi came from the Nguni people. The dislike of foreign nationals can stop if the people of South Africa will start to reflect on the Bantu history. We share common ancestral history. It is imperative that the South African government should introduce themes at

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<sup>238</sup> Interview with Che Mbumba (Savanah Park, 20 September, 2016).

<sup>239</sup> Interview with Andimbeje (Savanah Park, 20 September, 2016).

<sup>240</sup> Michael Mumisa, “Islam and Proselytism in South Africa and Malawi”, *Journal of Minority affairs*, 22.2, p. 285.

<sup>241</sup> Michael Mumisa, “Islam and Proselytism in South Africa and Malawi”, *Journal of Minority affairs*, 22.2, p. 287.

<sup>242</sup> Preben Kaarsholm, “Zanzibaris or Amakhuwa? Sufi Networks in South Africa”, *Journal of African History/* volume 55/ Issue 02/ July 2014, p. 194. <https://www.cambridge.org/core/services/aop-cambridge-core/content/view/S0021853714000085> [Accessed 09/09/2016].

school that deal with the origins of the Bantu people, in particular how the Nguni spread themselves in South Africa. In doing so it will be found that the people of southern Africa have the same roots.<sup>243</sup>

These sentiments on migration to South Africa are indicative that there is a common African identity felt amongst Muslim Yao women immigrants and the indigenous peoples of South Africa. They are of the opinion that by migrating to South Africa they are following in the same path as their forefathers who came in the 1800s. Given this shared common ancestral history they feel justified in migrating to South Africa.

### **Interactions between Muslim Yao and Zulu Women**

The interviews conducted with the women in this study highlighted some interesting aspects on the nature of relationship between locals and foreign nationals. This can be discerned from locals' perceptions of foreign nationals, their culture, food and clothing. Whilst some local men and women were generally cordial to foreign nationals, others perceived them with hostility. According to some women in this study the dislike of foreigners comes from men who perceive immigrant women as carriers of venereal diseases. There is an assumption that many foreign women are HIV infected. In some case there is a perception that women who follow their husbands to South Africa will never return home. In this respect, foreign couples with their children will dilute the culture of South Africans. Foreign women are also regarded as job takers. They steal jobs which South African women could have been doing.

For many Malawian women it is a challenge forging a new life in South Africa. On arrival they have sought to find ways to earn a living and alleviate poverty. To this effect they have sought to empower local African women and forge new relationships with the local women in KZN. Asyatu Mwamadi of Mangochi, a 42 year old women describes her poverty alleviation strategy she adopts to sustain a livelihood in KZN. She also highlights how this impacts on local women,

When I was young girl we used to learn how to make clay pots with my friends by imitating our elders. This was a process of teaching us how to work hard at a tender age. In the evening our parents used to relate stories to us and sometimes we used to play hide and seek, jumping up and down, playing netball which was popular in our village. You know our village is near Lake Malawi and we used to go to the lake to swim, I am a good swimmer. But I am also a good farmer as I had learnt how to grow crops such as maize and vegetables. I have taught my neighbours in Lindelani how to grow Chinese cabbage, mustard, and rape vegetables These vegetables were unknown to black people in South Africa, all what they knew was spinach and cabbage. In Malawi we know different types of vegetables such as okra, rape, mustard, sweet potato leaves and pumpkin leaves. We used to grow them back home. I have a garden of vegetables which I sell to South Africans. When they buy from me they do sell it in town. This means that we are also empowering South African women through small scale businesses. I believe that one day a number of Zulu women will know how to grow different types of vegetables. These days you can see Zulu women eating Chinese cabbage, rape or mustard vegetables, rather than spinach and cabbage which were the only type of vegetables known to the indigenous people. We are also assimilating in the Zulu culture. It is interesting to note that some Zulu women can now eat out type of food. They can even eat our thick porridge (*ugali*), Many South Africans eat what they call *uphuthu*. Uphuthuis also prepared from maize meal just as *ugali*, however, *uphuthu* is crumbly

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<sup>243</sup> Interview with Laila (Mawelewele, 19 September, 2016).

cooked and it is mostly eaten with *inkomazi* (sour milk), beans, *imifino*- greens, vegetables (such as wild spinach- *imbuya/ugobolo*, pumpkin leaves), meat or any other type of gravy- soup).<sup>244</sup>

The respondents of this research believe that their presence in KZN has facilitated cross-cultural and cross-ethnic interaction and assimilation. They have taught local Zulu women how to cook *ugali*- the food of the Yao. They are also teaching the indigenous people how to grow vegetables such as rape, mustard, and Chinese cabbage. A good number of Malawians are growing vegetables which they sell to Zulu women at the Early Morning Market in Durban. The Zulu women then resell them to other people. The growing of these vegetables is economically empowering women in South Africans. In this case, money is flowing among Muslim Yao and Zulu women who are doing small-scale businesses in the country. Some Zulu women have even starting selling *ugali* to Malawians.



*Figure 12: Rape vegetable picture. This type of vegetable has been introduced in South Africa by foreign nationals. Muslim Yao women are growing it in Durban while Zulu women resale it along the streets and Early Morning Market.*

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<sup>244</sup> Interview with Asiya Mwamadi (Lindelani, 26 September, 2016).



*Figure 13: Chinese cabbage is another type of vegetable grown by Malawians women which is becoming popular among South Africans these years.*

Heckel observed that “the food of the Yao is simple and nutritive and is chiefly vegetarian... the standard dish is called *ugali* and is prepared by pouring flour slowly into pot of boiling water which has to be stirred continuously until the water gets absorbed, when there remains a pudding-like mass: the *ugali*. This unsiced staple dish requires some spiced dish with sauce or gravy. Spiced dishes are beans, peas, spinach, and the like, and sometimes stew of game or poultry...”<sup>245</sup> Since the Yao and Zulu are categorized as Bantu people, it is likely that some Yao foods are similar to what the Zulu eats and this makes the Yao to easily assimilate into the Zulu culture although they differ in beliefs and customs.

However, according to some respondents, they have not yet embraced all aspects of Zulu culture but will imbibe some aspects of it. According to Asiya, the presence of Muslim Yao women in South Africa has contributed to the introduction of eating *ugali* among South Africans who used to eat *uphuthu*. She adds, that her,

favorite food is *ugali* with some *makumba* (tilapia) and *makambale* (mud fish). We are getting these products from some Malawian women who bring them in Durban. I don't like parboiled rice which is commonly found in many supermarkets. I prefer Malawian rice known as *kilombera* which we get it from the flea markets. There are a good number of Malawian vendors who are selling different products at the flea markets and along the streets.<sup>246</sup>

Malawian Yao women are also creating work opportunities for South Africans in KZN. They are employing South African women in their hair salons, tailoring shops, and restaurants. In this way

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<sup>245</sup> Benno Heckel, *The YaoTribe: Their Culture and Education*, p. 11.

<sup>246</sup> Interview with Asiya Mwamadi (Lindelani, 26 September, 2016).

they are both empowering local women in small scale businesses. Another good example is the type of clothing the Muslim Yao women wear in Durban.

Muslim Yao women have also introduced their distinct dress style to local Zulu women in the KZN province. Yao women have introduced various styles and fabrics in South Africa. One of these is what they call *chitenje*, which is a piece of cotton cloth that is wrapped around the waist of women. It is also used to carry a baby on the woman's back. On many occasions *chitenje* is served as common female attire in Malawi. From that material different designs are made which they call 'African attire'. In the past years it was not common to see Zulu women wearing *chitenje* or dressed in 'African attire.' This is indicative that South Africa is experiencing a shift from being isolated from the continent to integrating diverse African cultures. The styles of people's clothing and the type of food they eat are showing a new diversity of cultures.

Fatima Muhammad reiterates this point,

the Zulu people have started wearing *chitenje* rather than what they used to wear known as *ibhayi* in isiZulu. The Makuwa in Chatsworth call it *kisambi*. A good number of Malawian tailors design 'African attire' for the Zulu women. It is good to see different cultures assimilating in Durban. This is what we want; we want warm and friendly relations to exist amongst us. We want social cohesion to prevail amongst us. On the other hand, Malawian women have been introduced to non-material culture which includes Zulu language, norms and morals.<sup>247</sup>

Muslim Yao women are of the view that wearing *hijab* and an 'African attire' is one way of acknowledging the beauty of African culture and heritage. When women are dressed in 'African attire' they look splendid, they feel proud that they are truly Africans.

## Language barriers

The language barrier is crucial to the prevention of well-being of Muslim Yao women in South Africa. It is not easy to adapt and become accustomed to new people, new practice, mores, and new language. Asausyeje states, that "the language barrier has repercussions on the way live in South Africa. The challenge is that they cannot access to government health facilities because they cannot speak isiZulu fluently."<sup>248</sup> Abiti Adam a 40 year old single mother, who came to South Africa in 2010, outlines the challenges of not being fluent in the local language,

undocumented migrant women face many problems when they are sick. It is difficult to go to the clinic or hospital because of language barriers. It is difficult to communicate in isiZulu. Zulu language has a number of clicking words which a grown up person cannot easily learn. When foreign nationals go to the clinic and attempt to state their condition in English they are often ridiculed by the nurse who asks them if indeed they are Africans or *abelungu abamnyama* (black people who think that they are white by speaking English). We face difficulties in expressing ourselves in isiZulu. We arrived in this country without knowing any Zulu word. Which words in isiZulu can a new migrant use to say I am feeling stomachache or headache? If you say it in English, some nurses mock by refereeing to us as *abelungu abamnyama*. This happens in a number of clinics and hospitals. In this manner the nurse will take a long time to respond to a sick foreign woman. Some nurses will spend time on their cellphones.<sup>249</sup>

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<sup>247</sup> Interview with Fatima Muhammad (Chatworth, 20 September, 2016).

<sup>248</sup> Interview with Asausyeje (Overport, 2 September, 2016).

<sup>249</sup> Interview with Abiti Adam (Sydenham, 4 September, 2016).

It is likely that many foreign nationals do not always use public hospitals. They would rather go to a private clinic or buy some medication at pharmacy shops which are scattered in Durban. Other women believe that if they go to the hospital they will easily be traced and deported. The influx of migrant women in South Africa is creating a language barrier in many communities. It has a big impact on the type of health facilities they receive from government hospitals. In many cases, Muslim Yao women receive substandard health care because they cannot speak isiZulu fluently.

### **Challenges in the Workplace**

Muslim Yao immigrant women, like other immigrants, encounter many challenges on arrival in South Africa. The post-apartheid job market has been very competitive due to an influx of foreigners from many African countries. There have been upwards rates of joblessness between 1994 and 2015. Within this context foreigners are easy targets to hold responsible for the high unemployment rates and low wages. A substantial number of Muslim Yao women have become hawkers due to the low rate of employment experienced in South Africa. While they were in Malawi they had dreams of accumulating wealth easily. However upon arrival in South Africa it is a different reality. Many have ended up peddling goods along the streets of Durban. They are subject to gender bias, and gender violence.

Khadija Godilifa, a 37 year old mother of five children who came to South Africa in 2008, alludes to the problematic nature of gender in the workplace,

the state of being male or female migrant is the biggest challenge in South Africa and the rest of the world. Differentiating people based on social and cultural roles and behavior is problematic here. Women are always discriminated in many spheres of life. Good jobs are not provided to migrant women, rather they will overwork and underpaid.<sup>250</sup>

Pedraza states that "...the labor market allocates certain types of jobs to certain types of people-by gender, color, and class-reserving unskilled, unprotected, poorly paid jobs for women and people of color..."<sup>251</sup> Godilifa, concurs with Pedraza and argues that this gender bias also has implications in terms of remittances to families back home, "the employer will pay a good sum of money to a male employee than a female worker. This makes us to send little money to our countries. With the little money we receive from our bosses we manage to support our families back home."<sup>252</sup> She further adds that women immigrants are poorly paid. Employers exploit women's vulnerable status as some of them are undocumented migrants. Employers often threaten women that they would report them to the police or Home Affairs. Under these circumstances some women are forced to accept low wages and exploited working conditions. Godilifa states that,

I would rather take whatever job is provided to me. I know it is very difficult to secure a job these days in South Africa. There are many migrants from other African countries who want to work in

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<sup>250</sup> Interview with Khadija Godilifa (Marianhill, 11 September, 2016).

<sup>251</sup> Silvia Pedraza, "Women and Migration: The Social Consequences of Gender", *Annual Review of Sociology*, Vol. 17 (1991), pp. 303-325 <http://www.jstor.org/stable/pdf/2083345.pdf>.

<sup>252</sup> Interview with Khadija Godilifa (Marianhill, 11 September, 2016).

this country. I know that I will be a prosperous business woman, successful mother when I go back home though I have been a victim of discrimination and exploitation at work. The little wages I get here are better than a matriculated woman in Malawi. My achievement will be to educate my children with the money I am sending to Malawi.<sup>253</sup>

As far as challenges affecting women migrants are concerned, one has to concur with Koser that:

Women face particular challenges: Of course some are highly successful, and migration can empower women...Migrant women experience discrimination in labour market in many countries. They can be subject to dismissal and even deportation if they become pregnant or become socially stigmatized if they contract HIV/AIDS....<sup>254</sup>

Labour exploitation and unfair treatment of foreign black workers in terms of labour law requirements is common in South Africa. Muslim Yao women are denied and refused paid leave, or preferring that foreign nationals should be unregistered employees. They have been exploited, over worked, maltreated, falsely accused, underpaid without getting any annual leave, sick leave, and maternity leave. All these maltreatments are ignored as there are nowhere the women can go to report them.

