

**CONSTRUCTING IDENTITY  
THROUGH FESTIVALS:  
THE CASE OF LAMU CULTURAL FESTIVAL  
IN KENYA**

by

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I declare that this dissertation is my own original work. Where secondary material is used, this has been carefully acknowledged and referenced in accordance with university requirements.

I understand what plagiarism is and am aware of university policy and implications in this regard.



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31 March 2017

## **DEDICATION**

To Mr Christopher K. Karanja & Mrs Lydiah W. Kahuno

with gratitude, love and respect

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## ABSTRACT

Cultural festivals have become a prominent topic of research because of their socio-economic value. However, thus far, limited research has been conducted on the more profound issue of the possible contribution of festivals towards constructing a cultural identity. The aim of this study was therefore to determine the role that one particular festival, the Lamu Cultural Festival, plays in constructing cultural identity, particularly when people from different cultural backgrounds are involved. Lamu in Kenya was chosen as the study area, due to its rich and unique cultural heritage, with the main aim of investigating whether the Lamu Cultural Festival is helping to preserve the cultural heritage of this area and/or to create a new Lamu identity.

An anthropological approach was used to conduct the study on cultural identity. The research was conducted on the 14<sup>th</sup> annual Cultural Festival in Lamu, where the festival has taken place since 2001, after the Island was declared a UNESCO World Heritage Site. The best way to understand another culture is to experience it first-hand by travelling to the destination, hence the use of participant observation for data collection.

The dissertation looks at various debates regarding identity construction through cultural festivals. It also investigates the development of festival literature, festival tourism and the history of festivals. Cultural practices among the Aweer, the Bajuni, the Sanye and the Orma in Lamu, and these people's sense of cultural identity before the introduction of the Lamu Cultural Festival are also assessed, in order to understand the respective senses of cultural identity of these four indigenous groups involved in the festival. The Lamu Cultural Festival itself is also discussed in detail: the planning process, stakeholders and organisers, people's motivations for participating in the festival, festival items and their composition.

The research findings may assist festival organisers in achieving a better understanding of the importance of involving indigenous communities in the planning process and possibly in achieving a Lamu identity over time.

**Key Words:** Identity, festivals, indigenous communities, Lamu, Lamu Cultural Festival, cultural values and practices, stakeholders, Aweer, Bajuni, Sanye, Orma.

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## LIST OF ACRONYMS AND ABBREVIATIONS

ANC	African National Congress
IWGIA	International Work Group for Indigenous Affairs
KKNK	Klein Karoo Nasionale Kunstefees
UNESCO	United Nations Environmental Scientific and Cultural Organisation

## CHAPTER 1: INTRODUCTION

### 1.1 Problem statement

The term identity comes from the Latin word *idem*, which means the sameness of a person or thing. According to Gleason (1983:910), a thing's identity is what the thing is. Erikson (1968:61-65) describes the concept of identity as 'sameness over time', as well as 'difference from others'. This implies that for something to be the same over time, it has to be different from other things. Identity is thus predicated and constructed on the recognition of some common origin or shared characteristics with another person or group, or with an ideal (Brubaker & Cooper, 2000:7), and by implication, on difference from other origins, characteristics of a person, group, or ideal.

The study of identity in the social sciences commenced in the 1970s, when sociologists began to consider identity as an artefact of interactions between the individual and society (Gleason, 1983:918). Identity studies have attracted immense academic scholarly interest over the last few decades; indeed, Hall (1996:1) claimed that it is one of the fastest growing fields in the social sciences. Different disciplines have looked at identity from different perspectives.

The study of identity is a cornerstone of modern sociological thought. According to Appiah and Gates (1995:1), sociologists have focused scholarly attention on cohesion in respect of gender/sexuality, race/ethnicity and class. Cohesive identity addresses the 'we-ness' of a group (community) with collective similarities or shared attributes that make it possible for its members to co-exist (Appiah & Gates, 1995). A good example of collective identity is Marx's class-consciousness that could embrace psychological traits, physiological predispositions, regional features, and/or the properties of structural location (Jasper & Polletta, 2001). Sociologists have looked at ways in which interpersonal interactions mould an individual's sense of self, including religious identity (Cerulo, 1997), whereas psychology's focus has been on individual identity.

Anthropologists have carried out studies on ethnic and cultural identity (Gleason, 1983; Hall, 1991:20). Phinney *et al.* (2001:496) define ethnic identity as a sense of belonging to a

group or culture; it is an individual's sense of self in terms of membership of a particular ethnic group. It embraces various aspects, including self-identification, feelings of belongingness and commitment to a group, a sense of shared values, and attitudes towards one's own ethnic group. It involves issues of group membership, self-image, ethnic affiliation and cultural affiliation. It is a composite of attitudes, feelings and perceptions towards one's own ethnic group or culture. Ethnic identity varies from strong to weak – people with a strong ethnic identity are more interested in group membership, are committed to the group and participate in group activities and ethnic practices; people with a weak ethnic identity have little ethnic interest, and are neither interested in group membership, nor participate in ethnic activities (Ting-Toomey *et al.*, 2000:49-50). Cultural identity is the degree of membership affiliation with the larger culture; ethnic identity refers to the degree of membership with one's own specific ethnic group (Phinney, 1989, 1992). Taylor, Dubé and Bellerose (1986) have demonstrated that ethnic identity can be the basis of a cultural identity and can affect communication with others outside that group.

In this study, an anthropological approach is used to conduct a study on cultural identity as constructed in the Lamu Cultural Festival in Kenya. In the context of anthropology, cultural identity is regarded as a stable, unchanging and continuing frame of reference and meaning which people with a shared history and ancestry hold in common. It is one shared culture with common historical experiences, with a oneness underlying all other superficial differences (Hall, 1990:211,223). Collier and Thomas (1988, cited in Stephan & Stephan, 2000:544) describe cultural identity as the conscious identification of the members of a group with that group, the identification with and perceived acceptance into a group that has a shared system of symbols and meanings, as well as shared norms for conduct.

Meanings attached to places and shared by communities also serve as powerful sources of identity, and events such as festivals can contribute to a sense of sharing and belonging (McCabe & Stokoe, 2004:602; Okech, 2011:197). According to Taylor (2001:16) and Waitt (2000:842), the core values in a festival entail maintaining and disseminating the traditional elements of identity, language, territory, history, common culture and religion, which link festivals not only to identity construction, but simultaneously also to issues of authenticity. Visiting places that are associated with the past enables the creation and reaffirmation of identity. When a person understands his or her place in time and space, an identity is (or identities are) then created through insights into what is associated with

culture; authenticity is culturally determined (McIntosh & Prentice, 1999:590). According to Cohen (2012:259), an authentic experience is believed to be unique when one is true to oneself and is not lost in public spheres. He adds that people feel much more authentic when they engage in activities such as festivals and events that are not part of their everyday activities.

Cultural festivals have developed into a prominent topic of research because of their depth and diversity. A particular field of interest is their socio-economic value. Hence, most research links and examines the contribution of festival tourism to sustainable local socio-economic development (Yu & Turco, 2000; O'Sullivan & Jackson, 2002; Thrane, 2002; Gursoy, Kim & Uysal, 2004; Robinson, Picard & Long, 2004; McKercher, Sze Mei & Tse, 2006). Suffice it to say at this point that governments and businesses, residents and festival organizers regard festivals as a boon to local economies, and often seek to maximize the economic impact of festivals by attracting as many visitors as possible (Delamere, 2001; Shanka & Taylor, 2004).

Several authors have investigated people's reasons and motivations to attend festivals. Some authors, such as Ralston and Crompton (1988, cited in LeBlanc, 2004), Uysal *et al.* (1991), Mohr *et al.* (1993), Uysal, Gahan and Martin (1993), Backman *et al.* (1995), Formica and Uysal (1996) and Scott (1996), rather vaguely claim that festivals are by their very nature a tourist attraction, or that the type of festival determines the audience it attracts. Others are more specific in their identification of the motives of those who attend. According to Schneider and Backman (1996), tourists are motivated by their desire for a sense of escape in their seeking something different from their usual routine. By contrast, Ralston and Crompton (1988, cited in LeBlanc, 2004) and Kerstetter and Mowrer (1998) all come to the conclusion that family and social benefits are the main motivators for attending festivals. Uysal *et al.* (1993) have identified five main reasons that motivate people to attend festivals, namely a desire for excitement, escape, socialisation, family togetherness and event novelty. Backman *et al.* (1995) add a sixth motivation, namely relaxation. Grant and Poliwada (2001), in a study carried out on a festival in Ottawa, Canada, concluded that only a few tourists came to Ottawa with the specific aim of attending the festival.

Even though attention is increasingly given to tourists who attend festivals, most festivals were not initiated with tourists in mind. Instead, they began in response to local and

regional needs (Getz, 2002). Prior studies by Turko and Kelsey (1992) and Janiskee (1994) also argue that local support is a key aspect in the success of a festival.

Crompton and McKay (1997) are of the opinion that cultural exploration and group socialization are another motivation. An analysis of the findings of these authors show that the decision to attend a festival is usually triggered by a desire to meet a need, such as the need for socialization, relaxation, cultural exploration, enhancing kinship and family ties, escape and novelty.

Marketing forms an integral part of festivals and has received attention from a number of researchers. For instance, Kim and Chalip (2004) discuss the importance of market segmentation in terms of tourist preferences, and Formica and Uysal (1998) argue that successful promotion depends on effective segmentation. Marketing contributes to creating an image of a destination as desirable, attracts sponsors and raises the competitiveness of the host town. Destinations are increasingly using festivals and other large-scale events to develop an image of those destinations that can be marketed in order to promote tourism (Shaw & Williams, 2002; Ali-Knight & Robertson, 2003).

Researchers have attempted to demonstrate the relevance of both primary and secondary stakeholders (Reid & Arcodia, 2002). According to Getz, Andersson and Larson (2007:105), primary stakeholders include employees, volunteers, sponsors, suppliers, spectators, attendees, and participants, whereas secondary stakeholders consist of the government, the host community (community groups, residents), emergency services (fire, police, ambulance services), general business (profit and non-profit), media (print, radio, broadcast, television, internet), and tourism organizations. In the case of the Lamu Cultural Festival, which is the focus of this study, the local community and the Lamu Cultural Promotional Group are the primary stakeholders, and their role and influence on the festival strategy and survival are considered. The failure of a good relationship between a community and festival managers may lead to aggression from a host community, especially if there are cultural differences, because of differences in how the stakeholders interact with one another and see the exchange of resources. Incorporating stakeholders in the making and marketing of a festival can lead to increased community satisfaction, and their buy-in can decrease the chances that the festival will be a failure (Richards & Ryan, 2004; Reid & Arcodia, 2005; Mackeller, 2006; Quinn, 2006; Andersson & Getz, 2007; Getz *et al.*, 2007; Getz, 2008; Hede, 2008).

Thus far, limited research has been conducted on the socio-cultural impact of festivals on local communities. Some exceptions are the work of Fredline and Faulkner (2002a:115) and Mihalik (2000:139), who suggest that the way in which events affect the quality of life of the local residents can determine the success of a festival. Their findings imply that the hosting of an event within a community is affected by their personal experience(s) and societal values, community attachment, the age of the participants, their identification with the festival theme and their perceptions of participation. By contrast, Edensor (2001) and Shepherd (2002) focused on the extent to which festivals are responsible for cultural commodification, in view of the phenomenon that the locals may be paid to conduct rituals for tourists, and that tourists are frequently persuaded to take part in these rituals. In this respect, cultural practices may be adapted to suit tourists' tastes.

Even less research has been carried out on the more profound issue of the possible contribution of festivals to identity construction. Ritchie and Beliveau (1974) and Boo and Busser (2006) have looked at the role of festivals in image-making and place-marketing. Their studies suggest that festivals have intangible social benefits. According to Ritchie and Beliveau (1974), festivals affect a destination's image, and then change that image. Festivals have an impact on the economy of the destination, but also on the physical environment of the host community. Even though researchers have recognized the importance of these social impacts, the measurement of perceptions is problematic. Boo and Busser (2006), in a study on the contribution of festivals to image-making, argue that festivals can contribute to negative image change of a destination, and therefore recommend research on the possible positive contribution of festivals towards image-making. Getz (1991) is of the view that festivals possess the ability to form and improve the image of a community. Festivals that improve the image of a community have been observed in mega events such as the Olympics (Uysal *et al.*, 1993; Getz, 1997). Hall (1992) and De Bres and Davis (2001) also comment that festivals can play a large role in the development and maintenance of community identity through the use of place – this is particularly significant in the case of a smaller community, as it could enhance its cultural identity.

Festivals occur in specific localities and represent certain elements in those localities, resulting in the creation of a powerful sense of place. In this regard, Jeong and Santos (2004:642) state that places have been conceptualized as cultural artefacts of both social conflict and cohesion, as a means to assist the building of shared community values. By

appealing to people of various interests and including diverse religious elements, space can be used to create a unifying regional identity. Backmann *et al.* (1995:16) suggest a number of reasons for why a community may choose to host a festival. Some of these reasons are that festivals contribute towards the construction of identity in a socio-cultural, economic, political and environmental manner. Festivals are important venues of cultural expression that play a vital role in the preservation and revival of certain aspects of culture. They provide a place where cross-cultural education is facilitated. Linked with cultural tourism, an avenue can be created through which ethnic identities are represented and reinforced.

Turko and Kelsey (1992), Getz (1993) and Janiskee (1994) have studied the attitudes of host communities toward festivals, since the success of a festival depends largely on the host community's enthusiasm. Festivals provide a unique opportunity for communities to promote ethnic understanding, and represent a cultural-historical process in which ethnic groups express themselves through the ritual preservation and celebration of local traditions, history and culture (Chacko & Schaffer, 1993; Dunstan, 1994, cited in Derrett, 2003a; Frisby & Getz, 1989; Getz, 1991, 1997). In addition, Falassi (1987) has explored both the social and symbolic meanings of festivals, showing that they are closely linked to the values and views that a local community regards as essential to its social identity, history and survival.

The economic, political and social facets of a community's culture and the symbolic meanings attached to it are elements that make each festival unique and attractive to tourists (Falassi, 1987). These facets make community members feel connected with a given place, and these resources are also used to construct or express their own identities. He also notes that festivals have the potential to renew the life stream by preserving and reviving certain cultural aspects of a community in a symbolic and social sense, demonstrating their value to the locals.

