

6. A Research Note on the Work of Clerics-Led Peace Committees in Kenya's Coast  
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(Abstract by the author)

This abstract presents findings of a preliminary study on the work of the Coast Interfaith Council of Clerics (CICC) community-level peace committees in Kenya. Over the past five years, these semi-autonomous, geographically dispersed networks of clerics have effectively addressed inter-faith and inter-ethnic conflict in both urban and rural contexts. The study argues that, despite the fact that peace committees generally understand the notion of peace from Christian and Islam perspectives, they are, all the same, indigenous African structures. Of course, this argument is plausible only if one takes seriously Claude Ake's argument that 'the indigenous' refers to 'whatever the people consider important in their lives, whatever they regard as authentic expressions of themselves (Ake 1990).' In fact, CICC peace committees are rooted in the spiritual lives of Coastal residents; they tend to inspire more legitimacy and trust than their official counterparts. They also make conceptual and practical linkages between the issues of peace and development, which many ordinary Africans observe in their daily lives.

The study finds that CICC peace committees have a co-operative relationship with the state's Provincial Administration, which is based on joint planning and coordination of peace work. By partnering with peace committees, the state recognizes the moral autonomy of religious communities to address issues of peace. Partly based on their broad reach and appeal to the region's dominant religions, peace committees have also displayed the potential to be effective and sustainable mechanisms for broadening peace work at the community level. This particular development falls within the broader, global pattern of polycentric peace and security governance in many societies. Nevertheless, as their composition and initiatives tend to be dominated by clerics, it appears that some level of "elite capture" affects CICC peace committees.