Thus some women are forced to accept low wages. On arrival in South Africa many are desperate to find employment and hence will settle for meager wages. They are often compelled to accept the most unskilled jobs. Some women immigrants are also vulnerable and are subject to both economic and sexual exploitation. Crimes such as battery and indecent assault are common. These women often find it difficult to seek legal help largely due to lack of funding and being foreign nationals. Frequently they are too frightened to lay a charge against the accused. Foreign nationals who have to cope with legal issues are fearful of what will transpire or take place if they go to the police station. They are also afraid that they would lose their jobs if they report their employers.

A number of respondents believe that some employers exploit them heavily. Women have nowhere to report. Some women work from seven o'clock in the morning till nine o'clock in the evening. Sometimes Muslim women even fail to go to pray on Fridays.

As Asasyeje, a 40 year old women of four children who came to South Africa in 2000 states,

On the one hand, those who are staying at the house of their bosses are the ones who overwork and receive low wages. On the other hand, those women who are staying at their employer's houses are lucky because they pay nothing, while those who are renting rooms are exploited heavily by some land lords. It is a challenge to get a good house. Many Malawians live together in a small room. These rooms are not safe and good at all. It is unhealthy for many people to live in a small room. It is disturbing, irritating to live in a noisy environment. It is not easy to rest in that environment after a hard job. The said rooms can be charged at one or two thousand Rand. Imagine a domestic worker who receives between one and two thousand Rand, paying a house rent of one thousand Rand a month. How much money will remain from her wages? With this background a woman will opt to have a partner who will be supporting her and assist her to buy food and pay rent. Women who are desperate marry a man even without going for HIV test. All

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<sup>253</sup> Interview with Khadija Godilifa (Marianhill, 11 September, 2016).

<sup>254</sup> Khalid Koser, *International Migration: A Very Short Introduction*, p.122.

what is in their mind at that time is to get a man who can support them financially. In this way, women are made vulnerable to different types of venereal diseases.<sup>255</sup>

In order to overcome these challenges, many Muslim Yao women have adopted coping mechanisms. They engage in self-employed businesses selling affordable and convenient commodities. They also provide employment opportunities for fellow Malawians by recruiting them as shop assistants and labourers.

As noted earlier on, foreign nationals migrating to South Africa are perceived negatively. However, a closer examination of Malawian women and their livelihoods reveals that they are contributing to the economies of South Africa and Malawi. Che Ngoni, a 48 year old single mother who came to South Africa in 2000 argues that,

Muslim Yao women have opened gardens where they grow vegetables which are bought by South Africans who resale them. This is one way of empowering South African women. They also pay taxes in different forms, and others have set up a number of small scale businesses in the Greater Durban. A good example is that some Muslim Yao women have started hair saloon where they employ South African women to help them running the business. Some hair salons can be found along Alice and Point roads.<sup>256</sup>

Other women are tailors who stitch pants and 'African attires'. The pants they make are sold to South African men and women who come from Limpopo, Mpumalanga and Eastern Cape. In this way, Malawian women are also creators of jobs.



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<sup>255</sup> Interview with Asausyeje (Overport, 2 September, 2016).

<sup>256</sup> Interview with Che Ngonji (Newlands East, 10 September, 2016).

Figure 14: A sample of 'African attires' designed by Muslim Yao women made from chitenje material.



Figure 15: An migrant woman dressed in 'African attire' made from chitenje material attends to a customer in her hair salon along Johannes Nkosi (Alice Street).

## Remittances

Research indicates that remittances are crucial to the survival of receiving societies. They play a huge role in developing Malawian economy, individual households, and the expansion of businesses. Chipeta and Kachaka researched on the role of migrants' remittances in an unstable low-income economy in Malawi and found out that the "receipt of remittances reduces the incidence of poverty, the poverty gap and the severity of poverty".<sup>257</sup>

According to Farrant et al, "... Remittances are an invaluable source of income and foreign exchange earnings for many countries; especially for those with foreign exchange constraints...They are also more likely to reach areas of economies and societies that are left relatively untouched by official development assistance..."<sup>258</sup> In this case remittances sent by women reach their families in the rural areas of Malawi. The rural population of Malawi lack

<sup>257</sup> Chinyamata Chipeta and Willie Kachaka, "Role of Migrants' Remittances in an Unstable Low-Income Economy: A Case Study of Malawi", Working Paper no. 2005/05, Department of Economics (Zomba: University of Malawi, Chancellor College, 2005), p. 1 and p. 19.

<sup>258</sup> Macha Farrant et al, "Migration and Development Opportunities and Challenges for Policymakers", No.22, IOM Migration Research Series, Geneva, 2006, p. 14 [http://publications.iom.int/system/files/pdf/mrs\\_22.pdf](http://publications.iom.int/system/files/pdf/mrs_22.pdf) [Accessed 30/11/2016].

many essential things. They have poor road networks, few school books, and little to no health facilities. It is hard to live in Malawian villages where service delivery is always poor. Life in some rural areas is becoming easier due to the remittances sent by women who migrated to South Africa.

According to Asyatu Mbota, a 48 year old single mother of five children who came to South Africa in 2000,

I remember my family back home, they are all not working and they depend upon me as they know that I am in South Africa. I need to work hard and send some money in form of remittances to support my parents and my siblings. All what I want is to work hard so that I will be sending some money back home. It is a challenge to get good paying jobs in South Africa. The supply of labour is higher than the demand. There are many Africans who are migrating to this country and they will allow working in low paying jobs in order to survive. Although foreign nationals work in low paying jobs, they try their best by sending money back home.<sup>259</sup>

Remittances which are transferred to Malawi in the form of goods or cash are alleviating poverty in a number of household in rural and urban areas. Families in Malawi with the low income, poverty, or unemployed are now experiencing a better life than before. The transformation in their lives is occurring due to money sent by their children in South Africa. Many families in Malawi are now depending upon the remittances received from their families residing in South Africa.

Habiba Ashima, a 48 year old mother of three children who came to South Africa in 1993 highlights the value of remittances to both family and community in Malawi,

we work in order to send money to our relatives back home. The low salaries enable us to meet basic needs. We do not purchase food and groceries to send home. Sometimes we buy building materials which we are transported to Malawi. These days Malawi has seen the mushrooming of modern houses with iron sheets. A number of people are no longer sleeping in the grass thatched houses. Women's remittances obtained in South Africa have contributed to the development of Malawi. It is providing Malawi with much needed foreign exchange. It is one of the financial inflows to Malawi. The Muslim Yao women are playing an increasing role in the economies of South Africa and Malawi. They are contributing to economic growth of Malawi and to the live hoods of their relatives. Families in Malawi are now able to pay for education, building good houses, pay for water, electricity, and other services. As I have already stated, the Muslim Yao women are playing an increasing role in the economies of South Africa and Malawi. Muslim Yao women are helping their families back home by sending money and other goods and they are also helping South Africans by employing them.<sup>260</sup>

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<sup>259</sup> Interview with Asiya Mwamadi (Lindelani, 20 September, 2016).

<sup>260</sup> Interview with Habiaba Ashima (Marianhill, 12 September, 2016).



*Figure 16: A picture of a modern house in Malawi built by Fatima Muhammad using money transferred from South Africa.*

On the other hand, they face some problems when sending remittances to Malawi. It is a challenge to transfer cash to Malawi. On a number of occasions, they do not send money through formal channels. There are a number of informal ways of transferring money to Malawi. To some people it is a waste of time to transfer money through the post office, banks or money transfer agencies as the rates are expensive and very time consuming. The movement of people between countries is daily occurrence; women prefer that remittances are sent informally through border traders or through relatives and friends. The drivers of the daily buses or trucks which go to Malawi are also used to transfer money which reaches the destination within two days. Thus drivers and conductors are the ones who are a conduit of remittances.

A number of women do not keep their money in any bank. They prefer to send it home in hard cash through their relatives, friends, truck, and bus drivers. Many of them do not have access to formal banking and other notable banking services. To open a bank account one needs to produce a proof of residence and a 13 digit South African Identity green book or a passport with valid visa. A substantial number of migrant women do not have a 13 digit South African Identity and a valid visa.

Habiba Ashima narrative highlights the problematic nature of remittances,

the other challenge is that Muslim Yao women rent rooms and houses. They do not have permanent houses. It is difficult to open a bank account without a proof of residence. Some

landlords do not provide the tenants with documents of their buildings. The point is that it is difficult to open a bank account, the process is long.<sup>261</sup>

According to Asiya it is a challenge to open a bank account. It also becomes more difficult when immigrants are undocumented or enter the country illegally and seek to eke out a living on low wages,

if we were receiving good wages we would have been saving some of the money in the banks. A person being undocumented migrant has negative repercussions on wages, salaries, working conditions, labour stability. To survive with low salaries is not something one can take as a simple case.<sup>262</sup>

Low wages received in South Africa are an obstacle to women's ability to accumulate the much needed income they send to their families. They are struggling to send some money back home which is needed to improve the lives of their families in the villages. Remittances are playing an important role in developing Malawi's economy by providing foreign exchange to the unstable economy of the country; families' livelihood in rural and urban areas. It is also playing a crucial role in the expansion of some small-scale businesses. Poverty is being alleviated in Malawi due to money transferred from South Africa.

## Xenophobia

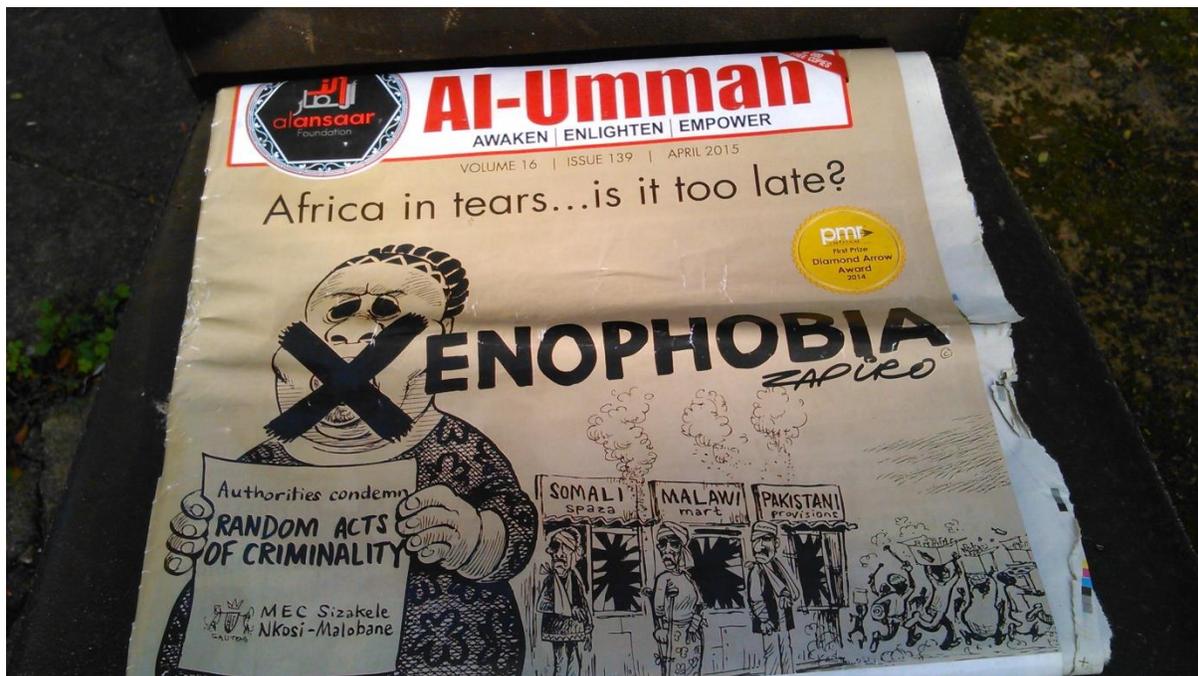


Figure 17: A cartoon depicting xenophobia in South Africa.<sup>263</sup>

<sup>261</sup> Interview with Habiaba Ashima (Marianhill, 12 September, 2016).

<sup>262</sup> Interview with Asiya Mwamad (Lindelani, 20 September, 2016).

<sup>263</sup> Al-Ummah Newspaper, "Africa in tears...is it too late?", Volume 16/ Issue 139/ April 2015, p. 1.

The fear or dislike of foreigners is not unique to South Africa. South Africa is a country where one finds a diversity of cultures. The country still attracts migrants from all corners of the world although there is a fear or dislike of foreigners by a few individuals. Xenophobia is not distinctive to this country; rather it is a global problem. It is experienced in Europe<sup>264</sup> and other SADC countries. For example, in November 2016, a number of Malawians residing in Tanzania were tortured and expelled. Reports by the Nyasatimes indicated that Malawian men were tortured and women raped in Tanzania.<sup>265</sup> This proves that Malawian immigrants in Tanzania are facing discrimination and violence.

Nevertheless, the dislike of foreign nationals in South Africa significantly increased after 1994 political dispensation. During apartheid the number of black people living in major cities was low compared to modern times. After the demise of apartheid the majority of indigenous people started to flock to different cities of South Africa in search of jobs. They were disillusioned that many unskilled jobs were taken by people from neighbouring countries. They were resentful and felt betrayed. Anger and hostility contributed to the dislike of fellow black men and women from African countries.

In 2008 the world was shocked by xenophobia that erupted in Alexandra Township and spread to other areas in Gauteng and the Western Cape. Groups of armed men attacked a number of foreigners including women and children. Panic stricken Mozambicans, Malawians, Zimbabweans, and Congolese were seen on television fleeing their homes. The armed gangs, beating drums and chanting songs ‘*awahambe amakwererekwere* (the *kwerekweres* must go) dragged people from their homes. Some of them set their belongings on fire and chased the foreigners out of the area. Images of crying women and children were seen on different television channels. Indeed, the 2008 and 2015 xenophobia attacks were terrible. It was frightening hearing stories and watching foreign nationals being murdered, while hundreds, including women and children, were attacked, raped, and their dwellings and possessions destroyed. They were asking themselves where they could go to sleep if they were attacked. They recall that they were not prepared to go home at that time. Some Muslim Yao women were afraid to wear *hijab* (Veil). They were scared to move around in town. *Hijab* is an identity of being a foreign Black Muslim. Islam in South Africa was not regarded as a religion of black people rather it was assumed as a religion of Indians. Seeing a black woman in Hijab signified that one is an immigrant.

