

TOPIC: Religious Practices and Cultural Traditions in East Africa: Respectfully Encountering Difference

In this lesson, you will learn about diverse religious practices and cultural traditions such as holiday celebrations, engagements, and marriages. Although celebrations such as marriage were discussed in the context of family life in the previous lesson, here we will broaden our scope to a focus on the relationship between the larger community and particular forms of religious practice and cultural traditions that have simultaneously shaped and been shaped by the orbital forces of their historical engagement with society.

Furthermore, as a matter of language-study, and therefore an inquiry into difference (that is, the specific kind of difference which emerges in scenes of addressing foreigners), we will also briefly, but nonetheless critically, consider our privileged positions as foreign students who are simultaneously encountering religious and cultural difference as scenes of objective pedagogical investigation as well as personal experience. As a matter of respectfully engaging and navigating foreign communities, it is vital that we retain a critical position - in regard to ourselves as well as the foreign community - in order to maintain sensitivity to our personal values and motivations and the way in which these self-modalities predetermine our encounters with foreignness and difference.

Moreover, despite the multitude of religious faiths and spiritualities in the East African region, the items in this lesson will discuss the religious practices and affiliations most common to Swahili communities: Christianity and Islam. Both Christianity and Islam have had a tremendous impact on social, cultural, and historical forms, norms, and patterns in East Africa. (Although this has not been touched on in the text books, the large Indian population in East Africa has established a large - and currently growing - Hindu community in this region.)

MATERIALS FOR THIS STUDY GUIDE

Textbooks

- Hinnebusch

- Lesson 26, Habari za Sarufi, Note 1 (pg. 186)
- Lesson 27, Habari za Sarufi, Note 1 (pp. 192-93)
- Lesson 21, Habari za Sarufi, Note 3 (pp. 149-150)
- Lesson 22, Zoezi La Kusoma (“Desturi za Arusi”) (pp. 154-5)
- Lesson 22, Msamiati (pp. 157-8)
- [Online audio for Hinnebusch](#)
- Almasi
 - Chapter 29 (pp. 305-314)
 - Chapter 13 (pp. 128-131)

Online Materials

- Newspaper Resources
 - [Gazeti la Mwananchi Tanzania](#)
 - [Mwanzo - Hizb ut Tahrir Kenya](#)
 - [RFI](#)
- Other Online Resources
 - [Wikipedia in Kiswahili - Religion in Tanzania](#)

ASSIGNMENTS FOR INDEPENDENT STUDY

Reviewing Relative Pronouns and Relative Clauses, and -enye 'having, possessing'

1. Read Hinnebusch Lesson 26, Habari za Sarufi, Note 1 (pg. 186). Study the examples and make flashcards to memorize the information.
2. Study Hinnebusch Lesson 27, Habari za Sarufi, Note 1 (pp. 192-93). Make sure you understand when to use the -amba- relative as opposed to the -o- relative. Make flashcards and memorize the information.
3. Read Almasi, Chapter 29 (pp. 305-314) for further information on relatives. Be especially attentive to information that is new or unfamiliar.
4. **HAND IN:** The translation of the Tafsiri on Hinnebusch, pg. 186.
5. **HAND IN:** The translation of the Tafsiri on Hinnebusch, pg. 193.
6. Hinnebusch Lesson 21, Habari za Sarufi, Note 3 (pp. 149-150). The -enye relative is an important way to form adjectives or other modifiers. Study its meaning as well as the table of forms provided, memorizing any that are irregular or surprising.

7. Read Almasi, Chapter 13 (pp. 128-131). This covers the forms and some additional points about -enye adjectives, as well as some others that we have studied before this guide. Note and memorize anything new.
8. **HAND IN:** The translation of the Tafsiri on Hinnebusch, pg. 150.

Learning about Religious Practices and Cultural Traditions

1. Hinnebusch, Lesson 22, Zoezi La Kusoma ("Desturi za Arusi") (pp. 154-5), and Msamiati (pp. 157-8). Study the vocabulary and read the passage. Memorize the phrases or words that are unfamiliar
2. Choose a religious tradition in a Swahili-speaking country – Christian or Islamic. Do some online research about it and the role it plays in that country. Choose a particular variant of Islam or Christianity. A good place to start is [Wikipedia in Kiswahili - Religion in Tanzania](#) and similar Wikipedia pages for other countries. YouTube is a good resource for seeing examples of different ceremonies or watching interviews. Searching in Swahili on Google is also a good way to find study material.
3. Consider: What are the major rituals and holidays the communities take part in, and how are they described in Swahili? What does a day or a week look like for a person who is a practitioner of these faiths in East Africa? How do these communities interact with one another?
4. **HAND IN:** A long dialogue (at least 20 lines) between a foreign traveler or student and a religious elder that is either Christian or Muslim (only these two options are provided because we have not learned about the customs of other religions in East Africa). This dialogue should take place during a public religious celebration such as Eid al-Fitr (the Islamic festival at the end of Ramadan), Christmas, Easter, or any other important religious event that is publicly celebrated in East Africa. The foreigner should politely greet the elder, and inquire about the festivities, ceremonies, or rituals happening around town.
5. **HAND IN:** Write out the notes for a presentation on the role and practice of religion in your family or some other community. Be prepared to give this presentation in your conversation session. You may use bullet points in the notes, but make sure to write in full sentences.

Reading the News

1. Go to the [Gazeti la Mwananchi Tanzania](#), [Mwanzo - Hizb ut Tahrir Kenya](#), or [RFI](#) and find a short article in Swahili on the subject of Religion. Read the article, noting down any new words or expressions to study afterwards and enter into your memory system.
2. **HAND IN:** A short summary (10 sentences) of an authentic Swahili news article about Health. Visit [Gazeti la Mwananchi Tanzania](#), [Mwanzo - Hizb ut Tahrir Kenya](#), or [RFI](#) to find one.

CONVERSATION SESSION PREPARATION

- Be prepared to... Present a short discussion (5-6 minutes) of the social and cultural importance of a particular religion and/or religious custom(s) (such as marriage, baptisms, circumcision, etc...) in your native country. Make sure to describe the way in which this religion or religious custom effects the entire community and society - that is, explain the way in which this religion has an impact on the society beyond the limits of the religious community itself. Or, you could also discuss the way in which the prevalence of a certain religious community affects the community at large. Refer to Hinnebusch, Lesson 22, Zoezi La Kusoma ("Desturi za Arusi") (pp. 154-5), Msamiati (pp. 157-8) for examples and vocabulary.
- Be prepared to... Perform a role play in which you are a foreign traveler/student visiting an East African country at the time of an important and publicly celebrated religious event such as Eid al-Fitr (the Islamic festival at the end of Ramadan), Christmas, Easter, or any other important religious event that is publicly celebrated in East Africa. During this event, you encounter an elder (Mzee) and you politely ask him about the festivities, ceremonies, or rituals occurring.

HOMEWORK FOR TUTORIAL

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- **HAND IN:** The translation of the Tafsiri on Hinnebusch, pg. 193.
- **HAND IN:** The translation of the Tafsiri on Hinnebusch, pg. 150.

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- **HAND IN:** A short summary (10 sentences) of an authentic Swahili news article about Health. Visit [Gazeti la Mwananchi Tanzania](#), [Mwanzo - Hizb ut Tahrir Kenya](#), or [RFI](#) to find one.