Getz (1991), in a study on festivals, special events and tourism, suggests that festival tourism minimizes the negative impact of tourism. Hence, festivals contribute to sustainable development, foster better relationships between hosts and guests and help to preserve natural, cultural and social environments. These findings are supported by the findings of Dunstan (1994, cited in Derrett, 2003a:51), who posits that festivals provide a forum for shared purposes, cultural values or traditions to be manifested. As far as cultural values are concerned, Peterson (1994, cited in Fiske, 1989:44) asserts that cultural objects

and artefacts provide comprehensive insights into social norms and socially acceptable practices, because of the values attached to these objects and artefacts. These cultural values are expressed in festivals, and are of particular significance for identity construction.

Adams and Goldbard (2001, cited in Jepson, Wiltshier & Clarke, 2008:7) and Derrett (2003a:51) argue that people turn to their culture to define themselves. Cultural identity connects individuals to an ancestral homeland, as it is founded on tradition, lifestyle, values and protocol. Indigenous values and belief systems are often difficult for outsiders to understand, especially given the superficial nature of many tourist experiences (McIntosh, Hinch & Ingram, 2002:39). In order to foster an appreciation of cultural identity, cultural attractions have to overcome cross-cultural differences to achieve an understanding of the nature and value of cultural diversity across different cultures (Ting-Toomey, 1999:140). Such values and practices can be shared positively with visitors through festivals, thus enhancing both group and place identity. Thus festivals can function as a celebration of a sense of place, and as a manifestation of community identity.

Mayfield and Crompton (1995:41) maintain that festivals are held for the purposes of recreation and socialisation, culture and education, fundraising to support an internal cause and agriculture; they also generate external revenue through the tourism business, and enhance community spirit and pride. This statement is largely in line with the perceptions of Hall (1992:24), who argues that communities organize festivals to enhance or preserve local culture and history. Hall (1992) explains that festivals can lengthen tourist seasons, extend the peak season, or introduce a new season into the life of a community. In addition, elements of community spirit and pride, co-operation, leadership, the enhancement of cultural traditions, capacity in control, development, improvement of health and social amenities can all be achieved by festivals (Quinn, 2009:489).

However, other researchers claim the opposite. Robinson *et al.* (2004:188) warn that when a festival is exploited as a tourist attraction, it can destroy local people's sense of community, sense of culture and values, because of the likelihood of commodification and commercialization. This happens when the cultural value of festivals is replaced with an economic value, and a festival comes to be seen as merely a vehicle to attract more tourists to the region. This view is supported by Getz (1994:113), who, with reference to events and authenticity issues, argues that when festivals and other special events are consciously

developed and promoted as tourist attractions, there is a risk that commercialization will detract from celebration, and that entertainment or spectacle will replace the inherent meaning(s) of the celebrations.

The Lamu Cultural Festival, which is the focus of this study, has been held on Lamu, an island off Kenya's coast in the Indian Ocean (see Figure 1.1) since 2001. This research was conducted during the 14<sup>th</sup> annual celebration in 2014. The only research so far on the festival was conducted by Okech (2011), who focused on its potential to improve the local economy. No research has been carried out on the role of the festival in promoting a common identity of the diverse indigenous groups on Lamu Island. Moreover, no research has been conducted on the identity of any of the indigenous groups that today compose the population of Lamu. Such research would undoubtedly make an invaluable contribution to determining the possible contribution of the Lamu cultural festival to constructing a Lamu identity. By understanding and determining the sense of cultural identity before the festival was introduced, the festival organisers could gain a greater insight into how the festival could be used as a tool to foster a better relationship between the different groups.

In Kenya, a number of community cultural festivals have been initiated with the aim of expressing the cultural values of different communities and to preserve their cultural heritage. Most of these festivals are one-day events and were only introduced very recently; hence no literature is available on these festivals, except the limited material obtainable from the internet. The initiation of these cultural festivals creates ample opportunity for research on festivals. In conducting this research in a heterogeneous community, I intend to contribute to the existing body of knowledge on cultural identity. This research differs from others on identity in that it was conducted in a community composed of different indigenous groups.

## **1.2 Aim of the study**

The aim of this study was to determine the role that festivals play in constructing cultural identity, particularly when people from different cultural backgrounds are involved.

The objectives of the study are based on this aim. They are discussed below.

### 1.3 Specific objectives

The objectives of the study are

- to determine the cultural practices and sense of cultural identity present before the Lamu Cultural Festival was introduced, with particular reference to the nature of the relationships in the past among the main indigenous groups on Lamu (the Aweer, Bajuni, Sanye and Orma);
- to provide a detailed account of the Lamu Cultural Festival;
- to analyse the way in which the Lamu Cultural Festival recognises and accommodates the presence of different cultural values and practices; and
- to consider the potential contribution of festival content/items in constructing cultural identity.

### 1.4 Research area

Some of the terms applied to Lamu are ‘traveller’s mecca’, ‘medieval’ and ‘exotic’ (Middleton, 1992; Fuglesang, 1994). Okech (2010:194) refers to Lamu Island as the ‘Kathmandu of Africa’. According to the Magical Kenya website, it is ‘a UNESCO world heritage town with streets that echo with the centuries of sea trade’ (Ministry of Tourism Kenya, n.d.\*).<sup>1</sup> Furthermore, Wright (2005:27, quoted in Poblete, 2007:33) states: ‘Lamu Town is the oldest and best preserved Swahili settlement in East Africa, retaining its traditional functions.’

Lamu Island is located on the Kenyan coast about 350 km north of Mombasa on one of the low-lying islands that form the Lamu Archipelago (see Figure 1.1, overleaf).

Lamu Old Town is a medieval town characterised by simple structural forms, between which run narrow streets and alleys. It is the principal inhabited part of the island, one of the oldest and best-preserved Swahili settlements in East Africa. Lamu is the spiritual cradle of the Swahili language (Middleton, 1992; Kenya travel guide, n.d.\*; Magical Kenya, n.d.\*).

The Lamu Archipelago extends from the Kenya-Somalia border in the north, to the Tana River Delta in the south, approximately 2° and 2°20' south of the Equator (Ylvisaker, 1979; Yassin, 2003; Olali, 2004). The Archipelago is part of the Swahili coast, which

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<sup>1</sup> References marked with an asterisk are online sources for which no year or page references are available.

stretches from the narrow coastal strip of the Kenya-Somalia border to Mozambique, including the nearby islands.



**Figure 1.1: Map of the Lamu Archipelago**

Source: Kenya Travel Guide (n.d.\*) and Lamu Conservation Trust (n.d.\*)

The Archipelago consists of 54 islands, some very small and uninhabited, and others large and lush (Kusimba, 1999). Together they provide beautiful scenery of forests, beaches and seascapes. Lamu Island is part of the Lamu Archipelago, which consists of several smaller islands such as Manda Island, Pate Island, Kiwayu Island and Ndau in the Kiunga Marine National Park (Ylvisaker, 1979; Republic of Kenya, 2002; Yassin, 2003; Lamu Museum, n.d.).

The three main islands in the Lamu Archipelago consist of significant archaeological and historical sites (Mwakikagile, 2007), namely Pate, Manda and Lamu. The largest of these is Pate, located furthest north (Kusimba, 1999; Yassin, 2003). Pate Island is flat, with natural sand dunes, 60 feet high, constituting a third of the island, which acts as a vital natural filter for Pate's fresh water supply – this is similar on Lamu (Siravo & Pulver, 1986). Other areas are used for agriculture, to grow coconut palms and mango trees, jasmine and *simsim* (sesame) (Prins, 1965; Bikales, 1989; Olali, 2004).

Originally, Lamu was called Tambwi Ndeo. It was later renamed Lamu by the Arabs to mean *Laamu*, or blame, as the locals blamed themselves for giving their town away (Romero, 1997; Yassin, 2003; Olali, 2004). According to other sources, Lamu had another earlier name, Kiwa Ndeo. The name was mostly used by poets, sailors and old-fashioned people to mean the ‘proud isle, also translated as “the island of vanity” or simply the “Island of Ndeo”’ (Prins, 1965:30; Yassin, 2003:37; Olali, 2004:54). According to Abdulaziz (1979), the name Lamu is credited to an Arab/Persian Gulf family, the Banu Lamu, who established the town. When settlers from Yemen and Oman migrated to Lamu during the 17<sup>th</sup> century, the name changed.

There is no exact date available, and nor is the precise age of the town known. According to Allen (1972), the town dates back as far as 1450, while Olali (2004) suggests it only dates back to about 1700. Romero (1997) has identified three sites in Lamu that date from the 19<sup>th</sup> century, and notes that Lamu may have been a pair of settlements during the 12<sup>th</sup> and 13<sup>th</sup> centuries. The buildings in the area between the sea front and the main street of the town, frequently visited by tourists today, were erected after 1850. Buildings built in the late 19<sup>th</sup> century exhibit traces of Indian and Zanzibari influences with roofs, large outside windows and upper floor courtyards. One example is the building that houses the Lamu Museum, whose completion dates back to 1891 (Allen, 1972; Olali, 2004).

The town remains largely frozen in its 18<sup>th</sup>/19<sup>th</sup> century condition. The town is built of coral stone and mangrove timber, and there are elaborately carved wooden doors influenced by a unique fusion of Swahili, Arabic, Persian, Indian and European building styles (Wishitemi, Spenceley & Wels, 2007). The architecture has hardly changed over the centuries, and the buildings of the stone towns of today, such as Gedi, Kilwa and Shanga, are similar to those of the ruins of early settlements (Vansina, 2014:196). The architectural tradition can be traced back to at least the 12<sup>th</sup> century up to the great buildings of the 18<sup>th</sup> and 19<sup>th</sup> century in present-day Lamu (Middleton, 1992). After Kenya gained independence in 1963, Lamu became part of the Kenyan state. Once the government realized its cultural significance, a conservation study was done in 1974, sponsored by UNESCO. In 1983, the town was declared a national monument (UNESCO, 2015).

The National Museums of Kenya initiated the Lamu Conservation Project in 1975. As a result, several monuments were restored, raising awareness of Lamu’s cultural heritage. Rehabilitation and conservation of Lamu Fort began in 1985. In 1986, a conservation area

at Lamu was gazetted under Kenya's *Antiquities and Monuments Act of 1983* leading to the establishment of a town planning and conservation office at Lamu in 1987 (Young, 2013). With the support of the government of the Netherlands, conservation activities were extended to restore houses, promote tourism compatible with local cultures, up-grade public areas and urban infrastructure and to educate the community on reducing pollution (Siravo & Pulver, 1986).

Numerous studies, including the pioneer archaeological work of Kirkman (1964:51-73), have focused on the maritime trading history of the Lamu Archipelago. As early as the 14<sup>th</sup> century, Lamu was a prosperous trade centre exporting goods such as timber, slaves, spices and ivory, and importing silks, porcelain, fine furniture and beads across the Indian Ocean. During the favourable monsoon winds, traders and sailors from Persia and India would set sail to the East African coast, navigating their dhows during the Kaskazi or north-eastern winds from November to March, crossing the Indian Ocean. Other ships came from China, South East Asia and the Arabian Peninsula, carrying gold and spices (Askew, 1999). They would trade it for timber, ivory and slaves with their partners in East Africa. Likewise, the dhows from East Africa would set sail to their trading partners' lands with hides, cowries, tortoise shells and ivory (Bikales, 1989).

The development of Lamu as a coastal settlement depended on good water supplies (Ghaidan, 1974, 1976; Hall, 1996). Lamu came under the authority of the Sultan of Oman by the 17<sup>th</sup> and 18<sup>th</sup> centuries, when he extended his trading network to include East Africa. During the Oman period and protection, a lot of slaves provided cheap labour (Marshall, 2014:243). The rest of the population consisted of three social groups, namely landowners, who were merchants living in stone houses, shariffs, who asserted that they were descendants of Mohammed, and artisans and fishermen. Zanzibar surpassed Lamu in the 19<sup>th</sup> century as a leading trade centre, but this did not change Lamu's character as a lively local centre of trade and culture.

Along with the exchange of commodities within the trade networks, an exchange of cultural practices and beliefs also occurred; most notably, Islam became the dominant religion (Askew, 1999). In recent years, the communities in Lamu have become more creolized, due to interaction with various ethnic groups, and also with foreigners, including Europeans and Americans (Poblete, 2007:53). Lamu is Kenya's oldest Muslim town

(Siravo & Pulver, 1986; Dossa, 1997) and it is the *entrepot* on the Swahili coast (Bikales, 1989; Middleton, 1992).

Lamu was an important religious town during the 19<sup>th</sup> century. This was mainly due to the Tarika, also known as the Way of the Prophet, which is celebrated in the annual Maulidi festival. The festival is still celebrated to the present day and attracts many Muslims. Lamu was considered a real Islamic town, compared to Mombasa, which is why Mombasa is seen as having lost its identity (Wynne-Jones & Fleisher, 2015:82). Moreover, in recent years, Lamu has become a significant educational centre for Swahili and Islamic culture, due to its Muslim society, which has remained unchanged and has been conserved over the years (Rainer, Rivera & Gandreau, 2011:126; UNESCO, 2015).

Although Lamu is remote, it is accessible by road, sea and air. Lamu Island can be accessed by boat from the mainland, and also from Manda Island, where there is an airport. There are only three vehicles in the town – one belongs to the district commissioner; there is a hospital ambulance, and there is a donkey sanctuary wagon (*Daily Nation*, 2005:11). These vehicles can only use the seashore as a road, as the paved streets in the interior of the town are too narrow for vehicles, and can only be used by pedestrians and donkeys. Given the relatively small size of the island, access to the sea is easy almost anywhere and boats are the obvious means of transportation for both leisure and fishing. Its relative remoteness and the fact that it still serves as a small-scale regional centre of trade, transport and socio-political activity gives it special qualities, making it inherently attractive to visitors. The Kenya-Uganda railway, which stretched from Kisumu to Mombasa, left Lamu isolated, as Mombasa became the main seaport and terminus, while Lamu remained a small local harbour. It can therefore be asserted that this isolation from modernization in the 20<sup>th</sup> century is the reason why Lamu's rich architectural heritage and culture are still preserved (Bremner, 2013).

## **1.5 Methodology**

The nature of the research required that an ethnographic approach be followed. Ethnography focuses on the social systems and cultural heritage of a community, describing the way of life of a people by making sense of the inherent meanings of gestures, displays, symbols, songs and everything that has meaning in that culture (Mouton, 2001:149; Maree, 2007:76). This method is used in qualitative studies that aim to

gain an in-depth understanding of human behaviour as expressed in different cultures (Mouton, 2001:150; Creswell, 2003). According to Denzin and Lincoln (1994:206), this approach implies an emphasis on processes and meanings that are not rigorously examined or measured in terms of quantity, amount, intensity or frequency. It also stresses the relationship between a researcher and the object of study. Qualitative research uses multiple methods that are interactive and humanist, involving active participation by the study group. A combination of qualitative research methods was used in this study.