In Johannesburg they were calling black Africans *Amagrigamba*. The meaning of this derogatory name is unknown. It is believed that the term is referred to an inferior person whose complexion is darker than South Africans who have light skins.

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<sup>264</sup> “The Rise of Xenophobia and Racism in Europe Looks a Lot Like Trumpism”. <http://truth-out.org/buzzflash/commentary/xenophobic-hate-and-militias-grow-in-europe-too-in-hunt-for-refugees> [Accessed 15/12/2016].

<sup>265</sup> Tiwonge Kumwenda, “Tanzanian Immigration in a tit for tat operation with Malawians: Over 200 detained, w omen raped and tortured”, November 29, 2016 – Nyasa Times <http://www.nyasatimes.com/tanzanian-immigration-tit-tat-operation-malawians-200-detained-w-omen-raped-torturered/> [Accessed 29/10/2016].



Figure 18: An advert which urges people to stop xenophobia<sup>266</sup>



<sup>266</sup> Your Right 2 Know Newspaper, April 2015, p. 8.

Figure 19: Protesters loot a foreign national's shop<sup>267</sup>

## Views on the reasons for the outbreak of xenophobia

### Job stealing

Many women in this study believed that one of the reasons for the outbreak of xenophobic attacks against foreign nationals was largely due to job security, “they have been regarded as competitors for various resources.”<sup>268</sup> They compete for jobs, houses, medication from the government hospitals which are meant for South Africans.

Muslim Yao women in this study are of the opinion that South Africans must work collectively to re-build and develop the country. They argue that the accusations hurled against foreign nationals of job stealing and using state funds and health care are baseless if the people follow an African philosophy of *umundu* which embraces the notion of humanity to others. *Umundu* in Chiyao is the same as *ubuntu* in isiZulu language. It encompasses generosity, compassion, communal life and healthcare systems. Africans can live together and work together for the benefit of everyone in that community. The communities which practice *umundu* do experience serenity and harmony. They maintain and foster good relationships. They recognize the integrity and dignity of the individual and a community as a whole. Good interpersonal relationships and collectivism can be achieved through the principles of *umundu*. They add that South Africans need to learn and understand and acknowledge the diversity of African histories, languages, values, cultures, and customs of foreign nationals.

Many women in this study have also alluded to how foreign nationals are labelled as outsiders. According to the respondents, South Africans have labelled foreign nationals in the country “*amakwerekwere*.”<sup>269</sup> The term *amakwerekwere* probably has roots in Zimbabwe. There is a tribe

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<sup>267</sup> Christopher Moagi, Daily Sun Newspaper, Thursday, 5 April, 2015, p. 5.

<sup>268</sup> Interview with Habiba Ashima (Marianhill, 12 September, 2016).

<sup>269</sup> A derogatory term used to refer to black Africans in South Africa. The origin of the term *kwerekwere* is still being debated. However, the discovery of diamonds in 1860 and gold in the 1880s attracted a number of labour migrants from Malawi, Mozambique, Lesotho, and Zimbabwe. Labour migrants from Zimbabwe comprised of a mixture of people made up of the Zezuru, Rwozi, Ndau, Karanga, Manyika, and Korekore. It is likely that when the Korekore intermingled with other people from different ethnic groups at the hostel compounds in the mines, they were referred as *makorekore*. The derogatory term *makwerekwere* was derived from Korekore—a proper tribal name of the member of a Bantu people inhabiting northeastern Zimbabwe who speaks the dialect of Shona. Workers in the mines coming into South Africa from neighbouring countries were discriminated against and given different types of names. In the late 1800s Malawians were called *manyasa*, because they came from a country which was then known as Nyasaland. *Nyasa* is a Yao name which means a lake. In this manner, migrant workers in the mines and elsewhere were regarded as *Makorekore*, *Manyasa*, and sometimes *Mashangaan*. They were referred as Mashangan because of the complexion of their skin. The Shangaans in South Africa have a darker skin colour just like some Malawians and Zimbabweans. From 1994 the term *makwerekwere* has become a fashion and slang for black foreign nationals. It is linked to fear and dislike of black nationals from neighbouring countries who are regarded as criminals, sellers of drugs, prostitutes, HIV carriers, takers or stealers of jobs, receivers of low wages, snatchers of wives, buyers of RDP houses, blamed for high rates of unemployment, and health facilities snatchers which are meant for South Africans. Poor service delivery by government is blamed on an influx of foreigners. All these sentiments have been fuelled by a sense of intense dislike, prejudiced hostility, animosity, but also the thoughts and feelings of insecurity, fear, concern on a person enjoying success or advantage. There has been the strong and painful bitterness felt by few

called “*Korekore*” From that tribal name all African foreigners are termed *amakwerekwere* which has a negative connotation and indeed it is humiliating to many black Africans. The term is now an identity marker which has been created in order to verify black Africans. For two decades this term has been the key label which South Africans refer to them. To many foreign nationals this label denotes that black Africans are inferior and barbarians. They fail to speak South African languages. When they speak their languages they make a continuous murmuring sound which the Zulu, Venda, Tsonga, Tswana, Swati, Ndebele, Pedi, Xhosa or Sotho do not understand. For example, Habiba Ashima states,

when I speak Chiyao with my friends in a bus, South Africans will look at us. They will think that we are babbling or chattering in a thoughtless or confused way. To South Africans, Chiyao language is a babbling talk or sound. They do not know that Chiyao has been spoken in Chatsworth for many years by our brothers and sisters who are called *Amazizimbane*. I think historians should write more about the contributions of the Yao in socioeconomic spheres of South Africa from the time our grandfathers came to this country. The contemporary South Africans must learn that Chiyao will be a minority language in Durban in a foreseeable future. It is not only my language that plays a role in discrimination. The skin colour of many Africans also provides a critical criterion for distinguishing them and South Africans. They are considered to be darker skinned than the indigenous people. One day I was walking with a Malawian friend who had a darker skin than me. There were two Zulu women who were coming in front of us. One of the lady screamed “*Yho! Yho! Yho! Waze wanyama umuntu*” literally meaning I have never seen a black person like this before in my life. She was referring to my friend’s dark skin colour (*umnyama*). The lady continued to exclaim, “Where do you come from? Were you burnt by the sun?”<sup>270</sup>

This is one way of classifying foreign nationals through the appearance. It is also pathetic seeing a number of police men and women who harass and round up foreign nationals just because they have a dark complexion. Foreign nationals with dark complexion are always suspected illegal immigrants and it is a hot target for police harassment in South African streets. This trend is worse in Johannesburg than Durban. Sometimes it is not only foreign nationals with dark complexions who are rounded up and harassed by the police. The Venda, Tsonga, and Pedi who have darker skins are also suspected illegal aliens. The police will easily round up black Africans than harassing illegal immigrants from Asia and Europe.

### **Victims of Xenophobia: how were they affected?**

Two respondents of this study were victims of xenophobia which took place in 2015. Asiya of Lindelani believes that the culture of violence retards the development in South Africa. She is of the opinion that the burning and looting of state infrastructure not only hinders service delivery but also destroys human relationship. She recounts her experience during the xenophobia attacks in Durban,

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individuals when foreign nationals get employed or open some businesses in townships. A feeling of indignant displeasure or persistent ill will is observed in the term *makwerekwere*. Other derogatory terms used on foreign nationals are *magrigamba*, *mangongongo*, and *mazayizayi*.

<sup>270</sup> Interview with Habiba Ashima (Marianhill, 12 September, 2016).

I was not in South Africa in 2008 but I experienced the 2015 xenophobia. It was indeed a big challenge to our lives. The people were chanting anti-migrant songs in Lindelani, “*abokufika abahambe*” meaning foreigners must go. I was going to work when the local people blocked the way by burning tyres on the streets. They forced us to walk along Ntuzuma road. It affected me badly. I was upset. It was a total discrimination. They were discriminating us basing on the colour of our skin which is a bit darker than the locals who have a light skin. During that period I had to escort my child to R. K. Khan hospital in Chatsworth. She was pregnant. I will remember the 2015 xenophobia because it happened during the month when my grandchild was born. He was born on 17 April 2015. Going to the hospital with my pregnant child was very hard. We were scared to be beaten by those anti-migrant gangs. I even stopped going to work and shopping. We had a shortage of food in our house. The tuck-shops owned by Somalians and Ethiopians were targeted and closed down. I remember that the Malawian government sent more than sixty buses to pick us but my child was in the hospital and I had no chance to leave South Africa. Her high blood pressure was very high due to the fear of being attacked. She had to give birth through caesar. My happiest moment in South Africa was when I received a grandchild in this world. I was happy that the child was born in South Africa. It was during the period of xenophobia.<sup>271</sup>

Not all Muslim Yao women were victims of xenophobic attacks. Those living in Bayview, Chatsworth (predominantly Indian area), escaped the hostility. This area has a long history of Malawian settlement. Chatsworth itself is a centre of the Makuwa and the Yao Muslims in Durban. In this case, it was impossible to attack fellow Muslim Yao migrants from Malawi. They only heard stories about xenophobic attacks from other foreigners, locals and the media. There were no incidences of xenophobic attacks in this area. All what they experienced was ‘Operation *Fiyela*’ which took place in that area. Drugs and guns were sought after by the police and the army.

Fatima Muhammad of Bayview- Chatsworth observed that in 2015 she was only verbally attacked in the commuter taxi. Fatima and her friend Farida were going to Pinetown to visit their relatives when irritated people hurled insults at them. Fatima and Farida do not speak isiZulu fluently. It is common that Malawians who have spent many years in Chatsworth either speak English or Chiyao on a daily basis. Malawians residing in Chatsworth will speak broken isiZulu when communicating with others. The language barrier plays a role in discrimination. The language provides a critical criterion for distinguishing foreign nationals and South Africans.

The respondents in this study also raised issues of African identity and questioned the notion of ‘what and what an African is’. They argue that it is strange that black South Africans hate fellow black Africans from other countries. It is unusual that the same people, who were segregated, discriminated against with pass laws during apartheid white regime are now treating differently or treating unfairly their brothers and sister from an African continent. Black South Africans were put at a disadvantage during apartheid. They were called *kaffirs*. The same people who were disfavoured by whites are victimizing fellow black Africans by calling them *amakwerekwere*.

### **Do Muslim Yao women feel good for being targeted?**

A substantial number of Muslim Yao women witnessed intense violence directed at foreign nationals that began on 11 May 2008 and the one which started in April 2015. As already

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<sup>271</sup> Interview with Asiya Mwamadi (Lindelani, 26 September, 2016).

observed above, the hostility to foreign nationals has been there even before 2008. Some local people resented the presence of foreign nationals long before the violence of 2008. In Johannesburg they were calling black Africans *mashangaan*, *manyasa*, *amagrigamba*. These terms are used to refer to an inferior person. But Shangaan is a tribal name of the people found in northern South Africa and southern Mozambique. They are referred to as Tsonga or Ronga. The complexion of the Tsonga is similar to many foreign nationals. Sometimes the Tsonga of northern South African are harassed by the police in Johannesburg. They are regarded as foreigners just because of the colour of their skin. A person who has a dark skin in Johannesburg was or is still referred to as a Shangaan. On the other hand, *Manyanja* is a term which originates from the word *nyasa* (lake). Formerly Malawi was called Nyasaland (the land of the lake) by the colonialists. All the people who came from Nyasaland (now Malawi) were regarded as *manyasa*. In the course of history the word *manyasa* denoted inferiority.

Muslim Yao women do not feel justified being prejudiced and treated differently. They are of the opinion that they are Africans who migrate to an African country. They are not *amakwerekwere* or *manyasa* but Yao. Derogatory terms such as *amangongongo*, *amazayizayi*, and *makwerekwere* are commonly heard in Durban. Recently the term *amazayizayi* is more frequently used than *amakwerekwere*. All these terms are used to despise black Africans. Andimbeje a 40 year old women who came to South Africa in 1999 argues that,

If indeed the term *amakwerekwere* is slang for foreigners, then why is it not used on the Chinese, Pakistanis, and other foreign nationals from Europe? *Amakwerekwere* is an abusive language to despise, dislike, shun, and look down on black Africans. In the eyes of some individuals, black Africans are inferior to the indigenous people in South Africa. They believe that South Africans are superior to the rest of Africans who have a dark complexion. Some indigenous people have a feeling that they do not belong to an African continent.<sup>272</sup>

The respondents in this study feel offended when called, foreigners, *amazayizayi* or *amakwerekwere*. They believe that some South Africans have a tendency of failing to remember that they can also be called foreigners if they leave this country. It is strange that few individuals feel good when they attack fellow Africans. They fail to accept black Africans coming from different countries. If xenophobia is defined as “fear or hatred of foreigners or strangers”, then why the strong dislike of foreigners is only applied to Africans. Why Europeans and a number of Asians are not being attacked? As will be seen later the policemen patrol the streets of Durban and track down foreigners. In their pursue they apprehend only black Africans. It is difficult to see a policeman asking identity documents from a European or Asian but prefer to stop a dark skinned man or woman. White skinned foreigners are left scot free. The respondents feel that they are always discriminated on the basis of their skin colour. Muslim Yao women do not feel good for being targeted at work or in the streets.

### **Reactions to the outbreaks of xenophobia Did they want to return home? Were they anxious or fearful?**

When Muslim Yao women arrived in South Africa, they had hopes that they would live peacefully in this country for ever but now their minds are on the crossroads. Some would like to return home. The outbreak of xenophobia and the high crime rate are main factors for wanting to

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<sup>272</sup> Interview with Andimbeje (Savannah Park, 20 September, 2016).

return to Malawi. For example, Habiba Ashima was attacked by thieves who ripped off her earrings along Joe Slovo Street in Durban. She states,

the thieves ran away with my earrings down the railway line as I was left wondering why they attacked me in such manner in broad day light. Although the crime rate is high in this country, my feelings about what lies ahead in South Africa are that it has a bright future if the people can change their mentality. They must start working hard in order to further develop the country. The blame game should stop, thinking that foreign nationals take local people's jobs and compete with them for housing and other resources such as schooling and health care are baseless.<sup>273</sup>

South Africa is like home to many Muslim Yao families who have children born in this country. The only challenge they face is the culture of violence. When the xenophobia attacks erupted in 2015, many families in Malawi were upset and concerned about their families' safety in South Africa. Some Muslim Yao women wanted to return home, but due to lack of funds were forced to stay behind in KZN. The government of Malawi is recorded to have sent over sixty busses to ferry Malawians who sought refuge in the mosques, churches and camps. The busses were not enough for the growing number of Malawians who sought refuge in the mosques and churches. On the other hand, a substantial number of Muslim Yao did not want to go home. They were of the opinion that once they went back home they would economically suffer. Although they were anxious or fearful they opted to remain in that volatile environment rather than returning home to Malawi.

It is not only xenophobia which affects foreign nationals. A number of police men and women victimize and disrespect black foreign nationals. A number of foreign nationals are a subject to police harassment.

### **Police Harassment**

Muslim Yao women are also subject to police harassment. They are of the opinion that they are unfairly targeted. They argue that local South Africans are willing to accept foreigners from Asia and Europe and not Africa.

They argue that there are immigrants from Europe and Asia who are residing legally or illegally in South Africa. The local South Africans find it difficult to distinguish between a legal and undocumented person from Europe and Asia. Europeans who live in the country illegally are regarded as tourists when walking in the streets of Durban. They add further that the police will not stop a white person asking him/her for documents rather they will harass black Africans just because of the colour of their skin. The dark colour of their skin has become a label for the police to trace black Africans. Even the Chinese people who are staying illegally in Durban are considered or looked on as businessmen. The police will intimidate, trouble, and worry black Africans rather than taunting or distressing Europeans, Chinese, Indians, Pakistanis, and the people from Bangladesh. Khadija Godilifa states that,

...it has become a habit of some police officers to trouble foreign nationals in the Greater Durban on weekends. They target the roads such as Yusuf Dadoo (Grey) and Victoria streets (Berta Mkhize) streets which lead to the Sunday flea markets. These police officers know that a number

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<sup>273</sup> Interview with Habiba Ashima (Marainhill, 12 September, 2016).

of undocumented foreigners shop at flea markets. Foreign nationals are victimized in a number of ways such as taking away their money and leaving them without anything in their pockets. Undocumented foreigners cannot report this because they are scared to be deported.<sup>274</sup>

Habiba Gegala adds that,

the complexion of the women in *hijab* (veils) also signifies that they are foreigners. It is easy to be harassed by the police who demand documents and if the women do not produce the papers they are whisked away to a secret place whereby the cops demand some favours in form of money or sex. Some cops have the nerve/courage of saying that they want to taste a foreign woman. They want to feel the difference between a South African and a foreigner.<sup>275</sup>

For many Muslim Yao women the bias meted out against Africans immigrants from the continent is unacceptable.

Habiba Ashima summarises police harassment in this way:

In many cases, undocumented migrant women have experienced rape, torture, battering, violence, discrimination, and exploitation in different places by different types of people. It is unfortunate that they have got nowhere to report and seek help. If an immigrant woman seeks help from the police they are often made fun of with the intention of humiliating. Migrant women are made objects of laughter by the police. In this manner, migrant women are left without any help. Sometimes a male police would want to search woman migrants. This is bizarre. This happens frequently at Park station in Johannesburg where the police target and harass bus commuters coming from Zimbabwe, Zambia, Mozambique and Malawi. A substantial number of cops at Park Station are there not to provide security, rather to fatten their pockets by soliciting money from migrants arriving in South Africa. The government should find means on how to stop this bad image of the police.<sup>276</sup>

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<sup>274</sup> Interview with Khadija Godilifa (Pinetown, 11 September, 2016).

<sup>275</sup> Interview with Habiba Gegala (Mawelewele, 16 September, 2016).

<sup>276</sup> Interview with Abiti Adam (Sydenham, 4 September, 2016).



Figure 20: Police involvement in criminal activities<sup>277</sup>

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<sup>277</sup> Simone Heradien, "Report finds that police take part in rape, murder", Daily Sun Newspaper, Thursday, 29 January, 2015, p. 2.



Figure 21: IsiZulu Newspaper showing how the police solicit money from foreign nationals.<sup>278</sup>

On the other hand, it is not only the police that victimize foreign nationals, landlords and the Department of Home Affairs has a number of officials who are disrespectful to black foreign nationals.

### Stereotyping

Another challenge Muslim Yao women migrants face is stereotyping. This is common amongst women migrants and migrants in general. According to Aisha,

sometimes it is argued that foreign nationals threaten the security of the state by being possible terrorists. When we are dressed in *hijab*, some ignorant people call us al-Qaida. They question us why we cover our whole body from the toes to the head while we live in a warm city of Durban. Don't we feel hot? Another assumption is that foreign nationals engage themselves in the sale of drugs. If you live along Point road there is an assumption that you are a drug peddler. For example, it is alleged that Point road in Durban is filled with drug dealers who are foreign nationals from Nigeria and other African countries. But it is not all Nigerians who are bad people. It is not good to generalize.<sup>279</sup>

Muslim Yao women are stereotyped according to religion. Some individuals believe that a Muslim woman covered in *hijab* will conceal bombs and later on unleash them on the public at the malls. This assumption does not go well with Muslim Yao women. They feel discriminated

<sup>278</sup> Philo Mjoli, "Kuthiwa amaphoyisa asezenzela imali ngokuboshwa kwabokufika", *Isolwezwe Ngesonto*, Ephreli 24, 2016, p. 8.

<sup>279</sup> Interview with Aisha (Clare Estate, 5 September, 2016).

against in that manner. Muslims in general are neither fundamentalists nor extremists. But there are a few radical Muslim individuals who are tarnishing the image of Islam.

Foreign women are also demonized in the context of HIV/AIDS. It is believed that many foreign women spread venereal diseases and that they compete for men in streets at night. Amina Ali a 30 year old mother of three who came to South Africa in 2010 explicitly states that “this assumption is not true. Some of us came to work and not to sell our bodies. These days it is dangerous to have multiple lovers. Everywhere we are told that the easiest way to contract HIV is through sex with multiple partners.”<sup>280</sup>

All these accusations leveled at foreign nationals do precipitate xenophobic sentiments. Anger against foreign nationals is the result of a number of assumptions as we have already observed above. This is a big challenge faced by foreign nationals. It is not easy to convince some indigenous people that foreign nationals from African countries are also developing the economy of the country. A few individuals regard foreign nationals as criminals, sellers of drugs (especially Nigerians who occupy flats at Point road in Durban), prostitutes, HIV carriers, takers or stealers of jobs, receivers of low wages, snatchers of wives, and buyers of RDP houses. They are blamed for high rates of unemployment, and competitors of health facilities which are meant for South Africans. Poor service delivery by government is blamed on an influx of foreigners. All these sentiments have been fueled by a sense of intense dislike, prejudiced hostility, animosity, but also the thoughts and feelings of insecurity, fear, concern on a person enjoying success or advantage. There has been a strong and painful bitterness felt by a few individuals when foreign nationals get employed or open some businesses in townships. A feeling of indignant displeasure is or persistent ill will be noted in the use of derogatory terms such as *amazayizayi*, *makwerekwere*, *magrigamba* and *mangongongo* which are leveled on foreign black Africans.

Another area which women believe is a challenge to their lives in the country is the tendency of politicians, common people, and officials asserting that South Africa has five to eleven million illegal immigrants. Others argued that there are more than ten million illegal migrants residing in this country. This kind of debate is conducive to incite anger against migrants. It is not known how the figures of undocumented foreigners are calculated. It seems that till now the South African government has no dependable or accurate figures. It has not provided real figures of illegal migrants. The use of unreliable figures ignites or incites violence against foreign nationals. The general public does not feel good when they hear that South Africa is a home of eleven to twelve million illegal aliens.

Amina Ali states,

I heard this in a taxi when the commuters were discussing about the issue of foreign nationals. There were a lot of arguments. Some bus commuter suggested that illegal immigrants in South Africa are five to eleven million. In this respect, five to eleven million illegal immigrants have taken away the jobs of South Africans. We have been blamed for taking up menial jobs which offer poor wages. In this case we are held responsible for lowering wages. Stereotyping and anti-immigrant views are a backbone of xenophobia which affects us psychologically.<sup>281</sup>

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<sup>280</sup> Interview with Amina Ali (Lindelani, 11 September, 2016).

<sup>281</sup> Interview with Amina Ali (Lindelani, 11 September, 2016).

Misconceptions of the number of immigrants give rise to hostility to migrants because the indigenous people believe that millions of undocumented immigrants have taken up all menial jobs available in the country. They also believe that employers favour illegal immigrants because they give them low wages.

### **Transnational Families**

It is not only xenophobia which is a challenge to Muslim Yao women, rather maintaining transnational families is another. For many Yao women it is difficult to migrate to South Africa with their children. They prefer to leave their children with their mothers and grandmothers. In this case, some children in Malawi grow without the love of their mothers. Che Ngonji states, “I came alone but left my children with my mother. She is taking care of them back home. I send some money every month.”<sup>282</sup> According to Asausyeje,

I remember my family back home, they are all not working and they depend upon me as they know that I am in South Africa. I need to work hard and send some money in form of remittances to support my parents and my siblings. All what I want is to work hard so that I will be sending some money back home. It is a challenge to keep some money because we are the lowest paid workers in South Africa. However, we try our best to keep a side some money and when it is one to two thousand Rand we send it back home.<sup>283</sup>

A substantial number of Muslim Yao women leave their children in Malawi because it is expensive to rent a good house in South Africa. Many Malawians live in single poorly ventilated rooms. Each person contributes a sum of money to pay rent to the exploitive landlords. For many Muslim Yao women these living conditions are not conducive for rearing young families. Muslim Yao women who leave their spouses behind in Malawi keep in contact via cell phone and Skype. They have also formed network groups which collect remittance in form of money and goods which are sent through Malawian transporters. These days it is not difficult to send money or goods to Malawi.

Many respondents in this study have alluded to the challenges of maintaining a stable family as a result of migration. The absentee wife, sister and daughter impacts on the home. Children grow without the love of their mother. The husbands left in Malawi are the ones who take responsibility of taking care of the children while the mothers are in South Africa. The absentee wife has given rise to extra-marital affairs and later divorce. Thus migration can often lead to dysfunctional and fractured families.

### **Marital relations**

Another challenge faced by Muslim Yao women in South Africa is that they find their husband married again. A substantial number of Muslim Yao men who married in South Africa left their

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<sup>282</sup> Interview with Che Ngonji (Newlands West, 10 September, 2016).

<sup>283</sup> Interview with Asausyeje (Overport, 2 September, 2016).

wives back home. It is likely that they do not inform their first wives about the new marriages. When the first wives insist on following their husbands in South Africa they find that their partners had married again. Asyatu Mbota remarked:

When I arrived in South Africa in 2002 I found that my husband had married a Zulu woman. I was totally upset because he did not tell me that he had taken a second wife. I did not hate her but she was the one who was jealous of me. She thought that my husband will leave her and continue staying with me. She was consumed with jealousy for a number of years. She was bitter that my husband could spend a number of days with me. At one time I had decided of returning back home but I persevered and she understood that we were both meant for one husband. *Laughs...* Within the same year we were both pregnant and the following year we both delivered boys. What I can tell you is that it is a big challenge for a woman to find out that your partner had secretly married. I understood that it is impossible for some men to spend a number of years staying alone without a partner. The goodness is that he had married instead of engaging himself with many girlfriends. In this case, polygamy is not a problem to me. Our religion allows a man to marry four wives if he can manage to take care of them. I think it is good to have one or two legal wives than having a countless number of partners. When my husband does not come to my house, I know that he is with his second wife. He is sleeping there. Sometimes I do call the other wife to check if indeed our husband is there. I think it is good to have two legal wives than having a number of girlfriends with illegitimate children. What do you think? *Laugh...*<sup>284</sup>

Some women immigrants have accepted polygamous marriage. They see no problem in the fact that their spouses have accepted local women as wives. Muslim Yao women immigrants have negotiated their domestic space/marriage and accepted this new situation. Accepting polygamy also highlights their survival strategy, a coping mechanism to sustain their marriage and family which could have broken if they insisted on monogamous marriage.

### **Family life in KZN**

Many Muslim Yao believe their great achievements will be to educate their children with the money they are sending to Malawi. There is a high rate of illiteracy among the Yao people.

Muslim Yao migrants left some of their children in Malawi with relatives. It is hard to bring young children to South Africa. For those who have attempted to bring their children to South Africa face a challenge to enroll children in government schools. Although some of their children were born here, they are denied a birth certificate because the parents are undocumented migrants. The said children cannot be enrolled in government schools. Other parents who can manage to pay high school fees send their children to private learning institutions. When those children reach grade 12 they do fail to write matric examinations which requires that all students should produce a South African identity document. This is a big challenge to mothers, sons and daughters who do not have the said identity document.

Khadija Godilifa reiterates this point,

another unnoticed challenge to the lives of children born from migrant parents is that they face difficulties attending classes. They are ridiculed for being born from *amakwerekwere* parents. Discrimination and bullying based on the colour of their skin have been experienced by Muslim

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<sup>284</sup> Interview with Asyatu Mbota (Isipingo, 13 September, 2016).