Participant observation is a procedure that involves observing and recording situations, events, feelings, physical settings and activities. It offers social researchers a distinct way of collecting data. It does not only rely on what people say they do, or what they say they think. Instead, it draws on the direct evidence of the eye to witness events first-hand. In short, it usually involves that a researcher goes and stays with the people to be studied, so that they become used to his/her presence (Kumar, 2011:140). This enables a researcher to observe the people in their undisturbed, non-staged state. It also helps to build rapport and trust between the researcher and researched subjects. It is based on the premise that, for certain purposes, it is best to observe what actually happens. Observation enables a researcher to interview respondents about the realities observed, the reason for their existence and meaning. This method is widely used in social and cultural anthropology, relying on field notes and the memory of the researcher, aided by photographic, documentary or audio materials (Mouton, 2001:148; Jupp, 2006:151; Walliman, 2006; Denzin & Lincoln, 2011:470). Since the object of my study was a festival, participant observation was the obvious method to commence the research. I went to Lamu to experience the festival first-hand, which then enabled me to ask questions relevant to the occasion. With the consent of the event organisers and members of the community, I was also able to take photographs to document my journey through the festival in support of the research findings.

Furthermore, the application of participant observation enabled me to observe how the community of Lamu conduct their way of life, and how it was affected by the festival. It enabled me to discover and understand local cultural values and practices. As the researcher, I visited and stayed with the community, observed them in their undisturbed state and participated in the festival activities to gain a deeper understanding of cultural identity. My observation was supplemented and followed up on by means of qualitative, open-ended, in-depth interviews with selected respondents.

These respondents were selected on account of their expert knowledge of the subject matter. The interviews were carried out both individually and in a group context, as recommended by Burns (1997), Welman, Kruger and Mitchell (2005:194-196), Jupp (2006) and Kumar (2011:141). The area chief and the elders were very knowledgeable about the history of Lamu, the relationship of the different indigenous groups before the introduction of the festival, and the threats that in their opinion face the cultural values and practices of the Lamu community today. Focus group interviews were conducted with community members participating in the various festival activities. A list of topics for discussion was prepared in advance, where women, men and children in a group setting discussed their involvement and participation in different festival activities, and their opinions on the equal or unequal representation of the four indigenous groups in the festival items. In the focus group discussions, other topics were included, such as people's motivations for participating in the festival items, benefits from participation, and whether the local people felt that the festival had successfully constructed a Lamu identity.

Finally, for the in-depth interviews, guiding themes were formulated in order to guide me as a researcher when conducting the unstructured open-ended interviews. This method allowed me to deviate from the topic when it was deemed necessary in order to accomplish the goal of the research.

For in-depth, open-ended interviews, interview questions are prepared in advance. These are usually kept sufficiently open so that the interview can evolve organically. Questions asked subsequent to the initial questions cannot be formulated in advance, but arise as the participant(s) respond(s) to the initial questions. The responses of the interviewees cannot be predicted, so the interviewer has to improvise half or more subsequent responses to the initially prepared questions. Benefits include the ability to gain rapport and the participant's trust, as well as a deeper understanding of the responses (Wengraf, 2001:111). Rapport is gained because the participant is allowed to divert from the set questions.

Subsequently, in-depth semi-structured interviews were conducted with members of the Lamu Tourist Association and the National Museums of Kenya to corroborate data that had emerged from other data sources. This kind of interview requires participants to answer a set of predetermined questions. It seldom spans a long period.

Members of the Lamu Cultural Promotional Group, which is today integrally involved in the Lamu Cultural Festival, were interviewed by means of in-depth semi-structured interviews on their role in the festival, the aims of introducing the festival, where they get their funding, the processes, challenges and social relations (network) involved in organising the Lamu Cultural Festival. Members of the Kenya Tourist Board, together with Magical Kenya, were specifically interviewed on their role in promoting the festival, the reasons for doing it, and the outcome of this promotion. Was the desired outcome of the promotion to foster community pride and/or to attract the tourists' gaze? These issues are discussed in more detail under sponsors and stakeholders in Chapter 3.

Sponsors of the 14<sup>th</sup> Lamu Cultural Festival included the Alliance Française, the Lamu Conservation Trust (whose role is also educating local people on the importance of environmental conservation), Gulf Energy, the Standard Group, the Kenya Airports Authorities, and the Lamu County government. Members of these institutions were all interviewed regarding ways to promote Kenya's heritage and cultural tourism, the challenges they face as sponsors, their role in the festival and what they gain from their sponsorship.

To familiarise myself with the stakeholders and festival organisers, I held informal meetings with them before and after the festival. This assisted me meaningfully in acquiring information on the processes, challenges and social relations related to constructing identity through the running of a community cultural festival. It also enabled me to understand what the sponsors gain from promoting the festival.

Unstructured personal interviews are often used in ethnographic fieldwork. The researcher prepares a checklist of topics or themes to be covered during the interview(s), and questions do not necessarily follow any particular order. The benefits of using this method are that the interaction between the participant and the researcher is more like a conversation than an interview, which often enables a researcher to uncover information that would not have been exposed by using structured or semi-structured interviews (Wengraf, 2001:263; Creswell, 2003; Kumar, 2011:145). Unstructured personal interviews were conducted with local government representatives and also with the Lamu Society Leaders. This ensured that open responses were captured. In addition, selected international partners, embassies and other sponsors of the Lamu Cultural Festival were interviewed to obtain a deeper understanding of their role in the festival, constructed

identity and the preservation of the town's cultural heritage. The interviews were conducted on the role that these individual organisations play in the preservation of the cultural heritage of Lamu.

Focus group interviews were conducted among the different community groups participating in the festival's activities in order to explore diverse opinions on different issues (cf. Kumar, 2011:160). Group interviews also enable researchers to obtain insight that cannot be achieved easily by means of individual interviews, as participants have the opportunity to express their opinions in such a way that consensus can be reached (cf. Welman *et al.*, 2005:201).

The groups were composed of the different indigenous groups in Lamu. All the groups were interviewed specifically on identity – to what extent did they feel that the festival had brought the different indigenous groups together? They were then asked to give reasons for their answer(s) by referring to particular examples. My intention was to find out to what extent each of the main indigenous groups is represented in the festival activities. Hence, I investigated the way in which the festival recognizes and accommodates the presence of different cultural values and practices in a heterogeneous community, with the assumption that such recognition and accommodation may play a determining role in constructing identity.

The interviews were conducted by taking *gender* and *age* into consideration, ensuring that the information was representative of the local community as a whole. These focus groups included *men* participating in the dhow races, the donkey riding competitions, and swimming; *women* who played an active role in the festival, for example, by participating in henna painting competitions, sharing poetry, displays of Swahili cuisine, and the Swahili bridal ceremony; and *children* (below the age of 18) who took part in the swimming competitions. Interviews with children were carried out with the consent of their parents or guardians. *Families* were also interviewed in cases where women and children could not be interviewed separately. The *youth* (18-25 years) participating in the festival formed part of the actors, and by interviewing them, I expected to gain insight into the reasons for their participation and the extent to which they perceived the festival to have brought the different indigenous groups together.

The *elderly* (above 70 years) were interviewed to gain insight into the history of Lamu, the cultural practices and cultural identity before the introduction of the festival, and to establish to what extent these practices and identities had been adapted for the purposes of the festival. In addition, the elderly were interviewed on the same topics as those that I discussed with the youth. I intended to find out whether and how, in the past, the four original indigenous groups came together, in order to determine the nature of the relation(s) between the main indigenous groups in the past.

The research was conducted simultaneously with a thorough review of the relevant existing literature. I made use of the available literature in the form of newspaper articles, magazines, Internet, minutes of meetings, reports, published articles in peer-reviewed journals, and any available unpublished journals. I also visited the Swahili cultural centre, the National Museums of Kenya, and the tourist information centre, to collect more information about the Lamu Cultural Festival.

I conducted extended interviews with the participants, studying the meanings of people's lives and covering the contextual conditions in which the interviewees live. Driven by a desire to explain events through existing and emerging concepts, I drew on multiple sources of evidence.

## **1.6 Ethical considerations**

Ethics, values, morality, community standards, laws and professionalism were observed in carrying out the research. Lamu is a Muslim community, but generally welcomes all visitors. Therefore, as a simple courtesy and sign of respect to the residents, I made sure to dress appropriately, according to the customs of the local community. Throughout the research, the Human Sciences Research Council's (n.d.\*) code of conduct for South Africa was followed in conducting the research.

In view of the subject matter, the principle of respect and protection of the interviewees was strictly adhered to. The research was conducted with, and not merely on, the identified Lamu community members. The research was never regarded as overriding the participants' personal, social and cultural values. I obtained informed consent from the participants in writing to protect the welfare of all participants. Where children were participants (for example, the children who entered the swimming competitions), written consent was obtained from parents, guardians or custodians.

The participants were informed that they did not have to participate, and that participation was voluntary. In June 2014, the year in which I conducted the research, there were terrorist attacks on Lamu. This meant that some individuals were not willing to participate in the research, because they were afraid that I might be gathering information to supply to the terrorists, as I am a foreigner. Hence, it was important that all participants knew that they could withdraw and that nobody was forced to participate. The rights of all individuals were respected and nobody was forced into participating. In fact, some of the respondents withdrew from group discussions, due to the security concerns.

Informed consent was obtained from all those interviewed, photographed and observed. Anonymity was guaranteed. Hence, respondents gave permission in full knowledge of the purpose of the research and the consequences of taking part in the research. The identity of the participants or institutions was treated with confidentiality, and whenever possible, the respondents were allowed to participate anonymously. It was agreed that no names of people would be mentioned, although organisations' names would be used, on condition that confidentiality for the dissertation would be sought.

Secondly, as far as the principle of transparency is concerned, access to all areas of the festival had to be negotiated with the organisers of the festival. Before agreeing to participate in the research, the participants were briefed on the aims and objectives, the significance and implications, the outcomes and benefits of the research. In communicating the findings of the research, I subscribe to the principles of honesty and transparency. No incentive was offered to participants. It was felt important to be totally honest about the research. With informed consent, the research would be truthful and would yield results that will stand up to close scrutiny.

In addition, the principle of scientific and academic professionalism was adhered to at all stages of the fieldwork. During the interviews, observation, group discussions and even in taking photographs, I presented myself in a professional manner. As I was from the mainland, it was important for me to preserve a high level of dignity in this conservative community. I was also a representative of my academic institution and therefore I had to be friendly and professional. I was careful not at any point to misuse my position or knowledge for personal gain. My intention was to ensure a relaxed environment and make the participants feel comfortable with participating in the research, which turned out to be a success.

In terms of the principle of accountability to the participants, I informed them about the aims of the research and answered all questions they had with regard to the research. Hence, the findings of this research are presented in a manner that will hopefully not offend any of the organisations that were involved.

## **1.7 Research constraints**

The events of 15 and 16 June 2014 changed Lamu County forever. On those two days, 65 people were massacred by the Al-Shabaab militia group from Somalia. The terror attacks occurred in the Mpeketoni, Kibaoni, Witu and Hindi areas on the mainland. As a result, a curfew was imposed on the whole county, including Lamu Island, where there were no attacks. Just before the Lamu Cultural Festival, there was a failed attempted attack by the Al-Shabaab militia on a bus ferrying local passengers from Malindi to Lamu. This made bus travel difficult and plane tickets very expensive.

According to the Chair of the Lamu Tourism Association, the curfew was instituted for the security of the local community. Since the curfew, Kenya's police and army have come in, and increased crime rates have been reported. One resident described how shops are raided 'with impunity at night', and reported that thieves 'steal the electric cable from Lamu to the neighbouring Shela village, cutting off all our power and putting us to the cost of running generators'. Tourists were scared off by the curfew scenario. As a result, the beaches and flights were empty, or were occupied by police officers and port officials. Some hotels and resorts closed, as have businesses that operate at night, while fishermen who fish at night have lost additional income.

The curfew was lifted temporarily for four days during the festival, but was re-introduced after the festival on 1 December. This did not make much of a difference to the locals, who are used to being confined to their homes from 6pm to 6am. All the locals were worried that attacks could actually occur during the festival. The participants were reluctant to provide any information after the terrorist attacks, especially to or in respect of foreigners.

Due to the curfew, the festival duration was shortened from the normal four days to three days (it started on 28 November at 2pm and ended on 30 November at 6pm). The rituals were also shortened and squeezed into these three days. During previous festivals, some festival activities would be performed at night and entertainment would run late into the night. I was not able to observe the rituals as I had long anticipated and therefore have to

assume that the shortened time and the tense conditions under which the research was conducted did have an impact on the results of the study. To overcome these constraints, I attended some of the festival activities such as the Swahili bridal ceremony alone, while my research assistant joined the men playing the Boa Game, where he as a man was allowed to participate. Only later did I join them, but as an observer. This enabled me to collect as much information as possible in the short period available to me.

Owing to the patriarchal character of the study area, I could not interview women on their own, and this may have affected the responses they were prepared to give on a number of crucial issues. To solve this problem, I conducted the interviews in a group context, which allowed women more freedom in the presence of other women. Because I am a female researcher, it was also difficult to conduct research in this patriarchal community and to interview men. These gender-related problems were an important problem in the study. To deal with this problem, I was accompanied by my fiancé, and also engaged a male research assistant from the local community. His role was to brief the locals before the interviews and to conduct the interviews on my behalf, but in my presence.

Lastly, I obtained formal consent from all the institutions interviewed and ensured the participants' integrity and anonymity. The interviews were conducted in Swahili in the case of the local community members, and in English in respect of all other institutions.

It was noticeable that not much advertising was done to promote the festival. The advertising was limited to two days before the actual festival, and was done on radio and television. Most of the locals were not sure whether the festival would take place at all, which meant that little preparation was done for the festival. I am therefore of the view that the hostilities may have affected the outcome of the research, since it meant that the festival was curtailed and all foreigners (including me, as the researcher) were treated with suspicion. Hence, rituals and events were squeezed into limited time slots, making extensive observation more difficult, and interviewing participants on the more profound meaning of certain performances also became difficult, largely due to the reluctance of local people to assist foreigners. The problem was exacerbated by the fact that I am a woman, and women (even researchers) are not highly regarded in the cultures concerned.

## CHAPTER 2: LITERATURE REVIEW

### 2.1 Introduction

The literature review considers different points of view and some relevant debates on identity construction through cultural festivals. The review focuses on literature that explores the role of festivals in the construction of cultural identity. This is followed by an investigation of the literature on the development of different trends and types of festivals and the phenomenon of festival tourism. The section concludes with a review of literature on the history of festivals in Kenya.