Yao children. The cultural difference between Muslim Yao and the Zulu children is one of obstacles which hinder the former to progress at school. Some South African children feel superior to the children born from other African countries or those born in this country from migrant mothers. The problem here is the 'otherness'.<sup>285</sup>

Thus it is a challenge to be a migrant, and mother. On other hand, Muslim Yao women migrants who have children in South Africa are coping by sending their children to Islamic institutions which offer bursaries for their learners.

Although the Muslim Yao women are adopting a diversity of cultures found in Durban, they are not forgetting their mother tongue-Chiyao. It is proving quite a challenge to speak Chiyao in Durban. Chiyao is a rich language in adages, proverbs, and idioms. During leisure time the Yao teach their children born in South Africa the appropriate values, ethics, courtesy, and social relations through their language. In spite of the fact that it is difficult for the children born in South Africa to grasp the Yao culture, their parents are trying their level best to impart knowledge to them through the use of the Chiyao language. However, it is not easy to raise the children born in South Africa. Fatima states, that "raising Muslim Yao children in the environment of a diversity of cultures is a big challenge. Our children easily assimilate into the Zulu culture, deviating from what is ordinary, usual, or expected of a Muslim Yao child."<sup>286</sup>

Muslim Yao women are also striving to educate their children in forms of address, gesture and greeting. They want their children to know where their parents came from. In leisure time there are many issues they discuss with their children. For example, how a younger person addresses an elderly person, a wife to her husband or a grown up person, a wife when called by the husband or elders, the gesture and behaviour of the wife when presenting or passing over an article to the husband, the visitor or the elderly person, how children should respond when called by the parents or their age groups. The use of Chiyao in their leisure time is that the language is one of the most important tools through which others are able to identify their roots. They also visit each other in leisure times and festivals where they enjoy eating their Malawian foods. However, it is a challenge to follow their old ways of living.

Habiba Ashima states,

things are changing in the contemporary world. Cultural barriers which transcend each and every aspect of life can be understood if people comprehend other people's ways of living. Muslim Yao women need to assimilate into the Zulu culture not entirely, rather to be invisible Muslim Yao women migrants in KwaZulu-Natal and not to feel like outsiders. They need social cohesion to prevail in South Africa.<sup>287</sup>

### **How do Muslim Yao Women construct and perform their cultural and religious identity in transnational settings?**

As already stated in chapter 1, this research examines gender in relation to other social categories such as race, class, ethnicity and identity. Whilst women are oppressed as women in gendered

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<sup>285</sup> Interview with Khadija Godilifa (Marianhill, 11 September 2016).

<sup>286</sup> Interview with Fatima (Malukazi, 21 September, /2016).

<sup>287</sup> Interview with Habiba Ashima (12 September, 2016).

society, it is important to recognize that not all women are positioned in the same way. Their identity is constructed at the “intersection of different social positions and, the relevance of which changes across time and space”.<sup>288</sup> Rather than examining gender, race, class, and nation as distinctive social hierarchies, intersectionality examines how they mutually construct one another.<sup>289</sup> This theory has highlighted the experiences of Muslim Yao women migrants in Durban who are facing marginalisation and discrimination due to their multiple identities which is critical in their lives. Being female, Muslim, and Yao at the same time is paramount in their gender based violence and discrimination. The identities such as Muslim and Yao overlap both in Malawi and South Africa. In South Africa they are called *makwerekwere musulmana*<sup>290</sup> while some people in Malawi still call them *achawa*<sup>291</sup> and their religion is referred to as *mpingo wa achawa* (the religion of *achawa*).

Asyatu Mbota states,

I am proud to be a Muslim Yao and referring to me as a *makwerekwere* Muslim or *achawa* Muslim is heartbreaking and distressing. The names *makwerekwere* and *achawa* are derogatory ones. When someone calls me with the said term I feel like I am not an African. It is like I am coming from another continent. It makes me sick. We are despised as inferior people from another continent. Some people think that Malawi is not within southern Africa. I am proud to be a Yao living in South Africa. Also being Muslim Yao I am also connected to the history of Durban, in particular to the history of Zanzibaris of Chatsworth. Muslim Yao women of Chatsworth have faced a number challenges in preserving the Yao and Muslim identities in the environment surrounded by different cultures such as Zulu and Indian. They have kept on eating *halaal*<sup>292</sup> foods and continued dressing in *hijab* (veil).<sup>293</sup>

Muslim Yao women still construct and perform their cultural and religious identity in transnational settings. They still appear in *hijab* in the streets of Durban. However, the appearance of Black Muslims in *hijab* is also a challenge to Muslim Yao women. When walking along the streets of Durban they are easily spotted. It is easy to know that Black Muslims in *hijab* are foreigners.

Che Ngonji argues that “the appearance of Black Muslim women dressed in *hijab* signifies or symbolises that Islam is no longer regarded as an Indian religion in this part of the world. The only time one sees a good number of indigenous (or local) African women in public in *hijab* is on Thursdays when many go house-to-house or shop-to-shop begging. Many Muslims are not sure whether these women are genuinely Muslim or donning the *hijab* in order to ask for charity.

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<sup>288</sup> S. Scuzzarello, *Caring Multiculturalism: Local Immigrant Policies and Narratives of Integration in Malmo, Birmingham and Bologna*. (Lund: Lund University, 2010), p.27.

<sup>289</sup> Patricia Hill Collins, *It's All in the Family: Intersections of Gender, Race, and Nation*, Hypatia, Vol. 13, Border Crossings: Multicultural and Post Colonial Feminist Challenges to Philosophy (Part 2) Summer, 1998, pp 62- 82 [accessed: 22/05/2011].

<sup>290</sup> *Kwerekwere*: a derogatory term used to refer to black Africans in South Africa.

*Musulman*: a Portuguese or Spanish term for Muslim.

<sup>291</sup> *Achawa*: a derogatory term used to refer to the Yao people in Malawi, Zambia, Zimbabwe, and Mozambique.

<sup>292</sup> The food which is permitted under Islamic laws.

<sup>293</sup> Interview with Asyatu Mbota (Isipingo, 13 September, 2016).

*Hijab* should not be associated with beggars. It is an Islamic identity for women. We feel respected when dressed in *hijab*.”<sup>294</sup>

Although Muslim Yao women feel respected while dressed in *hijab*, it is a type of attire which precipitates marginalisation and discrimination. For example, a number of respondents stated that they feel sad when they are dressed in *hijab*. When they attempt to greet fellow Indian Muslim women with an Islamic greeting of ‘*assalam alaykum*’ (peace be upon you), they encounter a dead silence or receive a grumbling answer. When they enter the shop and greet a Muslim Indian woman; she does not pay them any attention. This comes to the mind of Muslim Yao women that the greeted Muslim Indian woman is not responding as she conjectures and believes that Malawians are beggars who are dressed in Islamic attire just for the sake of asking for money.

Fatima says that “Islam encourages sharing and giving but it discourages begging. The wearing of *hijab* by a black woman in South Africa should not imply that black Muslims are beggars. Muslim Yao women do not go shop-to-shop, house-to-house or stand along the streets of Durban begging. They work hard to earn a living in this country.”<sup>295</sup>

Another pressure felt by Muslim Yao women in constructing and performing their cultural and religious identity in transnational settings is that many old cultural practices are diminishing amongst them. The respondents observed that there are some religious practices that have changed since they came to South Africa. Women are no longer accommodated in the mosques. Mosques in South Africa are seen as a symbol of men worshiping God and women have to worship in their houses. Many Muslim Yao women pray in their homes rather than going to the mosques. It has been an uneasy experience as they were used to assembly in mosques back home. It is not easy to carry out old practices in the new environment.

Although it is hard to find a mosque which takes in women for prayers, a number of the Muslim Yao in Durban leave their homes on Friday and worship their God at the *Jumuah* masjid, at the corner of Grey (now Yusuf Dadoo) and Queen Streets (Denis Hurley). What the Yao have observed is that Islam is not different. It is interpretations of theology which make Muslims differ in a number of practices. The Yao and Indian Muslims believe in one book that is the Quran. They also believe in the prophethood of Muhammad. The greetings and a number of religious practices are similar. However, the Yao and the Indians do differ on the type of clothes they wear, songs they sing, the food they eat, the languages they speak, the customs, and the art they follow. Marriages between the Yao and Indians are uncommon. There are few Malawian men who have married Indians. Probably there is no Indian male Muslim who has married a Muslim Yao woman.

The point is that it is difficult to find a mosque in South Africa where women are accommodated. This gives the impression as if Islam is for males only. Sometimes Muslim Yao women fail to explain to their Zulu friends why in Malawi they have mosques which accommodate females and they do not have such mosques in South Africa. There are few mosques in South Africa which accommodate females. The well-known mosque in Durban is called *Jumuah* masjid along Yusuf Dadoo and Denis Hurley streets. The problem is that Muslim converts face a problem in tracing

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<sup>294</sup> Interview with Che Ngonji (Newlands West, September, 2016).

<sup>295</sup> Interview with Fatima (Malukazi, 20 September, 2016).

fellow Muslim women. A mosque is a good place to congregate and interact with different people. Praying in the mosque by Muslim Yao women is part of their culture but it is sad that they are experiencing changes in South Africa. Things are different now; they cannot go to the mosque to pray as they did in Malawi.

In Malawi Muslim Yao women also used to make *dhikr* (devotion prayer in form of songs) on Thursday evening in preparation for Friday prayers. This was part of the Yao and Islamic culture. However, in South Africa they do not have time to sing together as a Yao family. A good reason why there are some subtle changes is that the Muslim Yao women are living separately from each other. Some are living in Marianhill, Mawelewele, Clare Estate, Overport, Malukazi, the Greater Durban, and Ispingo just to name a few.

However, Muslim Yao women do meet on the *Eid* day when they finish fasting in the month of *Ramadhan*. On many occasions they fail to attend *Eid* prayers just because mosques in South Africa have no separate facilities for women like Malawian mosques. There is one Islamic organization in Durban known as Taking Islam to the People (TIP) which is making strides in challenging the dominance of males in mosques. TIP annually organizes *Eid* prayers at the north beach open grounds to accommodate women. TIP invites all Muslims regardless of gender, race, class, and nation to pray at an open ground. It is fantastic seeing different women from different countries praying together. Women are even encouraged to speak on that day. Women do not speak in front of men but they speak behind a transparent *purdah*. All people can hear a woman giving a lecture on a particular topic.

Asiya Mwamadi states that,

after *Eid* prayers Muslim Yao women celebrate together by preparing some Malawi food. These days it is easy to find Malawi rice, dried fish, sweet potatoes, cassava, and beans. A number of Muslim Yao women bring all the mentioned types of food. They sell them along the streets and the Sunday flea markets in Durban. On this great day of *Eid* Muslim Yao women do invite South African friends. They enjoy eating our traditional food. They like eating our *ugali* (a pudding, dough-like mass prepared from maize flour). It is very smooth than South African *phuthu* which is crumbly cooked.<sup>296</sup>

The Muslim Yao women were also noted to neglect initiation ceremonies once they settled in Durban. Old traditions are dying as they are scattered and live among the Zulus and Indians who have different customs and cultures. Although some tribes in South Africa such as the Xhosa and Sotho do circumcise their children at the bush just as the Yao have been doing in Malawi, the Yao living in South Africa have never taken their children to be circumcised in the bush. The Muslim Yao women prefer taking their children to a medical doctor who is experienced in the operation. The contemporary Muslim Yao women are losing some Yao identity. Many religious and cultural practices are being eroded through a number of changes and experiences in South Africa. The Muslim Yao children were not circumcised in the hospital, rather by a villager known as *ngaliba*. After a circumcision ceremony all the boys were taken into the bush near a river where the elders of the village built a bush hut called *ndagala*. The children spent almost a month in that bush hut being given some instruction on how to respect elders. A circumcision ceremony is known as *Jando* in Chiyao. The first instruction given to the boys were basic

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<sup>296</sup> Interview with Asiya Mwamadi.Lindelani (26 September, 2016).

principles of agriculture (*kulima alimeje*) that is teaching them how to grow crops in order to defeat hunger. This was conducted in the form of singing *jando* songs which were used metaphorically and later interpreted by the elders (*kuwunda*). The said first agricultural lesson is called *msyungu wandanda*. In the Yao culture an uncircumcised man is regarded as a boy. To be a true Yao one has to pass through this passage of *unyago*.

However, it is not only boys who pass through an initiation school; girls also have their own school called *msondo*. *Jando* for the boys is what is known as circumcision, while *msondo* is a form of a school where girls are taught on how to respect the elders. All these initiations are called *unyago* in Chiyao, meaning initiation ceremony. Today these ceremonies are diminishing as the Yao are scattered in South Africa. It is good to note that the Xhosa have a similar circumcision ceremony just like the Yao. The difference is that among the Xhosa there are many incidents of circumcised boys dying while at the bush. This does not happen in Malawi.

Another initiation ceremony which is disappearing among Muslim Yao women in South Africa is *litiwo*. This was an initiation ceremony mainly for the women who were pregnant for the first time. Instructions were given to a woman on how to take care of herself while pregnant and what to expect on the day of delivering a baby.

Amina Ali argues that “those were happy days when women from different villages could assemble on one spot and help a pregnant woman by giving her some piece of advice. In those days it was a taboo to hear programmes on radio discussing what happens on labour. Children were taught that a child comes from heaven or bought and not through a mother’s womb. In the contemporary world it is no longer a taboo to hear it on radios and watch Television programmes which discuss antenatal issues.”<sup>297</sup>

Heckel is of the view that the initiation festivities (*unyago*) are the most important part of the culture of the Yaos. Their celebration represents a real fountain of life, their non-celebration would mean the tribe’s extinction.<sup>298</sup> The Muslim Yao women believe that being a Yao one must not completely lose the Yao culture just because one is in South Africa. For example *Jando* (circumcision) and *msondo* (a girl’s initiation) acted as schools where interpersonal relations, the role of the language and kinship relations among the Yao, respect, and courtesy were taught. Children were groomed in order to raise cultural awareness through language usage, with the aim of instilling a tolerance of differences in the country which have the potential of creating enmity or dividing villages and creating tension among Malawians.