### 2.2 Culture

Kroeber and Kluckhohn (1952) estimate that there are more than 160 definitions of culture. This reflects the fact that it is a complex, multidimensional phenomenon which has multiple meanings for different scholars. In an attempt to analyse these definitions, Reisinger and Turner (2003:4-14), categorised them according to their core feature(s). The seminal definition of culture is that of Tylor (1924:1), who defines culture as ‘that complex whole which includes knowledge, beliefs, arts, morals, law, customs and any other capabilities acquired by man as a member of society’. In the years that followed, others would attach more meaning(s) to this definition in their dealings with and understanding of the concept of culture. For example, Williams (1983:87) and Hall (1990:22) focused on the behavioural aspect of culture – Williams (1983:87) describes culture simply ‘as a way of life of a particular group of people’. Others emphasise either the more tangible or the more intangible aspects referred to in Tylor’s definition.

In this regard, Kroeber and Kluckhohn (1952:181, quoted by Adler, 1997:14) confer a particular cognitive dimension to culture when they say:

Culture consists of the derivatives of experience, more or less organized, learned or created by the individuals of a population, including those images or encodements and their interpretations (meanings) transmitted from past generations, from contemporaries, or formed by individuals themselves.

Hofstede (1991:5) also emphasises the cognitive feature of culture and describes it as ‘the collective programming of the mind which distinguishes the members of one group or

category of people from another’. He adds that culture is a ‘set of attitudes, values, beliefs, and behaviours shared by a group of people, but different for each individual, communicated from one generation to the next’ (Hofstede, 1991:5). People born in a particular cultural group context are conditioned (programmed) by means of a process of enculturation to become bearers of the system of values and knowledge of that particular cultural group (Kottak, 1994:16).

However, this does not imply that members of any particular (cultural) group are replicas of each other, especially in terms of their attitudes and personalities. To some degree, members of a particular group share the same values, attitudes, beliefs and behaviour, but the concept of culture also leaves room for individual creativity (mentally) and behaviour (Kottak, 1994:285; cf. Barnouw, 1985:10). This view is similar to that held by Spencer-Oatey (2008:3), and by Matsumoto (1996:16), who says:

Culture is a fuzzy set of basic assumptions and values, orientations to life, beliefs, policies, procedures and behavioural conventions that are shared by a group of people, and that influence (but do not determine) each member’s behaviour and his/her interpretations of the “meaning” of other people’s behaviour.

In view of these definitions and in the context of the current study, Billington *et al.*’s (1991:9-10) definition of culture appears to be balanced – they describe culture as the creation of consensus on values, as well as the way in which social groups develop distinct patterns of life. However, as explained above, within social groups there is room for individual personalities to create and contribute to their respective cultures. Only once these individual creations are accepted by fellow group members can these creations be regarded as culture (cf. Kottak, 1994:42-43).

Cultural entities are associated with particular ethnic groups, peoples or tribes. Such associations are made on the basis of a concept of culture which holds that in any given group, beliefs and practices usually conform to generally accepted rules of behaviour. Shared beliefs are thus sustained through regular interaction and transmission of those norms to successive generations. This consequently leads to a continuous cultural tradition, resulting in the construction of socially appropriate cultural practices (Hogan, 2000:8; cf. also Landis, 1986, cited in Robbins, 2000:75). Hence, culture can be seen as the existence and operation of a unique collective, according to which individuals tend to conform to a particular cultural distinctiveness, in order to be accepted as members of that collective (Kupiainen, 2004:6; cf. also Kottak, 1996:37). However, one has to caution against an

essentialist understanding of and approach to culture. Culture is not static, but constantly changes in a process of continuous adaptation to an ever-changing physical and social environment. Furthermore, when one facet of culture, such as a belief or values, changes, all other facets change as well (Kottak, 1994:3, 43-44).

In this regard Mayo (2000:44) remarks:

Traditions have not been so fixed that there is no room for human agency, questioning or modification. Even small-scale societies have rarely been complete “islands” cut off from any contact with alternative ways of life...small-scale societies are internally pluralistic...participants have not necessarily seen things the same way.

Hence, culture includes people’s customs and traditions, their heritage, history and way of life. Cultural factors may include architecture and decorations, arts and crafts, cuisine, clothes and fashion, dance, music and song, theatre, language, literature and storytelling, and village life (Grobler, 2005:31). The rate of change varies among groups.

The concept of culture includes the influence of past societies and implies the ethnocentricity of a person. Culture is an important aspect in the life of every individual, because it is part of what defines who a person is, and creates a sense of identity. A shared culture also enables a person to communicate and socialize with others. For this reason, there is a tendency among less technologically developed communities to preserve culture. In particular, the more abstract intangible facets of culture, such as values, religious beliefs and related practices, are usually best preserved (Kenny & Smillie, 2014).

Furthermore, the construct of a shared culture does not suggest that there is complete consensus in any given community on all issues at all times. Wassermann and Kriel (1997:68) report that there is a definite tendency to individual self-centredness and mutual exploitation, which creates tension in communities. In addition, ethnic groups interact with one another, which usually causes an exchange of cultural elements that are often influenced by notions of superiority and inferiority. MacCannell (1984:383) distinguishes four basic forms of relationship between groups where notions of superiority vs inferiority occur. In the first form, the ‘inferior’ group attempts to associate itself with the ‘superior’ group by adapting itself to the cultural values, beliefs and practices of the ‘superior’ group. In the second form, the ‘inferior’ group defines itself as the antithesis of the ‘superior’ group in opposition of the values of the ‘superior’ (dominant) group. In the third form, a ‘superior’ group associates itself with an ‘inferior’ group by adopting the cultural values and practices of the latter group. In the fourth form, a ‘superior’ group defines itself in

opposition to an ‘inferior’ group. In this regard, Jeong and Santos (2004:650) explain that dominant (superior) social groups define the dominant cultural identity of a locality in as far as there is a shared cultural belief – the dominant group tends to absorb ‘inferior’ ones.

In cases where there is no real awareness of feelings of superiority or inferiority, theoretically, there should be a 50-50 exchange of cultural elements. Contact between people from different cultures forces them to seek ways to accommodate each other to minimize conflict, (re)shaping intergroup relations between different ethnic communities. In the process of accommodating newcomers to the ‘new’ culture, cultural assimilation ensues, culminating in intermarriage and amalgamation. The process is progressive and irreversible (Redfield, Linton & Herskovits, 1936). Anthropologists have also considered this phenomenon of culture contact and change. Redfield *et al.* (1936:150) refer to this process as acculturation. The essential ingredient for this process is continuous first-hand contact between individuals of different cultural groups.

According to Teske and Nelson (1974:222), acculturation includes changes in artefacts, behaviour patterns, norms and values. Berry (1997:19) expanded this view on acculturation to include assimilation, integration, rejection and deculturation. He recognises the importance of multicultural societies, minority individuals and groups, and the fact that individuals have a choice about how far they are willing to go with the acculturation process. According to this view, a minority group or indigenous group can reverse the acculturation process to the dominant group and revert to their former cultural heritage. Fishman (2001) reports that there are numerous instances of indigenous groups who have managed to revive their ancestral language and culture.

### **2.3 Identity**

Identity is a term that came into use as a popular social science term in the 1950s. It is derived from the Latin root *idem*, which means ‘the same’. Erikson (1968:2) describes the concept of identity as ‘sameness over time’, as well as ‘difference from others’. For something to be the same over time, it has to be different from other things. Identity is a complex issue. In creating a person’s identity, many factors come together, including nationality, locality, ethnicity/culture, gender, sexuality, language, religion, social class, occupation, home and birthplace.

Several authors have articulated identities by selecting elements in the process of redefining the sense of belonging to a group and linking it to an ideology that legitimises that belonging.

According to Gillis (1994:3), ‘the core meaning of any individual or group identity, namely a sense of sameness over time and space, is sustained by remembering and what is remembered is defined by the assumed identity’. Identities are thus constructed. They are composed of attributes such as history, culture and space. The construction of identity involves processes of becoming, relating to what people become, how they are represented by outsiders and how they represent themselves (Harrison, 2011:145). Hall (1996:4) adds a further dimension to the concept of identity when he refers to the element of ‘difference and exclusion’ that plays a role in the emergence of sameness within the self and the group.

Individual and group identities, both ethnic and social, are in constant construction and reconstruction, and need to be understood in the context of specific cultural practices, as well as historical and institutional circumstances. Identity is constructed on the basis of the recognition of some common origin or shared characteristics and ideals within a group. Buckingham (2008:5-6) appears to align himself with this view when he says:

[P]eople categorize or label themselves and others, how they identify as members of particular groups; how a sense of group belonging or “community” is developed and maintained, and how groups discriminate against outsiders; how the boundaries between groups operate, and how groups relate to each other; and how institutions define and organize identities.

However, it appears that identity construction is not totally dependent on boundaries and boundary formation between different (ethnic) groups. Barth (1969:13), whose central focus was based on the formation of boundaries between ethnic groups, remarks that a ‘categorical ascription is an ethnic ascription when it clarifies a person in terms of his basic, most general identity, presumptively determined by his origin and background’. In this regard, several authors, such as Morrison (1982) and De Vos and Romanucci-Ross (1982), emphasise the importance of birth, descent, clan membership, culture and history.

In the preceding paragraphs particular reference has been made to concepts such as group identity, and specifically social and ethnic identity, in the context of particular cultural and historical circumstances, responsible for a sense of belonging. Since it is clear that identity construction takes place and finds expression in a group context, it requires particular

attention. Interaction between group members and conformation to prescribed modes of conduct, values and beliefs are indispensable elements of identity construction, especially social and ethnic/cultural group identity. They not only lead to a sense of belonging, but also to acceptance by group members. Below, the topics of social or cultural identity, place and space, and the role of history in the formation of a cultural identity are considered.

### ***2.3.1 Social or cultural identity?***

Sociologists tend to regard identity as an artefact of interaction(s) between every individual and society. Essentially, identity is a matter designated by a certain name, and involves accepting the name, and internalizing the role requirements that accompany identity and further conducting oneself as prescribed (Waters, 1990:10). This view of what identity really is seems rather vague, especially because the concept of society is not clearly indicated in this description. In the context of identity construction, it appears that the concept of society may relate to a national, regional, local or ethnic identity. These are all social identities with different bases. Likewise, people may have more than one identity, depending on the situation, especially in contemporary times (cf. Van Vuuren, 1992:30, 34). Cohen (2006:189) argues that ‘individuals now seem to be more than ever prone to articulate complex affiliations, meaningful attachments and multiple allegiances to issues, people, places and traditions that are beyond the boundaries of their resident nation-state’. People also choose their social organization according to their ‘perception of its meaning to different audiences, its salience in different social contexts, and its utility in different settings’ (Nagel 1994:155).

National identity is described by Anderson (1991:39) as a socio-cognitive construct; this implies that it is shaped by broader intellectual forces (such as language) and social forces. In his approach to national identity, Smith (1991:13) links social construction to more essentialist views; he defines national identity as a product of both natural continuity emerging from pre-existing ethnic and community identity, achieved by means of a conscious manipulation of commemoration, ideology and symbolism. This implies that national identity is in essence based on various groups, social and ethnic, which are not the same, but may differ in beliefs, values and particular (cultural) practices (Van Vuuren, 1992:30). Hence, other norms apply in the construction of national identity, as opposed to other forms of identity, such as occupation of the same locality within confined national

boundaries, allegiance to a paramount authority, and ideology and the creation of symbols to enhance national unity and identity.

Local identities refer to ethnic or cultural identities. They are socially constructed and evolve and adapt over time. As social units, ethnic or cultural identities are based on ‘perceived qualities of sameness as a result of which people who associate themselves, or are associated by others, with particular groups or categories on the basis of some common features’ (Caplan, 2004:6). In the context of cultural identity, such common features refer to shared cultural attributes, for example, beliefs, values, habits, customs, norms, a common language, religion, history, geography, kinship, and common biological/physical characteristics.

Each person always belongs to several social units, such as a family, an ethnic group, a nation, a social club or a religious organisation. A person can belong to all of them at the same time, with the result that a person may have several identities at the same time. Depending on individual preference, there is a hierarchy of identities for each person. Identifying with a social unit satisfies a sense of belonging, and gives an individual psychological security (especially in ethnic groups) and opportunities to satisfy or achieve certain goals (for example, in religious organisations or purposeful social clubs) (Epstein, 1978; Roosens, 1989:15-16).

Within social units, members occupy particular positions which relate to particular expectations in terms of role fulfilment. In the case of ethnic groups, members occupy different positions on account of certain criteria, such as seniority, job occupation, gender and age. The positions that members occupy determine their role fulfilment, but also their relations towards one another. Compliance with the role associated with each position and hence being recognised and accepted by other members as a valued member of the social/ethnic group creates a sense of belonging and self-identity. Hence, this concept of self-identity is partially determined by a person’s relation to a social or ethnic unit. Roosens’s (1989:15) comment is of particular significance in this regard – he says that ‘the individual must be seen in his or her social dimensions if we are to understand both the success and the driving force of individual and collective ethnic self-affirmation’ (cf. also Brewer & Roccas, 2001:228). In this way, self-identity becomes embedded in social or ethnic identity. The intimate relationship between self-identity and social identity is also supported by Tajfel (1978, quoted in Brewer, 2001:125), who defines social identity as

‘that part of the individual’s self-concept which derives from his[/her] knowledge of his[/her] membership of a social group (or groups) together with the value and emotional significance attached to that membership’.

Furthermore, although individuals tend to seek conformity between their identity claims and certain practices, role fulfilment is performed in a group context, according to cultural values and norms. Hence, such role fulfilment is rather a collective than an individual activity. In fact, the performance of role fulfilment in a group context provides a connection between an individual and the group (Turino, 2004:8; Rice, 2007). Brewer (2001:119) refers to the process by which this group-self representation is formed as collective identity. Instead of emphasizing what members of a specific social unit have in common, this type of identity emphasizes collective effort. Like group-based social identities, collective identity entails ‘shared representations of the group based on common interests and experiences’, referring as well to ‘an active process of shaping and forging an image of what the group stands for and how it wishes to be viewed by others’ (Brewer 2001:119).

In constructing identity where several cultural groups are in contact with each other, the local or regional identity tends to be defined by the dominant social groups where minority social groups are not strong enough within a heterogeneous community (Saleh & Ryan, 1993:290). However, this situation does not necessarily mean the disappearance or extinction of minority groups. On the contrary, it appears that the awareness of identity is often that of the minority group, and that this awareness is often stimulated by an experienced threat (Van Vuuren, 1992:31), such as domination by a superior group.