Children were taught the development of a child that is vital for young people to be protected, encouraged, loved, and nurtured both physically and emotionally by the whole community. In that manner children were seen not only as belonging to the nuclear family but rather as belonging to the whole Yao community. The Yao took different responsibilities in sharing, in education, care, and the most important- discipline of the Yao young boys and girls. In this respect, the Yao children could grow into well-balanced adults. A person with a good back

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<sup>297</sup> Interview with Amina Ali (Lindelani, 11/09/2016).

<sup>298</sup> Benno Heckel and Griffith Quick, *The Yao Tribe: Their Culture and Education* (London: Oxford University Press, 1935), p. 19.

ground will be entitled to sincerity, honesty, proficiency, and responsibility for his choices. These well- balanced Yao will be able to contribute meaningfully to the philosophy of *umundu* which encompasses and embraces the notion of humanity to others. They will play a meaningful role in society in many different areas.

As already noted above there are a number of religious and cultural practices which are diminishing among the Yao. However, all respondents showed that they still keep some traditions intact. For example they all agreed that they still compose and sing Islamic songs in their language known as *kaswida*. On leisure and festivals especially on the wedding ceremony the Yao sing and dance to a religious dance known as *sikiri*.

## CHAPTER 5

### Conclusion

The overall aim of this study was to examine the lived experiences of Muslim Yao immigrant women in South Africa. This study historicised their experiences through a life history and narrative approach of the women who have migrated to Durban. The research was contextualized within the larger story of migration to South Africa in the post-apartheid period and experiences of many migrant communities in recent years. It interrogated and explored the migration experiences of Muslim Yao women in KwaZulu-Natal between 1994 and 2015. These approaches will intensify current debates on migration by focusing on issues of gender, identity, and agency in Africa as there is an inadequate study accessible on Muslim Yao women in South Africa; the available literature focuses primarily on Muslim Yao male migrants.

This study was primarily a qualitative research aimed at documenting the lived experiences of Muslim Yao immigrant women in KwaZulu-Natal. It utilized a feminist perspective and highlighted two important theoretical concerns raised in this study: firstly, the lived experiences of Muslim Yao immigrant women, secondly the intersections of race, gender class, religion, identity and how they impact on the migration experiences of women. The qualitative case studies gave voice and a platform to ordinary Malawian women migrants to air their views regarding their migration, assimilation, and settlement in South Africa. Thus subjectivity of oral history is the strength of this methodology. As Alessandro Portelli, points out, oral sources “tell us not just what people did, but what they wanted to do, what they believed they were doing, what they now think they did... Subjectivity is as much the business of history as the more visible ‘facts’”.<sup>299</sup> By using this research methodology, the writer learnt that oral interviews facilitate the collaborative generation of knowledge between the researcher and the respondents. While this methodology was a rewarding process, it did raise important ethical questions and interpretive challenges. The interview process was rewarding in the sense that it allowed the writer to elicit answers to the key questions outlined in this thesis directly from the respondents. Crucial in this regard was building rapport with the informants. To do this, “open-ended” questions were used as they allowed the respondents to speak their minds without restriction; probing was used when it was sensed that something had been left out or that there was a deeper layer to be probed, that the narrator could possibly give a more complete or detailed answer; “follow-up” questions were employed when the answer that a respondent provided was interesting and required further scrutiny.<sup>300</sup> Once the writer of this research got used to the interview process there was a flow of data, alternating between listening and talking, as the respondent and the researcher understood how to listen and talk in the context of producing a life narrative. Rapport was crucial to build trust and get the respondents to reveal their stories as much as possible.<sup>301</sup>

This research methodology (interviewing and storytelling) brought out the importance of writing history ‘from below’ or the conception identification with ‘common people.’ In this case, writing

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<sup>299</sup> Alessandro Portelli, “The Peculiarities of Oral History,” *History Workshop Journal*, 12 (1981): 96-107, 99.

<sup>300</sup> Donald A. Ritchie, *Doing Oral History* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2015), 73-102.

<sup>301</sup> Ritchie, *Doing Oral History*, 51-68.

history from below has attempted to discover ordinary people as its subjects, and centralise on their experiences and perspectives, diverting itself from the conventional image of traditional political history and its emphasis on the deeds of 'great men'. The writing of history from below has demonstrated its extraordinary usefulness. Recovering the experiences of little explored and/or marginalised groups of people like Muslim Yao migrant women will reinstate their own history to social groups who may have thought that they had lost it, or who were ignorant that their history existed. This study challenges migration histories of Malawians to South Africa which has largely been male-centred.

On the one hand, it was difficult to locate respondents. An important point to take into consideration is that this research was undertaken in Durban whereby some Muslim Yao women move around as they do not have a permanent place to stay. They do not have permanent houses. They rent small houses or small rooms. The researcher experienced some predicaments on many occasions in the course of the fieldwork. Some women who told the researcher that they were living in Newlands East left for Mariannhill, they vacated the former house; while others had returned to Malawi. In this situation, the researcher could do nothing but to halt, and abandon the meeting. It was also difficult to interview some women who are working as housemaids.

However, the Malawian community groups which Muslim Yao women have formed in KZN undoubtedly did lend a helping hand to gather comprehensive information for this study. They are still connected through social network which previously helped them in the migration process. They argue that social networks of kinship and friendship furnish a way of harnessing a sense of Muslim Yao community in a foreign land. It links them through bonds of kinship, friendship and shared community of origin which helps them emotionally, socially, economically, psychologically, and religiously. In this respect, the researcher had an excellent network of informants that he could call upon and did not have any problems interviewing them.

This study has highlighted that women have been immigrating to South Africa with the intention of beginning a new life. Although there are many problems associated with acquiring employment in South Africa, it was found that there has been an increase in the number of international migrants in modern times more than before. However, this is not a new phenomenon; the history of migration is traced back to the origins of mankind. People have been migrating to different regions in the course of their history. An interesting trend that emerged from this study is the migration of Muslim Yao women to South Africa in the post-apartheid period.

After the demise of apartheid, South Africa has attracted a number of women migrants who come to work, study or trade. The democratization of South Africa in 1994 and the opening up of borders saw an influx of many labour migrants to the country. A surging movement of female migrants to South Africa has been taking place between 1994 and 2015. The gender proportions of migrants are now balancing out. Women who had been previously depicted as non-participative, victims lacking communal position are now breaking the barriers and challenging the dominant migration of males. Malawian women are now seeking to highlight gendered experiences in different eras, time and space. The long underestimation of female migration to South Africa is now disappearing due to the writing of their history in modern times.

Muslim Yao women migrants were motivated by a combination of factors to migrate, both “push” and “pull” factors. Among the “push” factors were: high unemployment in Malawi poverty, food shortages, and high rates of divorce, unstable economy, need for personal safety and a strong desire to seek a better livelihood. Among the “pull” factors in South Africa were: stable political government, opportunities for education, better livelihood and good healthcare. For some Muslim Yao women the decision to migrate was taken in conjunction with family members whilst in other cases women made independent decisions. This is indicative that women migrants are no longer passive bystanders in the decision-making process. On the contrary they are taking ownership of their lives and those of their families to seek better lives elsewhere. Thus these factors collectively played an important role in shaping and defining the migratory decisions of Muslim Yao women to South Africa.

This study also revealed that Muslim Yao women experienced settlement and labour market challenges. The oral interviews revealed varying realities of women’s experiences. They are vulnerable to exploitation and discrimination in the job markets. They are burdened with gender-based discrimination. On numerous occasions they are compelled to accept the most menial informal sector jobs. They overwork and receive low wages. They are not given any holiday or maternity leave. They can be dismissed without any pay from their bosses. The abuse of their human rights is always buried because they have nowhere to complain or report.

Although they receive low wages, Muslim Yao women are able to transfer remittances in the form of money and goods to their families. On the other hand; they also face challenges with regard to remittances. On several occasions, they do not remit money through formal remittance ways. To some Yao women it is futile to remit via the post office, banks or money transfer agencies as the rates are expensive and it is time-consuming. The drivers of the daily buses or trucks which go to Malawi are also used to transfer money which reaches the destination within two days. Remittances are important in the livelihood of the families back home. The money is used to build houses, for farming, expanding small scale businesses, and paying school fees for their children. The economy of Malawi is also sustained through the foreign exchange obtained from remittances. Transferring remittances to Malawi means that women also are capable of doing what men can do. Women are socio-economically empowered when they send money and goods to their countries.

One of the challenges that Muslim Yao women immigrants encounter is that of how others respond to them. As a result of their skin colour and race they are often perceived as the “Other”. These notions of “Other” and negative stereotypes of immigrants have given rise to the outbreak of xenophobic attacks. Foreign women are demonized in the context of HIV/AIDS. It is believed that many foreign women spread venereal diseases and they compete for men in streets at night. However, Muslim Yao women believe this assumption is not true. They only came to work and not to sell their bodies. The oral interviews reveal that there is a mistrust and suspicion of black migrants from other parts of the continent. Interestingly, this hostility is not always directed to other immigrants from Europe and Asia.

This study reveals that Muslim Yao women believe that the outbreak of xenophobia can be attributed to many factors: extreme contest on job markets, housing, and health facilities and the sense of advantage or supremacy in connection to other Africans who have a dark complexion.

The dark skin colour of many foreign nationals becomes a label for prejudice and discrimination which incites xenophobia. The dark colour of their skin has become a label.

Another important finding in this study is the intersections of gender and violence in the migration process. Women are subject to both physical and mental abuse in the public sphere, workplace and home. For example, undocumented migrant women have experienced rape, torture, battering, violence, discrimination, and exploitation. Women immigrants at times are also subject to ridicule and harassment from police authorities and have no recourse. The narratives in this study highlight an urgency to rectify the current situation facing women immigrants. Government, civil societies and non-governmental organizations need to work collectively to try and eradicate the vulnerable conditions women immigrants encounter.

An important feature of this study was to explore how the women are navigating their identity in multiple contexts – with fellow Malawians, other, predominantly Indian, Muslims, and black South Africans with whom they are in contact in various settings on a daily basis. Subsequently, the complex and intricate triangular relationship between Malawian women, local indigenous peoples (officially designated as “Black African” in the census), and Indians constituted an important aspect of this study. For some Muslim Yao women have embraced a hybrid identity, others have found assimilation more challenging. For some women identity can be both complex and problematic. Some women have to straddle between being Muslim and Yao and find embracing both identities challenging in the migration process.

The appearance of Black Muslims in *hijab* (veils) is a challenge to Muslim Yao women. When walking along the streets of Durban they are easily spotted. It is easy to know that Black Muslims in *hijab* are foreigners. The complexion of the women in *hijab* also signifies that they are foreigners. It is easy to be harassed by the police who demand documents and if the women do not produce the papers they are whisked away to a secret place whereby it is alleged that the police demand some favours in form of money. Sometimes the police could demand sex from a foreign woman. On the other hand, the appearance of Black Muslim women dressed in *hijab* also signifies or symbolises that Islam is no longer regarded as an Indian religion in this part of the world.

Another challenge experienced by Muslim Yao women in Durban is that many old cultural practices are diminishing amongst them. There are some religious practices that have changed since they came to South Africa. Women are no longer accommodated in the mosques. Mosques in South Africa are seen as a symbol of men worshipping God and women have to worship in their houses. What can be called a religious patriarchy in KZN is an impediment to the ideals of Muslim Yao women who used to be granted space in mosques in Malawi before they came here. The Muslim Yao women were noted to neglect initiation ceremonies once they settled in Durban. Old traditions are dying as they are scattered and live among the Zulus and Indians who have different customs and cultures. Although some tribes in South Africa such as the Xhosa, Ndebele, and Sotho do circumcise their children at the bush just as the Yao have been doing in Malawi, the Yao living in South Africa have never taken their children to be circumcised in the bush. They would rather take their children to a medical doctor who is experienced in the operation.

This study also noted that there are also a number of religious and cultural practices which are diminishing among the Yao. However, all respondents showed that they still keep some traditions intact. For example they all agreed that they still compose and sing Islamic songs in their language known as *kaswida*. On leisure and festivals especially on the wedding ceremony the Yao sing and dance to a religious dance known as *sikiri*. But they are no long practicing *litiwo* (an initiation for a pregnant woman) and *msondo* (an initiation for a girl).

Although the Muslim Yao women are adopting a diversity of cultures found in Durban, they are not forgetting their mother tongue-Chiyao. It is proving quite a challenge to speak Chiyao in Durban. Chiyao has been kept intact by a people known as Zanzibari in Chtsworth. This demonstrates that Chiyao is an unnoticed minor language in South Africa.

These oral narratives reveal that migration has an impact on religious identities. It does to some extent create shifts in practices and beliefs within a multicultural setting and society. Hence women immigrants have to shift and negotiate their religious identity to create their own space in transnational settings.

Maintaining transnational families is also a major challenge to their ways of living in South Africa. It is difficult to migrate to South Africa with their children. They prefer to leave their children with their grandmothers. In this case, some children in Malawi grow without the love of their mothers. Some women also have to endure changes to their marital status. Upon arrival some women discovered that their spouses had abandoned them, or entered into second marriages. Whilst some women chose to divorce their partners other women accepted polygamy in their geographical settings. Hence for many women migration leads to fractured family life. These narratives highlight how women negotiated their status both as wives and mothers in the migration process.