Adding to this, embedded in culture, there are values which people use to distinguish between what is right or wrong in a society, and between low and high culture, and to determine types of behaviour acceptable in a particular community. In this context, high culture refers to a set of cultural products, mainly the arts, a culture of the elite held in the highest esteem. It extends beyond the arts to become a necessary component of a national identity, which includes etiquette and social codes observed in the dominant class. On the other hand, low culture is what is regarded as the less well-educated cultural practices of the masses. All these vary from community to community (Williams, 1987; Featherstone, 1992; Storey 1993).

Cultural identity is therefore an important aspect for people, as it helps them to relate to other people and influences their overall sense of self and well-being (Samovar, Porter & McDaniel, 2009:63). When individuals identify themselves with a particular group, it is because they have a sense of belonging and security. This also means that there are no cultural barriers between people who share the same culture, and this creates trust among people. On the other hand, a wrongly expressed cultural identity (which occurs when one group's material culture is not used to express and structure their identity) can also create barriers between groups. It can result in feelings of exclusion, especially for minority groups (Geurts, 2003:238; Kenny & Smillie, 2014).

Wallestein (1994, cited in Robbins, 2000) also indicates that culture is used as a means of communication between generations, as it gives people identity. Through shared values amongst a group, the people get a sense of belonging. It also brings them together through their shared interests.

To conclude, social identity exists when a social group collectively shares values, beliefs, habits, customs, norms, a common language, religion and history, as an expression of its cultural identity. These shared cultural elements endow a social group with its particular identity. In this context, social identity is not distinct from cultural identity, since it is the members of the social group who are the bearers of the culture that gives them their identity. Strictly speaking, it would be more correct to refer to socio-cultural identity. Since culture only exists because of its bearers, as they maintain and create it in a social group context, I would argue that the concept of cultural identity is adequate, since it implies social identity (cf. Epstein, 1978:112; Getz, 1994).

### ***2.3.2 Place/space***

Buggey (1999, cited in Lee 2010:376), with reference to the Aborigines, describes place as a cultural landscape valued by a particular group or groups on account of their long and multifaceted association with that landscape. It expresses their intimate relationship with the natural and spiritual environment, since it embodies their traditional knowledge of spirits, land uses and ecology. Other authors such as De Vos and Romanucci-Ross (1982), Van Vuuren (1992:32) and West and Ndlovu (2010) also acknowledge the significance of 'territory' or place as a uniting element in the formation of ethnic and hence cultural identity.

The comments above may evoke the impression that place refers to a geographical ‘territory’, demarcated by boundaries. However, according to Barth (1969), place does not necessarily refer to a territory defined by boundaries, but can also imply a space where continuous validation and expression of cultural practices, values and beliefs takes place. In the context of the current discussion, place is used to refer to space endowed with cultural meaning and identity. Harrison and Rose (2010:257) remark that much ‘of the contemporary theorising about place builds on the presupposition that place is a human artefact: human endeavours to make the world meaningful do so culturally, investing space with meaning’ (cf. also Byrne, 2010:152). Consequently, members of the ethnic group often identify so closely with place that the notion of cultural identity is transferred to place (cf. Byrne, 2010:157; West & Ndlovu, 2010:217). This view is also supported by Jeong and Santos (2004:647), who refer to the cultural identity of a place (cf. Derrett, 2003b; Robinson *et al.*, 2004).

In contemporary times, even members of close-knit units, such as ethnic groups, often find themselves remote from their people and dwelling place, with the result that there is ‘no sense of place’ (Featherstone, 2006, quoted in Picard & Robinson, 2006:101). Under these conditions, local narratives about places, festivals and events are significant in the creation and maintenance of cultural identity constructions (Picard & Robinson, 2006:102; Byrne, 2010:153). An example cited by Bird (2002:531) is that of Minnesota, where a sense of place is achieved through the drawing together of legends and stories. Members of the High Bridge community of Stillwater, Minnesota, pass on legends and folklore from generation to generation. Even though most people in the community do not believe in the ancient tales, they still continue to re-create these folk tales of the past, because these relate to their sense of belonging. Without anticipating the discussion on festivals and its relation to place, suffice it to say here that the place where a festival takes place has its own unique qualities and provides an opportunity for local inhabitants to present their own culture through a display of cultural artefacts and their participation in festival activities. In this way, place contributes to the construction of cultural identity.

### **2.3.3 *History and cultural identity***

According to Hall (1990:223), cultural identity can be defined as one shared culture which people with a shared history and a common ancestry have in common. He adds that cultural identities reflect a common historical experience and shared cultural codes which

provide one people with stable continuous frames of reference or meaning. Macleod (2006:74) explains that it is a key aspect of culture that it is constantly evolving as our societies develop. The historical factor in the creation of cultural identity is also acknowledged by Schermerhorn (1970, cited in Isiksal, 2002:2-4) and by Smith (1991:12) when they define an ethnic group as a category of people (within the larger society) that have, or are considered to have, a common ancestry, shared historical past, and a cultural focus on one or more elements that define their identity.

According to Elias-Varotsis (2006:25), cultural identity involves becoming, as well as being. It belongs to the future just as much as it belongs to the past. Feelings and sentiments in respect of the history of an ethnic group are stimulated by collective rites which remind participants in a formal and an informal way of who they are and from whence they come. Such rites of ‘belonging to’ reconfirm the origin of the group and dramatize its struggles, as well as its victories. Ritual practices are characterised by dramatic symbolic representations of the past, and are loaded with concrete forms of abstract meaning (De Vos & Romanucci-Ross, 1982:364; Van Vuuren, 1992:20,36). Hence, meaning is conveyed over time and from one generation to another by means of these collective rites, creating what West and Ndlovu (2010:217) call ‘collective memory’, which is a very important factor in the maintenance of cultural identity.

Collective memory is characterised by selective acts of remembering. Cultural groups decide what is suitable to remember and what should be forgotten. Collective memory is transferred from one generation to another by means of narratives. A cultural group may narrate historical events in the form of oral histories, songs, rites and festivals. However, every successive generation interprets and reinterprets its cultural legacy, and in doing so, gives it new meaning (Byrne, 2010:164; West & Ndlovu, 2010:233). In this process, memories constantly respond to new circumstances and influences, undergoing constant transformations. In this regard, Byrne (2010:169) remarks: ‘Everywhere...cultures (societies) are inventive. Cultural identity is improvised partly by drawing on the past.’ In more practical terms, it means that cultural groups improvise cultural representations of the past. Festivals appear to be one of the most effective ways to narrate and improvise such cultural representations of the past. In the context of the Lamu Cultural Festival, this narration and improvisation of cultural representations is complicated by the presence and participation of different indigenous groups.

## 2.4 Festivals

### 2.4.1 *The concept of festivals*

A variety of definitions describe the characteristics of festivals. Many of these definitions are very superficial, in that they only give an indication of what festivals are, and then leave the rest to the imagination of the reader.

According to Falassi (1987:1), ‘a festival is an event, a social phenomenon, encountered in virtually all human cultures’. Getz (1991) defines a festival as a sacred or profound time of celebration, a special occurrence celebrating a notable person, harvest or important product consisting of a series of performances. Hughes (2000:89) describes a festival as a special event with an array of activities concentrated over a short period, and explains that festivals are regular, as they occur every year. The length of time involved varies from one weekend in the case of some festivals to several weeks in the case of larger festivals. This is largely in line with the description provided by Janiskee (1980:97) of festivals as ‘formal periods or programs of pleasurable activities, entertainment or events having a festive character and publicly celebrating some concept, happening or fact’. Turner (1982) agrees with the characteristics mentioned by Janiskee (1980:97), and adds that festivals are a significant form of cultural practices accepted in all cultures.

Getz (1997:2) provides a more detailed description of festivals; he distinguishes between traditional and contemporary festivals, and indicates their characteristics. He describes festivals as one of the most common forms of cultural celebration. Although many are traditional, and have a long history, many have been created in recent decades. Common characteristics of festivals created in more recent times include parades and processions, sport and recreational events, art and entertainment, displaying many celebratory elements. Traditional festivals tend to retain their religious or mystical roots, whereas contemporary festivals are primarily secular. Countless new themes have been established, even though traditional festival themes have been retained, such as those related to harvests (Falassi, 1987:2).

Stripped to its bare bones, a festival is a themed, public celebration. To qualify as a festival, the celebration should be held by and for the public. Unless the public is invited, an event is a private party; hence, selling tickets to the public may not be sufficient to qualify an event as a festival. The object of celebration, which can be called the theme, is

often explicitly recognised in the name of the event, which is referred to as a music festival, cultural festival or food festival. Wherever a festival takes place, the particular space will have its own uniqueness, representing its own culture, which is achieved through performances or other objects displayed for the visitors (Getz, 1997:2).

Some further understanding of and insight into the nature and characteristics of festivals are provided by Dunstan (1994, cited in Derrett, 2003a:53), who says that festivals and cultural events manifest a forum for a shared purpose, which may include cultural values and traditions. Similarly, Dugas and Schweitzer (1997, cited in Derrett 2003b:53), say that a sense of community should be the goal of a festival. Manning (1983:33-50) explains celebration as a performance that is or entails the dramatic presentation of cultural symbols. Here a sense of community is envisioned as a sense of purpose, values, working together on community issues, celebration and problem-solving. This view is in line with the arguments of Getz (1991, 1997:11) and Frisby and Getz (1989:7-11), who suggest that festivals promote ethnic understanding, which in turn helps to preserve and celebrate local traditions, history and culture. The suggestion that festivals are significant in creating cultural identity is taken a step further by Adams and Goldbard (2001, cited in Jepson *et al.*, 2008:11), who maintain that festivals are a way for people to turn to their culture for identity, to assert their local values and to present these to visitors.

The significance of festivals to culture is also emphasised by Frey (1994:31) and Getz (2008:412), who describe a cultural festival as the organisation of a specific event within the cultural domain, but as characterised by a significant contribution of originality. Hence, cultural festivals are open to innovation, which implies that they can contribute to the treasure of arts of a cultural community. Cultural festivals are frequent over time, last for a minimum duration of time, and entail a certain level of organisation. Festivals and other cultural performances that display cultural elements are rich in meaning and provide a 'text' or 'reading' which can educate the observer about the host community and its culture(s).

These characteristics are discussed further in Chapter 4, in relation to this particular study, which considers aspects of the Lamu Cultural Festival that celebrate constructs that are thought to be sacred and profound to the local communities. The celebration is open to the public with an array of activities that occur regularly, and take place at the same locality, signifying some form of cultural practice whose aim is preserving and celebrating local

traditions, history and culture, as described by Janiskee (1980:97), Turner (1982), Frisby and Getz (1989), Getz (1991:22, 1997:19), Dunstan (1994, cited in Derrett, 2003a :51) and Hughes (2000).

To conclude, festivals are times of celebration with activities concentrated over a short period. They are regular (usually they are annual events) and the length varies from one weekend to several weeks. To qualify as a festival, an event should be by and for the public, and thus composed of and based on a significant accepted selection of cultural practices. The object of the celebration or the theme is recognised in the name of the festival, for example, it is a cultural festival, a music festival, a food festival, a yoga festival, a wine festival, etc. A festival therefore manifests a shared purpose, cultural values and traditions. This is confirmed by Getz (1991:22), who states that festivals foster '[c]ity pride and spirit through enhanced image, strengthening...traditions and values, greater participation in sports activities, and the arts; adoption of new social patterns of cultural forms through exposure at the event is the legacy of a festival'.

#### ***2.4.2 Types of events/festivals***

Getz (1997:11) analyses special events in terms of their context. From event organisers' point of view, a festival is a one-time or infrequently occurring event outside the normal programmes or activities of the sponsoring or organizing body. From the customers' or guests' point of view, it is an opportunity for a leisure, social or cultural experience outside the normal range of choices, or beyond everyday experience. The attributes that contribute to the special atmosphere are a festive spirit, uniqueness, quality, authenticity, tradition, hospitality, the theme and symbolism.

Events can be categorized in many different ways, namely by content, form and/or size. In terms of size, events are classified as mega events, hallmark events, major events, and local or community events.

Mega events are so large that they affect whole economies. These events target international markets and have an impact on the economic and social fibre of the community, for example, the Olympic Games, world fairs and expositions, and the world soccer cup finals (Ritchie, 1984:2).

Hallmark events are major one-off or recurring events of limited duration, developed primarily to enhance awareness, the appeal and the profitability of a tourism destination in the short or long term. What defines their success is their uniqueness, status or timely significance to create interest and attract attention, for example, Mardi Gras in New Orleans and the Edinburgh Festival in Scotland (Ritchie, 1984:2). Recognition of the character of the places and their citizens brings in large amounts of tourist dollars and creates community pride and recognition internationally (Getz, 1997:5-6). Hallmark events are inextricably linked to their destination. As a result they become synonymous with the name of the place and gain widespread recognition and awareness (Getz, 1997:407; Bowdin *et al.*, 2006:39). Getz (1997:408) and Page and Hall (2003) state that hallmark events provide significance in terms of image-making and also in addressing issues of seasonality by establishing an attraction for visitors outside the main tourist season.

Local and community events refer to festivals and events organised by communities with the aim of entertaining the local people. The benefits produced by these events include community pride, which creates and strengthens a sense of belonging and a sense of place. For these reasons, as part of community and cultural development strategies, local governments often support such events. Moreover, local government can help to expose people to new ideas and experiences, encourage participation in sport and arts activities and encourage tolerance and diversity through festivals (Janiskee, 1996:404). Janiskee (1996:405) explains that community festivals can attract a large number of visitors to a community, turning festivals into hallmark events. As community festivals are owned by a community and volunteer services are also provided by the community, Janiskee (1996:405) terms them family-fun events. These festivals also often appropriate public venues for the festivals' activities such as streets, parks, local convention centres, sport and recreational facilities.

According to Arnold (1999:113), festivals serve seven functions: tourism, entertainment, education, social interaction, business, trade and inspiration.

### ***2.4.3 History of festivals and festival research***

Before the 20<sup>th</sup> century, travel was largely a matter of necessity – the purpose was trade, war, government and worship, unlike today, where travel is also for 'non-instrumental' pleasure purposes. Religious travel drew a large number of people in ancient Greece to

take to the roads in search of recognised and valued culture. Festivals such as the Saturnalia in ancient Rome were also closely associated with social organisation and political processes. These festivals, in addition to athletic games, included sacrifices and prayer as part of dedication to the gods (Casson, 1974:384). The most significant festivals of ancient times included the Olympic Games held in honour of the god Zeus. Here, the spectators at the games had an opportunity to view works of art and listen to readings of poetry (Hughes, 2000:81).

Allen *et al.* (2000:78) state that since the dawn of time, human beings have found ways to mark important events in their lives, such as the changing of the seasons, the phases of the moon and the renewal of life each spring. This is evident from the Aboriginal Coloboree and Chinese New Year festivals, to the Dionysian rites of ancient Greece, to the present day. Behind well-known figures such as Old Father Time and Santa Claus lie old myths, archetypes and ancient celebrations. The European carnival tradition of the Middle Ages, myths and rituals were created to interpret cosmic happenings. Initially, festivals were not introduced with income-generation in mind, but currently many festivals staged are focused on income generation (Law, 2000:121).

Culture-related events are claimed to promote the most developed industry globally, namely tourism. The merging of culture and tourism has given birth to one of the best and least harmful forms of tourism, namely cultural tourism. The people who are the bearers of culture in a place are the primary attraction, as tourists travel to a particular destination to experience that particular culture at that place. The role played by cultural events determines their promotion and inclusion in the touristic circuit. The affiliation of cultural events to tourism is a determinant of touristic aims, and becomes an image generator for the place. The result is that cultural festivals have multiple kinds of impact – economic, social-cultural and environmental (Shaw & Williams, 2002:267; Jeong & Santos, 2004:648).

There may be favourable symbiosis between certain types of tourism, such as festival tourism and cultural tourism (O’Sullivan & Jackson, 2002:325). In recent years, cultural tourism has emerged as a niche form of tourism, with the local community showcasing and sharing their cultural heritage, values and traditions. As locals showcase their diverse cultures and more tourists seek to experience them, festivals become an important element of contemporary cultural tourism.

A chronological review of festival tourism literature by Getz (2008) shows the considerable growth in festival research from the early 1960s. In the 1960s and 1970s, Boorstin, a historian, first drew attention to pseudo-events created for publicity and political purposes (Boorstin, 1961, 1964, 1968, 1992). In 1974, Ritchie and Beliveau published the first article specifically on event tourism, paying particular attention to how hallmark events could combat the seasonality of tourism demand. Most of the research carried out during that period was economic impact assessments of specific events.

In the 1980s, the research expanded further. In addition to studies on the economic impact of festivals, researchers began to consider residents' perceptions of festivals and visitors' economic impact on the local society (Gunn & Wicks, 1982; Ritchie, 1984; Burns, Hatch & Mules, 1986; Burns & Mules, 1989). Research in the 1990s focused more on the reasons why people attend and travel to festivals, and the importance of events in generating tourism demand (Crompton & McKay, 1994; Hawkins & Goldblatt, 1995). The first decade of the 21<sup>st</sup> century ushered in more elaborate, more comprehensive research on festivals, as methodology for conducting event impact assessments developed (Dwyer *et al.*, 2000a, 2000b). It also appears that since the 1980s and into the new century, occasional anthropological studies on the social and cultural impact of festivals have also been conducted (cf. Greenwood, 1972; Ritchie, 1984; Cunneen & Lynch, 1988; Delamere, 2001; Delamere, Wankel & Hinch, 2001; Fredline, 2006; Fredline & Faulkner, 1998, 2000, 2002a, 2002b; Xiao & Smith, 2004).

These studies suggest that the interaction between tourists, the destination and the host community has a socio-cultural impact. When festivals are taking place, the lives of the local people are disrupted by the activities, and overcrowding, increased crime and vandalism can make locals hostile to tourists. According to Douglas, Douglas and Derrett (2001), these changes may lead to the degradation of the morals and values of a particular community, leading to a loss of its identity. Getz (1997:6) warns that festivals have the power to destroy a community's cultural heritage if the community allows its culture to be commoditised to meet the needs of tourists. Host community dissatisfaction can threaten the long-term success of a festival, not only culturally, but also economically.

Recently, festivals have acquired increased status as an aspect of organised domestic and international mass tourism worldwide, in the form of festival tourism. Festivals have become one of the products that tourists desire, whether these festivals are traditional

moments of social celebration, or constructed and highly orchestrated events (Picard & Robinson, 2006:2). Both the observation of and participation in festivals is an aspect increasing significantly in tourist experiences. According to Hughes (2000), festivals aim at sharing common interests with others, such as the celebration of a particular theme, for example, art or a particular local culture, as in the case of the Lamu Cultural Festival. This results in a number of different productions or performances, bringing together both locals and the non-local audience attending the festival.

There are increasing numbers of festivals worldwide, in line with some local communities' efforts to reclaim their identity (Getz, 1989). When a cultural festival takes place, personal and shared aspects of a sense of community identity are demonstrated. Festival organisers rely heavily on locals for the success of these festivals, as the locals are part of the audience and are also suppliers of events and goods. This allows festivals to add meaning, memories and traditions to the locals' way of life (Getz 2002:214). Derrett (2005:5) emphasises that festivals enhance the cultural identity of communities through an exchange of rituals. They also act as a mechanism that brings diverse factions of a community into a shared experience.

Cultural festivals are designed to provide cultural experiences based on the cultural material available to participants (Getz, 2008). In the case of Lamu, the host population plans the event and attends it as a community celebration. The external promotion is done by the festival organisers, the media and tourism marketing agencies, leading to visibility beyond the confines of the 'host' communities (Long & Robinson, 2004:1; Picard & Robinson, 2006b:1).

Historically, festivals have always provided meaningful connectivity and spectacle for visitors. During the 18<sup>th</sup> and 19<sup>th</sup> centuries in Europe, festivals helped to make visible the social life of foreign townscapes and landscapes (Picard & Robinson, 2006b:4). With the growing economic significance of tourism, researchers and policy-makers are placing increased emphasis on local festivals, due to their contribution to the 'destination market mix' (McKercher *et al.*, 2006:56).

One of the aims of festivals is attracting external audiences, particularly valued tourist markets. The main role of festivals is to provide an occasion for local participants to perform important and complex social, emotional and educational roles for tourist

audiences. In this way, cultural festivals showcase a destination's heritage, traditions and cultural landscapes (Long & Robinson, 2004:1; McKercher *et al.*, 2006:55; Getz, 2008:412). In some instances, festivals are the main motivators for tourists to visit particular destinations, and tourist packages may have festivals as the primary product of offer. In other instances, festivals are used to support the cultural product of a certain destination, in which case, the tourist may or may not attend the festival. In some instances, a tourist may accidentally stumble on a festival while exploring the locality (Picard & Robinson, 2006b:3).

#### ***2.4.4 Festivals and identity construction***

Celebrations such as festivals provide opportunities to bring people together for a common purpose, thus enhancing social cohesion and hence social identity (Frisby & Getz, 1989; Chacko & Schaffer, 1993; Getz, 1997; Dunstan, 1994, cited in Derrett, 2003b). As explained in Section 2.3.1, social identity is based on shared beliefs, rituals, values, world-views, symbols, habits, customs, language, religion, historical experiences, common descent and place (territory). In this context, there is no difference between social and cultural identity (cf. Epstein, 1978:112; Van Vuuren, 1992:16).

Investigating how festivals come into being (how and why they are initiated), and how they are linked to a local community could explain festivals' contribution to cultural identity. Festivals combine time, space and memory to produce the identity of a location. They build on perceived, imagined and lived experiences to create a sense of place and belonging through which communities are meant to exist as cohesive entities. Festivals are said to have the potential to enable communities to interpret and re-interpret their cultural identity. Hence, festivals provide the space and opportunity for the conservation of cultural heritage practices, and also for their reinterpretation and innovation (Hall, 1990:223; Elias-Varotsis, 2006:28).

Cultural events such as festivals have become a platform where both policy-makers and cultural producers come together to support identity. To maintain this common identity, traditions deemed as being in danger must be (re)instilled in the population of a local community. Celebrating culture and the identity of the people staging an event is one of the main aims of cultural festivals. Producers of cultural festivals see the aspect of identity as a binding agent for the local community (Crespi-Vallbona & Richards, 2007:111). As

explained above, culture endows people with identity; it acts as a means of communication between generations and societies. It creates a sense of belonging through shared community values when people are drawn together by shared interests.

The process of identity construction through festivals occurs by means of specific cultural practices involving many elements. Festivals have long constituted a vehicle for expressing a close relationship between place and identity, as they express a collective belonging to a place or group. A festival provides a setting for social interactions and an arena where local culture is produced and reproduced, creating opportunities for shared histories, cultural values and ideals. These factors together distinguish one place from another.

After investigating festivals, Geertz (1993) concluded that a person's sense of identity is closely linked to his/her attachment to place. This implies that festivals are signifiers of the cultural identity of the spaces where they occur. According to Copley and Robson (1996:19), festivals provide an opportunity to showcase a destination's rich intangible heritage, local traditions, ethnic backgrounds and cultural landscapes. De Bres and Davis (2001:327) state that community cultural festivals in particular celebrate both group and place identity. The success of a festival is measured largely in terms of the host community's capacity to represent and recognise itself in the event.

From the above debates, it seems that for individuals to identify with a place or a group, community members from a common origin have to share a culture and history. Their participation in a festival is a confirmation of people's coming together for the purposes of social cohesion, to showcase one shared culture and demonstrate a sense of belonging in the community. In this study, these arguments, combined with festivals' objectives as outlined by Hughes (2000) are used to determine the success of the Lamu Cultural Festival in constructing a Lamu identity.

#### **2.4.5 *Festival tourism***

According to Kim, Uysal and Chen (2002:127), festival tourism has become one of the fastest growing sectors in cultural tourism. Hence, several authors are now considering this form of tourism. According to O'Sullivan and Jackson (2002:325), festival tourism is defined as 'a phenomenon which people from outside a festival locale visit during the festival period'. They add that festival tourism is linked to community development and is concerned about local environments, and can therefore be regarded as one of the most

sustainable forms of tourism development. Janiskee (1996:400) points out that as festivals approach, locals get involved in activities to make the locality more presentable.

According to Ritchie (1984:2), this kind of tourism is tied to ‘events of limited duration developed primarily to enhance the awareness, appeal and profitability of a tourist destination’. Festival tourism encompasses a range of activities, and the term is frequently used as a catch-all for events tourism and festivals of any size or organisational type. Festival tourism falls under special interest tourism – it may be a new term, but is not a new phenomenon. Community festivals are good examples of sustainable tourism practice organised by and for the benefit of a local community (De Bres & Davis, 2001:329).

In festival tourism, the place is a main attraction. The culture of the local people and the festival itself determine its promotion and inclusion in the national and international tourist circuit. Hence, festivals serve as image generators for the place and the development of certain forms of tourism – in this case, heritage and cultural tourism. Different cities globally host annual festivals with varying degrees of significance; and once-off festivals. The Glasgow festival is one of the more significant ones held by the European Union – Glasgow was the European city of culture for 1990; it therefore decided, unlike such other cities, to hold a large number of events over the entire year (Hughes, 2000:91).

#### **2.4.6 Cultural festivals in Africa**

Festivals and events are among the fastest growing segments of the tourism industry, with cities and countries competing to host such festivals and events (Crompton & McKay, 1997; Getz, 1997; Thrane, 2002; Saayman & Saayman, 2006). Africa and its cities have taken the opportunity to benefit from this global phenomenon to attract some of the benefits that cities derive from festivals (Saayman & Saayman, 2006). These include an improved image and infrastructure, marketing benefits and income generation (Frisby & Getz, 1989; Getz, 1993). According to Throsby (1999:6), cultural festivals are a multi-faceted cultural phenomenon, each endowed with its own identity and structure, reflecting an active cultural process. Common traits of these cultural festivals include intense production and a cultural experience with goals of public entertainment and an enhanced cultural image of the venue (McKercher *et al.*, 2006:55-56).

Cultural festivals act as mechanisms to generate local pride, identity and income, but they have attracted global criticism – some argue that the cultural content of a festival is

devalued, others fear that local culture is replaced by popular culture. Festivals play an important role in group and place identity (De Bres & Davis, 2001), but have also been accused of commodification, which has been blamed for a loss of identity. According to Quinn (2003:332), the local can lose its authenticity because of modernisation, and economic gains from tourism can lead to the commercialisation of a culture. South Africa features language festivals. The Grahamstown Festival's original aim was to celebrate and re-establish, empower and maintain the cultural heritage of English-speaking South Africans (Visser, 2005:162). Afrikaans language festivals arose in the 1990s to promote Afrikaans culture because of a perceived 'language struggle' – some parts of the Afrikaans-speaking population began to fear the extinction of their language and culture in the ANC-led 'new South Africa' after 1994. These festivals include the Klein Karoo Nasionale Kunstefees [Little Karoo National Arts Festival], commonly known as the KKNK, in Oudtshoorn, the Aardklop [Earthbeat] festival in Potchefstroom, the Afrikaanse Woordfees [Afrikaans Word Festival] in Stellenbosch, the Gariep Fees [Gariep Festival] in Kimberly, and the Suidooster Fees [South Easter (wind) Festival] in Bellville, near Cape Town (South African festivals n\*d\*).

The Mangaung African Cultural Festival (Macufe) in the Free State city of Bloemfontein in South Africa is another example of a festival that aims at marketing a city, giving rise to wider economic growth. Macufe, which calls itself South Africa's only 'true African festival' has an international focus, rather than a purely local one, representing the vast range of cultural groups in Africa (Macufe, 2004). The annual Cape Town Minstrel Carnival, established in the mid-19<sup>th</sup> century, is the oldest festival in South Africa. It is an identity-based festival, celebrating the emancipation of the Malayan people from slavery in South Africa (Martin, 2000; Pollack, 2004).

In West Africa, the New Yam Festivals of West Africa are celebrated in various communities during the yam season. The communities involved in the festivals celebrate in various countries across West Africa, including Agni (Ivory Coast), Yoruba, Beni, Tiv, Igala and Ibo (Nigeria), Fanti, Ga, Kroba, Ashanti (Ghana) and Fon and Holli (Dahomey) communities, and the Ewe in Ghana and Togoland. According to Coursey and Coursey (1971:445), these festivals have been greatly eroded over the last few decades, under the influence of European culture. The festivals have lost their original significance, which was to celebrate the beginning of the harvest, and are now more like social celebrations.

There are a vast number of festivals in Africa, but there appears to be very little published research that might assist in understanding the purposes of these festivals and the impact they have on host communities.

#### ***2.4.7 Cultural festivals in Kenya***

Until recently, festival tourism was an unknown practice in Kenya. Tourism in Kenya was introduced before 1930, when international tourists began arriving in the country in small numbers, mainly because of its abundance in wildlife and what the country had to offer (Kamau, 1999; Sindiga, 1999). Hence the tourism industry in Kenya is primarily based on its rich wildlife resources. The legacy of these early endeavours is found in the establishment of Nairobi National Park, which was gazetted in 1946, followed by Tsavo in 1948, the Aberdares in 1950, Meru in 1966 and Lake Nakuru National Park in 1967. Many tourists visited the parks in the 1950s and 1960s for sport hunting and fishing, the collection of trophies and the general viewing of wildlife (Irandu, 2004).