These narratives also reveal that Muslim Yao women are active in the migration process and far from being passive and docile. Despite the multiple challenges they endure they are negotiating their multiple identities as wife, mother and immigrant and women to create new lives in the transnational settings. Women narratives show that their migration to South Africa has economically empowered women. A number of women are now independent from men. Divorced women have become independent by seeking employment in this country. These women want to show competence and authority in their own right by working in South Africa. Some respondents believe that it will be difficult to return home. A substantial number of Muslim Yao women only visit their parents, brothers, sisters, uncles and aunts in Malawi. They visit Malawi once a year. Sometimes they spend two to three years without going home depending on the availability of transport money. They miss their elders in Malawi. They also miss eating the most delicious fish in Malawi-*chambo* (tilapia shirana). On the other hand, South Africa is their new home. They have children who were born in South Africa. It means that the family is in South Africa. They want to see the fruits of educating their children in South Africa.

In addition they are also embracing the multiculturalism of their new geographical settings. On the one hand, they like the diverse culture in Durban, their interaction between the Yao, Indians, other African women, and the Zulu. Muslim Yao women believe that it is good to learn isiZulu as this language has a number of words which are similar with Chiyao. Similar weather patterns

and landscape evoke nostalgic feelings amongst Yao women immigrants in Durban. They state that the weather in Durban is always warm, just like Mangochi. They are used to seeing the mass of water of Lake Malawi and now they like watching the waves of the Indian Ocean in Durban. When they sit by the sea they reflect on the old days in Malawi when they were young women pounding maize in the mortar (*lituli*) with the pestle (*mwisi*), cooking *ugali* on the firewood (*sasu*) and drawing water from the lake. They love both Malawi and South Africa. On the other hand Muslim Yao women are also integrating their own religious and ethnic culture in Durban in the context of clothing, art, food, ideas, norms, languages, beliefs, mores, music, dance, and drama. The styles of people's clothing and the type of food they eat are showing a new diversity of cultures in KZN. They are also contributing to multiculturalism in Durban and KZN. Their narratives highlight how migration can also add to and enrich multiculturalism in diverse geographical settings and the pivotal role women can play in the process.

This study was motivated by concerns over (lack of) literature which deals with Muslim Yao women migrants to South Africa. Hence this study has highlighted the lived experiences of Muslim Yao women immigrants to KZN. This thesis will stimulate further rational debate on Muslim Yao migrants. This study demonstrates the many challenges and constraints women endure in the migration process in the context of Muslim Yao women. It highlights how the participants used their agency to negotiate their multiple roles as wives, mothers and immigrants in their new geographical location. The rich narratives emerging from this study will certainly provide a platform for future comparative studies of women immigrants from other geographical settings within the African continent. This study was limited to Durban, KZN. Future research should be conducted on the migration experiences of Malawian women to other parts of South Africa, and globally. These will provide valuable insights into how geographical location impacts on women's migration experiences in the context of race, gender, class, religion and ethnicity. This will certainly contribute to new understanding of gendered migratory experiences which is currently gaining momentum in global research.

## Appendix 1: Interview guide

MA History

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### Oral History Interview Questions: a Guide

#### Part I: Basic Biographical Data

Please state your full name and please spell your full name

Where were you born?

When were you born?

What is your current occupation?

What is your educational background?

Please tell me the full names of your parents.

What did they do for a living?

What was their educational background?

How many brothers and sisters do you have?

Where are they living and what do they do?

What was it like growing up?

If he or she is an immigrant, ask the interviewee to describe life in their country of origin.

If they were born in the South Africa, ask what their neighborhood was like.

How did they get along with other groups: racial, religious, class?

#### Part II: Migration and Settlement

Why did they come to South Africa?

Why did they choose South Africa?

How did they come to South Africa?

Who made the decision to immigrate?

How was the decision made?

How long did the decision take? (Note: political refugees must make the decision to immigrate in a much shorter time, often in a few minutes, hours, or a day.)

By what means did they immigrate to South Africa? (Via airplane or through African countries?)

Who provided the money for the transportation?

Did they travel together as a family or separately?

How was the health of everyone? Was anyone pregnant during the journey?

Where did they arrive in South Africa?

Who greeted them when they arrived? Was it a relative or a friend or an agency representative?

Where did they go and live once they arrived?

What were their financial resources like when they arrived?

Did they immediately find housing to rent or buy?

What was their neighbourhood like?

How did they get along with their neighbours and the community?

How long did they stay in their first home?

Did they find a job immediately? Was there a job waiting for them?

Who helped them find a job?

Did they like their job? What were their working conditions like?

If they did not find a job, what did they do to survive?

What happened to the rest of their families?

Do they live close to other family members?

How are the experiences of women different from those of men?

### **Part III: Race/Ethnic relations, Identity, and the Future**

Of what ethnicity are their friends?

How did they get along with locals?

Did they experience any racial / class / nationality discrimination? (If yes, please describe.)

How did they get along with other ethnic / religious groups, e.g., other Africans, Indians, Muslims, Christians, whites?

How did they get along with other migrants?

Do they keep in contact with migrants from their home countries and how is this done?

What kinds of social or professional organizations do they belong to?

What kinds of traditions and practices did they keep?

Why do they continue to practice these traditions and customs?

Which did they decide to change or stop practicing?

What do they see as their "identity"?

For example, do they see themselves as African, country of origin, South African?

How would they feel if their children married outside their ethnic / religious group?

What kinds of traditions did they pass on or would like to pass on to their children?

Which traditions do their children practice?

Have they had personal experiences of xenophobia?

What happened? How were they affected?

What do they see as their "place" in South Africa?

What are their feelings about South Africa?

How did these feelings change from when they arrived in South Africa?

What was the most important and meaningful event or experience in their life?

What was the happiest moment in their life?

What are their dreams and visions for their future?

Is there anything they would like to add to the interview?

**Thank you for participating**

## Appendix 2: Informed Consent Document

Social Sciences, College of Humanities, University of  
KwaZulu-Natal, Howard Campus,

### Informed Consent Document

Dear Participant,

My name is Joseph Yusufu Mbalaka (student no- 215068614). I am a Masters of Social Science student studying at the University of KwaZulu-Natal, Howard College Campus. The title of my research is *Exploring the Migration Experience of Muslim Yao Women in KwaZulu-Natal, 1994 – 2015*. The aim of this study is to historicise the lived migration experiences of the Yao Muslim women in South Africa, using the methodology of oral history to examine their multiple aspects of their lives, especially on the reasons for their migration, their settlement patterns, the challenges, constraints they experienced in the context of social adaptation and cultural assimilation between 1994 to 2015. I am interested in interviewing you so as to share your experiences and observations on the subject matter. Your community is one part of my studies. To gather the information, I am interested in asking you some questions.

Please note that:

- The information that you provide will be used for scholarly research only.
- Your participation is entirely voluntary. You have a choice to participate, not to participate or stop participating at any point. You will not be penalized for taking such action.
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- The interview will take approximately one and half hours.
- The record as well as other items associated with the interview will be held in a password-protected file accessible only to me and my supervisors. After a period of 5 years, in line with the rules of the university, the information that you provide will be disposed by shredding and burning.
- If you agree to participate, please sign the declaration attached to this statement (a separate sheet will be provided for signatures)

I can be contacted at: School of Social Sciences, University of KwaZulu-Natal, Howard College Campus, Durban. Email: [215068614@stu.ukzn.ac.za](mailto:215068614@stu.ukzn.ac.za) or [ndapeuli@gmail.com](mailto:ndapeuli@gmail.com) Cell: 0783924114

My supervisor is Professor Kalpana Hiralal who is located at the School of Social Sciences, Howard College Campus, Durban of the University of KwaZulu-Natal. Contact details: Email: [hiralalk@ukzn.ac.za](mailto:hiralalk@ukzn.ac.za) Phone: 031 260 7536.

The Humanities and Social Sciences Research Ethics Committee contact details are as follows:  
Ms Phumele Ximba, University of KwaZulu-Natal, Research Office, Email: [ximbap@ukzn.ca.za](mailto:ximbap@ukzn.ca.za), Phone number +27312603587. Thank you for your contribution to this research.

DECLARATION

I, ABITI ADAM..... (full names of participant) hereby confirm that I understand the contents of this document and the nature of the research project, and I consent to participating in the research project.

I understand that I am at liberty to withdraw from the project at any time, should I so desire.

I understand the intention of the research. I hereby agree to participate.

I consent / do not consent to have this interview recorded (if applicable)

  
SIGNATURE OF PARTICIPANT

4/9/16  
DATE

**Informed Consent Document**

Dear Participant,

My name is Joseph Yusufu Mbalaka (student no- 215068614). I am a Masters of Social Science student studying at the University of KwaZulu-Natal, Howard College Campus. The title of my research is *Exploring the Migration Experience of Muslim Yao Women in KwaZulu-Natal, 1994 – 2015*. The aim of this study is to historicise the lived migration experiences of the Yao Muslim women in South Africa, using the methodology of oral history to examine their multiple aspects of their lives, especially on the reasons for their migration, their settlement patterns, the challenges, constraints they experienced in the context of social adaptation and cultural assimilation between 1994 to 2015. I am interested in interviewing you so as to share your experiences and observations on the subject matter. Your community is one part of my studies. To gather the information, I am interested in asking you some questions.

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Thank you for your contribution to this research.

DECLARATION

I... Aisha ..... (full names of participant) hereby confirm that I understand the contents of this document and the nature of the research project, and I consent to participating in the research project.

I understand that I am at liberty to withdraw from the project at any time, should I so desire.

I understand the intention of the research. I hereby agree to participate.

I consent / do not consent to have this interview recorded (if applicable)

Aisha .....  
SIGNATURE OF PARTICIPANT

05 SEPT. 16 .....  
DATE

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DECLARATION

I, Asiyah Mbata ..... (full names of participant) hereby confirm that I understand the contents of this document and the nature of the research project, and I consent to participating in the research project.

I understand that I am at liberty to withdraw from the project at any time, should I so desire.  
I understand the intention of the research. I hereby agree to participate.

I consent / do not consent to have this interview recorded (if applicable)

  
.....  
SIGNATURE OF PARTICIPANT

11/09/2016  
.....  
DATE

Social Sciences, College of Humanities, University of  
KwaZulu-Natal, Howard Campus,

### **Informed Consent Document**

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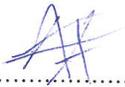
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DECLARATION

I.....AMINA Ali..... (full names of participant) hereby confirm that I understand the contents of this document and the nature of the research project, and I consent to participating in the research project.

I understand that I am at liberty to withdraw from the project at any time, should I so desire.  
I understand the intention of the research. I hereby agree to participate.

I consent / do not consent to have this interview recorded (if applicable)

  
.....  
SIGNATURE OF PARTICIPANT

11/09/2016  
.....  
DATE

### **Informed Consent Document**

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DECLARATION

I, ANDIMBEJE MSUSA ..... (full names of participant) hereby confirm that I understand the contents of this document and the nature of the research project, and I consent to participating in the research project.

I understand that I am at liberty to withdraw from the project at any time, should I so desire.

I understand the intention of the research. I hereby agree to participate.

I consent / do not consent to have this interview recorded (if applicable)

Amusa .....  
SIGNATURE OF PARTICIPANT

11-09-2016 .....  
DATE

### **Informed Consent Document**

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DECLARATION

I ANGALIYA KUTI..... (full names of participant) hereby confirm that I understand the contents of this document and the nature of the research project, and I consent to participating in the research project.

I understand that I am at liberty to withdraw from the project at any time, should I so desire.

I understand the intention of the research. I hereby agree to participate.

I consent / do not consent to have this interview recorded (if applicable)

ANGALIYAKUTI.....  
SIGNATURE OF PARTICIPANT

14-09-2016  
DATE

Social Sciences, College of Humanities, University of  
KwaZulu-Natal, Howard Campus,

### **Informed Consent Document**

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DECLARATION

I, ANGUMBEJE..... (full names of participant) hereby confirm that I understand the contents of this document and the nature of the research project, and I consent to participating in the research project.

I understand that I am at liberty to withdraw from the project at any time, should I so desire.  
I understand the intention of the research. I hereby agree to participate.

I consent / do not consent to have this interview recorded (if applicable)

ARJE.....  
SIGNATURE OF PARTICIPANT

17/09/2016  
DATE

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DECLARATION

I, Asausyeje ..... (full names of participant) hereby confirm that I understand the contents of this document and the nature of the research project, and I consent to participating in the research project.

I understand that I am at liberty to withdraw from the project at any time, should I so desire.

I understand the intention of the research. I hereby agree to participate.

I consent / do not consent to have this interview recorded (if applicable)

  
.....  
SIGNATURE OF PARTICIPANT

02/09/2016  
.....  
DATE

### **Informed Consent Document**

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Thank you for your contribution to this research.

DECLARATION

I, Che Msumba ..... (full names of participant) hereby confirm that I understand the contents of this document and the nature of the research project, and I consent to participating in the research project.

I understand that I am at liberty to withdraw from the project at any time, should I so desire.

I understand the intention of the research. I hereby agree to participate.

I consent / do not consent to have this interview recorded (if applicable)

Che Msumba  
SIGNATURE OF PARTICIPANT

11-09-2016  
DATE

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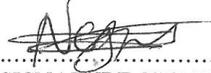
Thank you for your contribution to this research.

DECLARATION

I, Che Ngaji..... (full names of participant) hereby confirm that I understand the contents of this document and the nature of the research project, and I consent to participating in the research project.

I understand that I am at liberty to withdraw from the project at any time, should I so desire.  
I understand the intention of the research. I hereby agree to participate.

I consent / do not consent to have this interview recorded (if applicable)

  
.....  
SIGNATURE OF PARTICIPANT

10 September 16  
DATE

### **Informed Consent Document**

Dear Participant,

My name is Joseph Yusufu Mbalaka (student no- 215068614). I am a Masters of Social Science student studying at the University of KwaZulu-Natal, Howard College Campus. The title of my research is *Exploring the Migration Experience of Muslim Yao Women in KwaZulu-Natal, 1994 – 2015*. The aim of this study is to historicise the lived migration experiences of the Yao Muslim women in South Africa, using the methodology of oral history to examine their multiple aspects of their lives, especially on the reasons for their migration, their settlement patterns, the challenges, constraints they experienced in the context of social adaptation and cultural assimilation between 1994 to 2015. I am interested in interviewing you so as to share your experiences and observations on the subject matter. Your community is one part of my studies. To gather the information, I am interested in asking you some questions.

Please note that:

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- If you agree to participate, please sign the declaration attached to this statement (a separate sheet will be provided for signatures)

I can be contacted at: School of Social Sciences, University of KwaZulu-Natal, Howard College Campus, Durban. Email: [215068614@stu.ukzn.ac.za](mailto:215068614@stu.ukzn.ac.za) or [ndapeuli@gmail.com](mailto:ndapeuli@gmail.com) Cell: 0783924114

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Thank you for your contribution to this research.

DECLARATION

I EMIFA NYUSA..... (full names of participant) hereby confirm that I understand the contents of this document and the nature of the research project, and I consent to participating in the research project.

I understand that I am at liberty to withdraw from the project at any time, should I so desire. I understand the intention of the research. I hereby agree to participate.

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.....  
SIGNATURE OF PARTICIPANT

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DATE

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Thank you for your contribution to this research.

DECLARATION

I Faceza Muhammad ..... (full names of participant) hereby confirm that I understand the contents of this document and the nature of the research project, and I consent to participating in the research project.

I understand that I am at liberty to withdraw from the project at any time, should I so desire.

I understand the intention of the research. I hereby agree to participate.

I consent / do not consent to have this interview recorded (if applicable)

Faceza Muhammad  
SIGNATURE OF PARTICIPANT

9 September 2016  
DATE

### **Informed Consent Document**

Dear Participant,

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DECLARATION

I, FATIMA ..... (full names of participant) hereby confirm that I understand the contents of this document and the nature of the research project, and I consent to participating in the research project.

I understand that I am at liberty to withdraw from the project at any time, should I so desire.

I understand the intention of the research. I hereby agree to participate.

I consent / do not consent to have this interview recorded (if applicable)

FAG .....  
SIGNATURE OF PARTICIPANT

11-09-2016 .....  
DATE

### **Informed Consent Document**

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DECLARATION

I Fatma Dano ..... (full names of participant) hereby confirm that I understand the contents of this document and the nature of the research project, and I consent to participating in the research project.

I understand that I am at liberty to withdraw from the project at any time, should I so desire. I understand the intention of the research. I hereby agree to participate.

I consent / do not consent to have this interview recorded (if applicable)

Fatma .....  
SIGNATURE OF PARTICIPANT

.....  
DATE

DECLARATION

I, HABIBA GEGALA ..... (full names of participant) hereby confirm that I understand the contents of this document and the nature of the research project, and I consent to participating in the research project.

I understand that I am at liberty to withdraw from the project at any time, should I so desire.

I understand the intention of the research. I hereby agree to participate.

I consent / do not consent to have this interview recorded (if applicable)

  
.....  
SIGNATURE OF PARTICIPANT

  
.....  
DATE

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Thank you for your contribution to this research.

DECLARATION

I, Hajeerah Bwanali..... (full names of participant) hereby confirm that I understand the contents of this document and the nature of the research project, and I consent to participating in the research project.

I understand that I am at liberty to withdraw from the project at any time, should I so desire. I understand the intention of the research. I hereby agree to participate.

I consent / do not consent to have this interview recorded (if applicable)

H. Bwanali  
SIGNATURE OF PARTICIPANT

11/09/16  
H. Bwanali  
DATE

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Thank you for your contribution to this research.

DECLARATION

I halima Mboka ..... (full names of participant) hereby confirm that I understand the contents of this document and the nature of the research project, and I consent to participating in the research project.

I understand that I am at liberty to withdraw from the project at any time, should I so desire.

I understand the intention of the research. I hereby agree to participate.

I consent / do not consent to have this interview recorded (if applicable)

h. Mboka  
SIGNATURE OF PARTICIPANT

11-9-2016  
DATE

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DECLARATION

I, HAWA MLOKOTE..... (full names of participant) hereby confirm that I understand the contents of this document and the nature of the research project, and I consent to participating in the research project.

I understand that I am at liberty to withdraw from the project at any time, should I so desire.

I understand the intention of the research. I hereby agree to participate.

I consent / do not consent to have this interview recorded (if applicable)

HWA.....  
SIGNATURE OF PARTICIPANT

11 September 2016.....  
DATE

**Informed Consent Document**

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Thank you for your contribution to this research.

DECLARATION

I, Khadija.....Gadifa..... (full names of participant) hereby confirm that I understand the contents of this document and the nature of the research project, and I consent to participating in the research project.

I understand that I am at liberty to withdraw from the project at any time, should I so desire. I understand the intention of the research. I hereby agree to participate.

I consent / do not consent to have this interview recorded (if applicable)

[Signature]  
SIGNATURE OF PARTICIPANT

11/09/2016  
DATE

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Thank you for your contribution to this research.

DECLARATION

I KHADISA MOSES ..... (full names of participant) hereby confirm that I understand the contents of this document and the nature of the research project, and I consent to participating in the research project.

I understand that I am at liberty to withdraw from the project at any time, should I so desire.

I understand the intention of the research. I hereby agree to participate.

I consent / do not consent to have this interview recorded (if applicable)

Khadisa Moses  
SIGNATURE OF PARTICIPANT

25/03/2016.....  
DATE

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The Humanities and Social Sciences Research Ethics Committee contact details are as follows: Ms Phumele Ximba, University of KwaZulu-Natal, Research Office, Email: [ximbap@ukzn.ca.za](mailto:ximbap@ukzn.ca.za), Phone number +27312603587.

Thank you for your contribution to this research.

DECLARATION

I.....KHADUJA SAITI..... (full names of participant) hereby confirm that I understand the contents of this document and the nature of the research project, and I consent to participating in the research project.

I understand that I am at liberty to withdraw from the project at any time, should I so desire. I understand the intention of the research. I hereby agree to participate.

I consent / do not consent to have this interview recorded (if applicable)

KHADUJA SAITI  
SIGNATURE OF PARTICIPANT

11-09-16  
DATE

**Informed Consent Document**

Dear Participant,

My name is Joseph Yusufu Mbalaka (student no- 215068614). I am a Masters of Social Science student studying at the University of KwaZulu-Natal, Howard College Campus. The title of my research is *Exploring the Migration Experience of Muslim Yao Women in KwaZulu-Natal, 1994 – 2015*. The aim of this study is to historicise the lived migration experiences of the Yao Muslim women in South Africa, using the methodology of oral history to examine their multiple aspects of their lives, especially on the reasons for their migration, their settlement patterns, the challenges, constraints they experienced in the context of social adaptation and cultural assimilation between 1994 to 2015. I am interested in interviewing you so as to share your experiences and observations on the subject matter. Your community is one part of my studies. To gather the information, I am interested in asking you some questions.

Please note that:

- The information that you provide will be used for scholarly research only.
- Your participation is entirely voluntary. You have a choice to participate, not to participate or stop participating at any point. You will not be penalized for taking such action.
- Your views in this interview will be presented anonymously. Neither your name nor identity will be disclosed in any form in this study.
- The interview will take approximately one and half hours.
- The record as well as other items associated with the interview will be held in a password-protected file accessible only to me and my supervisors. After a period of 5 years, in line with the rules of the university, the information that you provide will be disposed by shredding and burning.
- If you agree to participate, please sign the declaration attached to this statement (a separate sheet will be provided for signatures)

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Thank you for your contribution to this research.

DECLARATION

I, Laila ..... (full names of participant) hereby confirm that I understand the contents of this document and the nature of the research project, and I consent to participating in the research project.

I understand that I am at liberty to withdraw from the project at any time, should I so desire.

I understand the intention of the research. I hereby agree to participate.

I consent / do not consent to have this interview recorded (if applicable)

Laila  
.....  
SIGNATURE OF PARTICIPANT

9-9-2016  
.....  
DATE

**Informed Consent Document**

Dear Participant,

My name is Joseph Yusufu Mbalaka (student no- 215068614). I am a Masters of Social Science student studying at the University of KwaZulu-Natal, Howard College Campus. The title of my research is *Exploring the Migration Experience of Muslim Yao Women in KwaZulu-Natal, 1994 – 2015*. The aim of this study is to historicise the lived migration experiences of the Yao Muslim women in South Africa, using the methodology of oral history to examine their multiple aspects of their lives, especially on the reasons for their migration, their settlement patterns, the challenges, constraints they experienced in the context of social adaptation and cultural assimilation between 1994 to 2015. I am interested in interviewing you so as to share your experiences and observations on the subject matter. Your community is one part of my studies. To gather the information, I am interested in asking you some questions.

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Thank you for your contribution to this research.

DECLARATION

I LOYENESS NISEULA..... (full names of participant) hereby confirm that I understand the contents of this document and the nature of the research project, and I consent to participating in the research project.

I understand that I am at liberty to withdraw from the project at any time, should I so desire. I understand the intention of the research. I hereby agree to participate.

I consent / do not consent to have this interview recorded (if applicable)

  
.....  
SIGNATURE OF PARTICIPANT

.....  
DATE

**Informed Consent Document**

Dear Participant,

My name is Joseph Yusufu Mbalaka (student no- 215068614). I am a Masters of Social Science student studying at the University of KwaZulu-Natal, Howard College Campus. The title of my research is *Exploring the Migration Experience of Muslim Yao Women in KwaZulu-Natal, 1994 – 2015*. The aim of this study is to historicise the lived migration experiences of the Yao Muslim women in South Africa, using the methodology of oral history to examine their multiple aspects of their lives, especially on the reasons for their migration, their settlement patterns, the challenges, constraints they experienced in the context of social adaptation and cultural assimilation between 1994 to 2015. I am interested in interviewing you so as to share your experiences and observations on the subject matter. Your community is one part of my studies. To gather the information, I am interested in asking you some questions.

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Thank you for your contribution to this research.

DECLARATION

I maligamu John ..... (full names of participant) hereby confirm that I understand the contents of this document and the nature of the research project, and I consent to participating in the research project.

I understand that I am at liberty to withdraw from the project at any time, should I so desire. I understand the intention of the research. I hereby agree to participate.

I consent / do not consent to have this interview recorded (if applicable)

m John .....  
SIGNATURE OF PARTICIPANT

.....  
DATE

**Informed Consent Document**

Dear Participant,

My name is Joseph Yusufu Mbalaka (student no- 215068614). I am a Masters of Social Science student studying at the University of KwaZulu-Natal, Howard College Campus. The title of my research is *Exploring the Migration Experience of Muslim Yao Women in KwaZulu-Natal, 1994 – 2015*. The aim of this study is to historicise the lived migration experiences of the Yao Muslim women in South Africa, using the methodology of oral history to examine their multiple aspects of their lives, especially on the reasons for their migration, their settlement patterns, the challenges, constraints they experienced in the context of social adaptation and cultural assimilation between 1994 to 2015. I am interested in interviewing you so as to share your experiences and observations on the subject matter. Your community is one part of my studies. To gather the information, I am interested in asking you some questions.

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Thank you for your contribution to this research.

DECLARATION

I, SHAKIRA..... (full names of participant) hereby confirm that I understand the contents of this document and the nature of the research project, and I consent to participating in the research project.

I understand that I am at liberty to withdraw from the project at any time, should I so desire.

I understand the intention of the research. I hereby agree to participate.

I consent / do not consent to have this interview recorded (if applicable)

Shakira  
.....  
SIGNATURE OF PARTICIPANT

9-9-2016  
.....  
DATE

**Informed Consent Document**

Dear Participant,

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Thank you for your contribution to this research.

DECLARATION

I, Sigete ..... (full names of participant) hereby confirm that I understand the contents of this document and the nature of the research project, and I consent to participating in the research project.

I understand that I am at liberty to withdraw from the project at any time, should I so desire.

I understand the intention of the research. I hereby agree to participate.

I consent / do not consent to have this interview recorded (if applicable)

Sigete  
.....  
SIGNATURE OF PARTICIPANT

08/09/10  
.....  
DATE

**Informed Consent Document**

Dear Participant,

My name is Joseph Yusufu Mbalaka (student no- 215068614). I am a Masters of Social Science student studying at the University of KwaZulu-Natal, Howard College Campus. The title of my research is *Exploring the Migration Experience of Muslim Yao Women in KwaZulu-Natal, 1994 – 2015*. The aim of this study is to historicise the lived migration experiences of the Yao Muslim women in South Africa, using the methodology of oral history to examine their multiple aspects of their lives, especially on the reasons for their migration, their settlement patterns, the challenges, constraints they experienced in the context of social adaptation and cultural assimilation between 1994 to 2015. I am interested in interviewing you so as to share your experiences and observations on the subject matter. Your community is one part of my studies. To gather the information, I am interested in asking you some questions.

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Thank you for your contribution to this research.

DECLARATION

I, OPLE ..... (*full names of participant*) hereby confirm that I understand the contents of this document and the nature of the research project, and I consent to participating in the research project.

I understand that I am at liberty to withdraw from the project at any time, should I so desire.

I understand the intention of the research. I hereby agree to participate.

I consent / do not consent to have this interview recorded (if applicable)

  
.....  
SIGNATURE OF PARTICIPANT

9-9-2016  
.....  
DATE

## **Bibliography**

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Amina Upile (Malukazi, 20 September, 2016).

Asausyeje (Overport, 2 September, 2016).

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**(iii) Photographs:**

*Figures: 4, 5, 6, 7, 8, 9, 10, 11, 12, 14, and 15.* (The photographs were taken by the author of this study).

Figure: 13 (Fatima Muhammad's personal photograph).

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