Recently, tourism in Kenya has begun to shift towards heritage and cultural tourism. It has been argued that native, indigenous and traditional peoples have distinctive cultures, and often also possess a rich heritage and a reservoir of intellectual property that has value for both economic and emotional reasons (Walle, 2010:158). As a result, several community cultural festivals have been initiated with the aim of expressing the cultural values of different communities and to preserve their cultural heritage.

The Abatochi cultural festival is a one-day event whose main aim is to educate the youth on their cultural values. Values inculcated in the community during the festival are peace among humanity, love of customs and traditions, unity in diversity and respect for others. The activities in the event include songs and dance, the showcasing of musical instruments and foods (Festivals in Kenya, n.d.\*).

The first Abawanga Cultural Festival was held in December 2011 to celebrate the culture and traditions of the Wanga community and to unite them with neighbouring communities (Abasamias, Babukusus and Abasukhas). The aim of the festival is to pass on the Wanga culture to the younger people by showcasing traditional storage equipment, such as baskets, grain containers and gourds for milk and traditional foods (Festivals in Kenya, n.d.\*).

The Bull Fighting (Lihe/Liru) cultural festival is an event held at the end of every month. It involves bullfights, with cheering crowds, till one of the bulls surrenders the battle after being overpowered or injured. The aim of the 'Lihe' is to promote clan loyalty by bringing together community members (Festivals in Kenya, n.d.\*).

The Kakapel Annual Teso Cultural Festival is held to teach the current generation about their culture and the traditions of the past through a display of cultural artefacts, herbal medicine, and traditional Teso weapons used during wars and to protect young men herding grazing animals. Other activities in the festival are the presentation of Iteso traditional songs and dances, Iteso traditional marriage practices, traditional ways of cooking vegetables and extracting fat from milk. Through narrations, the young are told the histories of their ancestors, promoting unity among the Iteso community (Festivals in Kenya, n.d.\*).

The Migwena Community Sports and Cultural Festival is the biggest festival held in the Bondo District, and has been held since 1933. Its main purpose is to maintain the culture of the Luo community. Luo traditional games and some relevant cultural features are some of the activities of the festival. The locality where the festival is held was an important site for traditional weddings in the olden days, and as a result people believe that it is easy to get a wife here during the festival (Festivals in Kenya, n.d.\*).

The festivals mentioned above are all one-day events or at most two, and they all started recently, with the exception of the Migwena Community Sports and Cultural Festival. No literature is available on them apart from the Internet sources mentioned.

The Maulidi Festival is the destination and culmination of religious pilgrimage for Muslims from the coast and all over East Africa. It is a four-day event held every year in Lamu during the third month of the Muslim Calendar and it is a celebration held in commemoration of the Prophet Muhammad's birth. The festival is also a celebration of Sufism or Islamic mysticism, which is responsible for the spread of Islam. The festival offers spiritual benefits for Muslims who cannot afford to go on the great pilgrimage to Mecca. During the day, traditional dances are performed, accompanied by local energetic drumming. More solemn prayer vigils are held throughout the night. Other events include dhow races, henna painting and poetry recitals (Magical Kenya, n.d.\*; Gearhart, 1998).

The other major festival apart from the Maulidi and the Lamu Cultural Festival (discussed in detail in Chapter 4) is the Lake Turkana Cultural Festival, which was initiated in 2008. It was proposed by the local community of Loiyangalani and was jointly organised by the German Embassy and the National Museums of Kenya. The festival features unique demonstrations of ten communities which live in the Lake Turkana region, namely the El Molo, Rendille, Samburu, Turkana, Dassanach, Ghabra, Borana, Konso, Wata and Burji communities. The festival gives the participating communities an opportunity for cross-cultural interaction and promotes peace and reconciliation. Activities undertaken in the festival include the presentation of customs and living conditions of the ten tribes – dances, music, traditional costumes, and arts and crafts (Lake Turkana Festival, n.d.\*).

No in-depth academic reach has so far been done on these festivals, or on the role that they play in the construction of cultural identity in a heterogeneous community.

## **2.5 Conclusion**

The aim of this study was to establish to what extent the Lamu Cultural Festival may have contributed to the construction of a new Lamu identity, since more than one cultural group is involved. Hence, the research was concerned with the relationship between festivals and identity construction. This study was done against the backdrop of the aspiration of the organisers of the Lamu Cultural Festival to create a unique cultural identity among the four different indigenous groups.

Conducting research of this nature required me to acquaint myself with two basic concepts: identity and culture. I had to obtain clarity on the difference between the concepts of social and cultural identity, as both terms are used apparently interchangeably in the literature. A literature review revealed that there is no essential distinction between the two concepts, as cultural identity manifests itself in social identity and cohesion.

In more particular terms, social identity refers to the commonality between individuals who construct their identity claims on the basis of particular cultural practices. Cultural identity designates the connection between an individual and a group through cultural practices and values. Similarities between group members, such as shared cultural values, beliefs, symbols and practices, appear to be the basics of identity. Thus adherence to culture is a pre-requisite for social group membership, and is also characterised by deep

feelings of emotion which play a significant role in social cohesion and identity. Other forms of identity contribute to a sense of identity.

Place identity is a process of appropriation and re-appropriation rather than invention, in the sense that local narratives about places, festivals and events are significant in the creation and maintenance of cultural identity constructions.

A festival is defined as an event, a social phenomenon, a celebration of a notable person or happening. It consists of a series of performances or activities. It is a regular event, as it happens every year (or month) and activities are concentrated into a short period. It is a public, themed celebration, by the public and for the public. The object of celebration (referred to as the theme) is reflected in the name of the festival (for example, a cultural festival, wine festival, or music festival). This points to the different types of festivals defined in terms of their context and purpose.

Festivals have a long history dating back to ancient Greece, where festivals were closely linked to social organisation and religious and political processes. Festival research has grown considerably from the early 1960s, covering topics such as the economic impact of festivals, residents' and visitors' perceptions of festivals, and the importance of festivals in generating tourism demand. Recently, more in-depth and comprehensive research on festivals has developed a methodology for conducting event impact assessment. Occasionally, anthropologists have looked at the social and cultural impact of festivals, but thus far, the literature on festivals does not reveal much about how community cultural festivals contribute to the construction of identity, or about how festivals can best represent the community. Festivals should provide an opportunity for community cultural development, fostering cultural and ethnic understanding, as well as local group and place identity.

From the literature review, it seems that a local festival such as the Lamu Cultural Festival should be inclusive and should draw effectively on community involvement and support for it to successfully fulfil its role of constructing a Lamu identity through a festival. Therefore, in the next chapter, cultural practices and the sense of cultural identity before the introduction of the festival are investigated.

## CHAPTER 3:

# CULTURAL PRACTICES AND SENSE OF CULTURAL IDENTITY BEFORE THE INTRODUCTION OF THE FESTIVAL

### 3.1 Introduction

This chapter aims to examine the cultural practices of the four different indigenous groups as a manifestation of their respective senses of cultural identity before the introduction of the festival. This is done by means of a literature study of the cultural practices of each of the four different indigenous groups before they settled in Lamu town.

Cultural practices are shared by members of the same indigenous group:

As with any culture, members of an indigenous group *share* certain beliefs, values, habits, customs, and norms because of their common background. They define themselves as different and special because of cultural features. This distinction may arise from language, religion, historical experience, geographic isolation, kinship, or race (...). Markers of an ethnic group may include a collective name, belief in common descent, a sense of solidarity, and an association with a specific territory, which the group may or may not hold. (Kottak, 1996:37)

This view is largely supported by Harrison (2011). Smith (1986:32) explains that an indigenous group consists of individuals that share a common name, myths of common origin and elements of common history, and that they possess a common sense of group loyalty, identity and territory.

For the purposes of the study, indigenous groups are defined as a tribal people whose social, economic and cultural conditions distinguish them from other communities. Indigenous communities are responsible for the preservation and maintenance of traditional knowledge and practices. These groups embody traditional lifestyles based on their customs and culture, which include hunting and gathering and nomadism. According to the Lamu Conservation Trust (2015), Lamu has four main indigenous communities: the Aweer, the Bajuni, the Sanye and the Orma.

Another group that lives in Lamu is the Swahili, who historically negotiate their identity between African and Arab identities, and uphold Islamic religious practices. They have intermarried with other upcountry tribes of African descent to give rise to the Swahili culture (Allen, 1993; Kusimba, 1999). The Swahili are found all over the coast of East

Africa. For this reason, in my study, the Swahili are not regarded as an indigenous group of Lamu.

McIntosh, Hinch and Ingram, (2002:47) take the notion of common descent, identity and history a step further when they claim that cultural identity connects individuals to an ancestral homeland, as cultural identity is founded on tradition, lifestyle, values and protocol. According to Hall (1990:225), identity is a matter of ‘becoming’ as well as of ‘being’. It is a continuing frame of reference and meaning which people with a shared history and ancestry hold in common (cf. Ashmore, Jussion & Wilder, 2001). Cultural identities have histories, and come from somewhere, transcending time, place, history and culture. Cultural identities are not eternally fixed, but like everything historical, they undergo change. This implies that members of an indigenous group share a biological background, the same space of communication and interaction, the same cultural values and a subjective belief in a common descent (Barth, 1969:37; Weber, 1976:416).

Cohen (1987:387-388, cited in Bloom, 1998:107) considers the anthropological use of the word ethnicity in the context of inclusiveness and exclusiveness. It is a process of assigning individuals to groups by the individual and others. Ethnicity is no more than ‘a set of descent-based cultural identifiers used to assign persons to groupings that expand and contract in inverse relation to the scale of inclusiveness and exclusiveness of the membership’ (Cohen, 1987:387, cited in Bloom, 1998:107). Eriksen (2002:4-11) shares this perspective and adds another important aspect to our understanding of ethnicity when he defines ethnicity as aspects of relationships between groups which consider themselves (and are regarded by others) as culturally distinctive (cf. Barth, 1969:25).

Phinney *et al.* (2001:498) provide another angle by expressing ethnic identity as an individual’s ‘sense of self’ in terms of membership of a particular indigenous group. Hence, apart from the cultural facets mentioned above, ethnic identity embraces shared values, attitudes towards the own indigenous group which include belonging to a group, commitment to a group, and self-identification.

In view of the preceding discussion and to determine the sense of cultural identity that existed in respect of each of the four distinct indigenous groups before the introduction of the Lamu Cultural Festival, the cultural practices that are considered as identity markers

for each group are their collective name, historical background, economic activities, socio-cultural practices, authority system and religious practices.

## **3.2 Cultural practices and values before the introduction of the Lamu Cultural Festival**

Cultural practices are patterns of behaviour and interactions between the members of an indigenous group. Such practices inevitably lead to cultural products; some of these are tangible, others intangible. Examples of tangible cultural products are objects such as pottery, instruments, tools, dress, types of dwellings, food, arts and crafts. Intangible products include language, religion, social, economic and political institutions. Values, ideas and beliefs motivate the cultural practices and products (tangible and intangible) of indigenous groups (Larsen, 1994; Munjeri, 2004:13). Below, I discuss Lamu's four indigenous groups, namely the Aweer, the Bajuni, the Sanye and the Orma. For each group, I provide a historical background, and information on the group's economic activities, authority system, socio-cultural practices and religious practices. In Section 3.3, I consider the similarities and differences between these groups on the basis of this information.

### **3.2.1 *The Aweer***

#### **3.2.1.1 *Historical background***

The Aweer, also known as the Boni, are a vulnerable group that have struggled to survive since 1967, when their homeland became a battlefield in the war between Kenya and Somalia. They originally settled between the Juba River in what is today Somalia and the Tana River in what is today Kenya (Okoth-Okombo, 2011:258). The name 'Boni' is thought to be a derogatory Somali denomination of various low caste groups who were freed slaves and whose livelihood depends on hunting wild animals. Therefore the people prefer the name 'Aweer', meaning hunter (Brenzinger, 1992:4). In the Aweer community, there are also various subgroups with minor differences in dialect, based on geographical location.

Today they live mixed in semi-permanent villages in Kiunga (Mlimani, Basuba, Mangai, Mararani and Pandanguo) on the mainland (Nurse, 1985). Some of the Aweer moved to Lamu Island after natural disasters wiped out their livestock, forcing them to move, a few

at a time. One man heard that there was work on the farms on the agricultural plots on the Island, located at the edge of the town, and he later sent back to the mainland for his family. Others followed to work on the farms as cultivators or tend cattle, the same livelihoods that the Aweer practised before the natural disaster (Curtin, 1985:455). The total ban on hunting in Kenya imposed in 1977 forced the Aweer to look for alternative means of survival. Even though the subgroups may display a certain degree of autonomy in terms of their territory and social activities, they still share a lot of their culture and traditions, as indicated in the sections below (Stiles, 1981:848; Laher & Sing'Oei, 2014:94).

### 3.2.1.2 *Economic activities*

The Aweer are reported to have become hunter-gatherers after they abandoned pastoralism for reasons yet unknown, but probably because hunting and gathering were both viable and lucrative. They may also have done so after natural disasters wiped out their livestock (Stiles, 1981:23). They had a reputation as proficient elephant hunters who supplied ivory to the coast (Ng'ang'a, 2006:555). Apart from this, they collected fruit and honey from the forests. After the Kenyan government banned hunting in the 1970s, the Aweer shifted to agriculture (Faulkner, 2006). Their main crops are maize, millet and sorghum. Varying from family to family, all sorghum and maize is sold, except for a 50kg bag left for consumption. These staples are supplemented with cassava, beans, pumpkins, papayas, coconuts, bananas, and a wide variety of wild plants (Faulkner, 2006). The Aweer also keep chickens, but rarely eat them; eggs are mainly sold, but are occasionally eaten hard-boiled (Stiles, 1979:15). Fish is a proscribed food by tradition, as the Aweer believe fish makes their skin break out in spots if they consume it (Eastman, 1988:6).

Despite the prohibition on hunting, it is still practised on a small scale, and for particular purposes, namely for initiation, food and trophies. Trophy hunting usually focuses on elephants, rhinos and hippos. The horns and ivory are taken back to the villages as trophies to prove the hunters' accomplishments and to show off (Nunow, 2012). The Aweer people also have special skills which they use to find honey: they produce a certain tune which calls out a bird that takes them to the honey, usually in trees like mahogany or *Neem*, a tree which belongs to the mahogany family. In addition, they keep beehives that are placed strategically; each beehive generates approximately 40kg of honey per year (Nunow,

2012:11; Al-Sayed, 2013). They lived in balance with the environment, but now life is difficult because there is limited water for cultivation (Lamu Museum, n.d.).

### 3.2.1.3 *Socio-cultural practices*

Since the Aweer mainly depended on hunting and gathering in the past, each member of the group who was involved in this practice had to start learning his or her craft at an early age. Hunting held a very important place in the socio-cultural system of the Aweer, as it was part of their system for a very long time (Nunow, 2012). Traditional life revolved around ritual ceremonies related to hunting. A distinction is made by the Aweer between small (*busha*) and large (*dua* or *binansi*) game. The *dua* include elephant, rhino, buffalo or lions (Nunow, 2012). For a man to be regarded as an experienced hunter (to be considered a man), he had to kill a *dua*. According to Nunow (2012), until he had done so, he was referred to as a *munese* (not yet a man). A ceremony known as *kerar* was held when a man killed a *dua*. At the ceremony, the man was taught traditional knowledge concerning medicine, hunting and leadership (Kenya Museum societies, n.d.\*). Songs of praise were sung, and he was decorated with ornaments. Oil was poured over his head and shoulders by older women. After this ceremony, he was regarded as a man (*miso*). When a man became more experienced and successful, bringing a lot of game to the village, he was referred to as a *hargon* (the best in hunting) and became a highly respected member of the community (Nunow, 2012).

The Aweer have proscriptions against eating certain animals, which include the dog and cat families, porcupines, rats and monkeys. Before the introduction of Islam, they used to eat elephants, but with nominal acceptance of Islam, they no longer do (Stiles, 1981:24).

Men were mainly concerned with hunting, and young boys started quite early, being taught how to kill small animals such as birds, or being given a certain spot and waiting for an animal so that they could kill it (Nunow, 2012). Graduation into manhood would be achieved after killing a bigger wild animal such as a lion, rhino, buffalo or an enemy of the community (Nunow, 2012). After killing the animal, the boy would then cut off the tail, put the tail on his shoulder and stand on the carcass while singing a heroic song. Hunting activities were usually performed in daytime, or during full moon. The hunters used hunting equipment such as traps, bows and poisoned arrows (Nunow, 2012:11).

The role of the women was to build the Aweer's beehive-like houses. The houses were bee-hive shaped and round, made of branches and saplings covered by bark and dried grass (Eastman, 1988:5). Each such unit housed one nuclear family together, although older boys would sometimes sleep outside under a tree. Elderly widowers slept in a *bande*, small huts or rectangular grass-covered houses, traditionally built for unmarried men. Relatives usually lived near one another, and married sons built their houses adjacent to their father's house, and widowed daughters would often move back to their father's house (Nunow, 2012:11).

The Aweer practised endogamy, meaning that they only married among themselves. They married members of the same patrilineage within the bands or encampments dispersed over the same area. Polygyny was practised (where some men have more than one wife). In that case, each wife had her own house, where she lived with her children. The husband visited the wives' houses periodically; he had no home of his own (Joshua Project, n.d.\*). Therefore children belong to their father's patrilineage (Prins, 1963:181). The Aweer were very particular as to their wives and daughters remaining chaste until they get married and also for prolonged periods of up to three years after the delivery of a child. They still practise infibulation, which involves the removal of female genitalia, and then stitching the wound, leaving only a very small opening for menstruation and urination. The practice is not only applied to girls, but also to women after delivery. As a result, many Aweer wives abandon their husbands for Swahili partners (Prins, 1963:177). Some locals believe that this will lead to the self-destruction of the tribe. Some also argue that Islamization may mean that the tribe as a cultural identity might vanish.

There are four different types of dances in the Aweer community which are said to comprise the complete Aweer dance repertoire (Stiles, 1979:16). Percussion instruments, which include drums, *debi* cans and sometimes *sufurias* (metal cooking pots), are the only instruments used (Stiles, 1979). The first dance is a men's dance, named *ngomela* (after the drum). They form a semicircle and clap hands to the rhythm of the drums. As the dance progresses, a line of women and young girls forms opposite the men, shuffling their feet and keeping their faces expressionless. It is an old dance which has been passed on by the ancestors, symbolising the domination of women by men (Stiles, 1979). The second dance is the *bere*, which involves both men and women. They make a rough ring with men on one side and women on the other. The third dance is the *erema*, which is accompanied by singing, clapping of hands and drums. The final dance is the *mwanarumbe*, which is

always the last one of the night. It is danced only by older women who have a lot of dancing experience, as it requires special skill. The dances can take place in any order, except for the *mwanarube*, which is the closing dance (Stiles, 1979:16-17; Nurse, Spear & Spear, 1985:15).

Traditionally, the Aweer had no concept of individual ownership of property or individual accumulation of wealth among the Aweer community, as they all shared what they had. Ownership was mainly communal (Stiles, 1979). The only personal property for men was a bow, arrow, knife, axe and a calabash for honey, as well as poison used for hunting. Women owned beads, baskets, combs and locally made utensils (Nunow, 2012). The Aweer used to make stools and pots for the household use, as well as mats and *uteos* (flattish baskets). Weaving, comb-wood carving and beadwork were also practised. Both men and women wove baskets and mats (Nunow, 2012:11).

Expert medicine men among the Aweer used herbal medicine to treat the sick. Their payment was mainly a fee in the form of honey or meat. Herbs were collected from the forests and then boiled. However, this has changed today, because nowadays the sick are taken to the hospital, although the nearest one may be almost 50km away (Waswala-Olewe *et al.*, 2014:40).

The Aweer marked the graves of great men with the skull of a long-horned ox on a pole (Waswala-Olewe *et al.*, 2014).

#### 3.2.1.4 Authority system

Like many hunting and gathering communities, the Aweer lacked a central political authority. Instead, they had two headmen who wielded authority side by side at the same time (Prins, 1963). The two headmen were sisters' sons whose selection was mainly based on age, with the eldest assuming the position of headman. One took precedence over the other, walked in front and was greeted first (Prins, 1963:182). The headman had the final authority on most decisions, although they might consult with Islamic officials or other civil authorities in cases where people were dissatisfied with a certain decision (Nunow, 2012:11). The community elders, on the other hand, presided over religious and cultural ceremonies (Nunow, 2012:11; Human Rights Commission, 2014:25). Politically, the Aweer seem to have been attached to the sedentary Bantu, and today there are still small groups that live under the tutelage of the more powerful Bantu (Ng'ang'a, 2006:556). This

was a result of interaction with the Bantu-speaking Bajuni in Shungwaya. The Aweer also seem to have adopted some superficial Orma cultural traits (Stiles, 1979:42). The government no longer recognizes double headmanship. The Aweer on Lamu Island now accept the judicial authority of the Liwali of Lamu to solve interpersonal conflicts. The government has brought them under the jurisdiction of minor officials known as the *mudirs*, who are Islamic functionaries (Prins, 1963:178).

### 3.2.1.5 *Religious practices*

Traditionally the Aweer believed in a supreme being, one high god who was worshipped in a sacred spot set aside for prayer. They held the forests in great reverence, because the trees traditionally represent the *mizimu*, the ancestors. Special holy people were designated to handle religious matters. In the 1950s, the Aweer converted *en masse* to Islam. However, in spite of their Islamization, they still perform some traditional religious activities in their homesteads and in the forests. Even though some rites have been modified to fit in with Islam, there are still aspects of the Aweer traditional religious customs which are performed under the *herrop* tree (Stiles, 1979; Faulkner, 2006:298).

## 3.2.2 *The Bajuni*

### 3.2.2.1 *Historical background*

This is the largest of the four indigenous groups on Lamu Island. They are also known as *Tikuu*, *Tuku* and *Gunya*. Bajuni is their preferred name, as the term *Gunya* is used among the Bajuni people to refer to people who were originally slaves (Laher & Sing'Oei, 2014:86).

The Bajuni speak a distinctive dialect of Swahili known as Kitikuu. They are believed to have migrated from a place in the north called Shungwaya, which could not yet be traced. In Bajuni oral traditions, Shungwaya does not seem to exist; some mention it as a specific place, while others regard it as a generalized area along the Bajuni migration route (Nurse, 1980). Some people claim that the Orma (see Section 3.2.4) were in Shungwaya too. The reasons for migration vary; some say the Bajuni people migrated due to pressure from the Orma and other indigenous groups that were also settled in Shungwaya, while others ascribe the migration to internal squabbles (Nurse, 1980). It is alleged that all the original

clans left their mark by making incisions on a certain tree. It is asserted that Fumo Liongwe, a legendary Bajuni hero and leader, was born at Shungwaya (Nurse, 1980).

They trace their origins to diverse groups in Shungwaya of primarily Bantu and Arab descent. Other narrators say that the Bajuni ancestors came from *arabuni* (Mecca), Shirazi, Arafat and Shamu (Syria) (Abungu & Abungu, 2009:176). Bajuni folklore also tells that the Bajuni people arrived at the coast at much the same time as the Portuguese, in the 16<sup>th</sup> century (Nurse, 1980:38).

The Orma invasion in the 16<sup>th</sup> and 17<sup>th</sup> centuries forced the Bajuni to flee the mainland and to start moving to the islands (Nurse, 2007:2). Prior to the 1960s, most of the Bajuni lived on the mainland, but the repeated razing of houses, burning of crops, and cattle theft by the Somali forced them to migrate *en masse* to the islands. Their mainland neighbours were aggressive towards the Bajuni; hence, the relationship between them was uneasy. Very few Bajuni are left on the mainland coast of Southern Somalia and northern Kenya (Nurse & Hinnebusch, 1993:516). Before they settled on Lamu Island, the Bajuni lived between Kismayuu and the Pate Islands in Kenya. Mazrui and Shariff (1994:56) suggest that a person from the Bajuni islands is first and foremost a Bajuni, and then a Swahili.

#### 3.2.2.2 *Economic activities*

The Bajuni mainly base their livelihood on fishing, farming, boat-building, craftsmanship and, more recently, also on tourism-related activities (Middleton, 1992; People-in-country profile, n.d.\*). In the past, they were a stable community, but the men travelled widely for the purposes of trade, as far afield as Mogadishu, Kismayuu and across the Indian Ocean to South Arabia. They also traded in Mombasa, Malindi, Zanzibar, Tanzania and the Comoro Islands. Most of the Bajuni were also fishermen, spending many weeks each year in fishing camps, and some were famous sea captains operating on the East African Coast (Middleton, 1992). The women also travelled, but not as much as the men. They only travelled to nearby islands for supplies to weave baskets to sell (Nurse, 2007). Due to their trading activities and fishing, the Bajuni learnt Swahili as a language of communication (Nurse, 2007).

The roles of men and women were clearly defined: men were in charge of business, preparing nets, fishing and making boats. The women took care of their homes, did household chores, engaged in agriculture, and earned cash by weaving baskets and selling

cowries (Nurse, 2007). The role of boys was to take care of goats, and to accompany their fathers on fishing trips. Both men and women were involved in activities such as singing, poetry and storytelling (Nurse, 2007:7; Bodin & Prell, 2011:78).

The staple foods of the Bajuni are coconut, rice and fish (Bodin & Prell, 2011). *Mtama* millet or sorghum, *mawe* (bulrush millet) and *wimbi* (eleusine) were the most common cereals cultivated by the Bajuni before the introduction to *mahindi* (maize) (Bodin & Prell, 2011). Millet is still an important staple used to make bread and brew beer. People also recall that it was used as a currency, and therefore it was a symbol of wealth (Bodin & Prell, 2011).

### 3.2.2.3 *Socio-cultural practices*

The Bajuni are composed of eighteen clans (*k'amasi kumi na nane*) which originated in Shungwaya (Allen, 1967:314). Many of the names of these clans have been derived from the names of places on the Somalian or Northern Kenyan coast. These names are mentioned in virtually all the songs and poems of the Bajuni (Allen, 1967). The Bajuni practise endogamy (the custom of marrying within a specific, social cultural or indigenous group in accordance with the custom or law) (Allen, 1967). As opposed to the exogamous marriages practised by most pastoralist communities, the Bajuni marry in their extended family and practise monogamy (Gardner & Bushra, 2004:8). Among the Bajuni, it is the task of the bride's mother to choose a suitable groom for her daughter from the men in her clan. Once the bride's family has identified a groom, the groom's father proposes to the bride's parents, after which a group of elders from both families meet to decide on the amount of marriage goods to be provided (Abungu & Abungu, 2009:143). Once the amount of marriage goods has been agreed upon, the groom's family sends the marriage goods to the young woman's family. Since the Bajuni are matrilineal and matrilocal, the husband moves to live with the wife's family (Abungu & Abungu, 2009:144).

At the age of seven years, children are taken to a Muslim school where they are taught the Qur'an, how to pray, and also to conduct morally upright lives (Bethany World Prayer Center, 2015). Children are required to be very respectful of other people. When they meet an older person, they are expected to offer greetings by taking the person's right hand and kissing it. They are also expected to get up and offer their seat to an older person when such a person enters a room (Bethany World Prayer Center, 2015). In addition, they are the

last to eat. Girls are usually taught how to cook when they get to the age of 10 years. They are not supposed to mingle with boys once they reach puberty (Joshua Project, n.d.\*). They have to be accompanied by a female chaperone when they go to public places, and have to ensure that they are fully covered by the traditional *buibui* (a long black cloth worn as a shawl) (Bethany World Prayer Center, 2015; Joshua Project, n.d.\*).

Men and women dress differently. Men wear *kikois* (a cotton wrap) draped around the waist. They also wear shoes made of rubber thongs (Bethany World Prayer Center, 2015). Women are required to cover every part of their body, only leaving the eyes uncovered (Gardner & Bushra, 2004). In the past, the women used to wear golden rings in one pierced nostril, and many earrings in their ear lobes. These are, however, currently regarded as unfashionable (Joshua Project, n.d.\*).

There is a wealth of songs and poetry among the Bajuni. These include *mashairi*, *t'endi vave* and *randa*, which are sung by farmers, and *kimayi* songs, sung by fisher folk. The names of these songs refer to the events of the period around and before the Orma invasion in the 16<sup>th</sup> century (Nurse, 1980:38), before the displacement of the Bajuni from their original settlements of Shungwaya, which is said to have been a very sophisticated settlement with buildings of more than one storey (Prins, 1965:31; Allen, 1993:184). Among the Bajuni, the women play the musical instruments (Adamson, 1967:270).

#### 3.2.2.4 Authority system

The Bajuni are regarded as an unruly people who moved into Lamu at the same time as the Portuguese. As far back as the 1830s, the Bajuni were ruled by the Arab rulers from Zanzibar who had representatives in Lamu. The Sultan of Zanzibar controlled a ten-mile wide coastal strip from the south of Zanzibar, through Mombasa and Lamu in Kenya, all the way up to Kismayu and Mogadishu in Somali. The Sultan managed his subjects through a *murdir* (an Islamic leader) (Laher & Sing'Oei, 2014:89).

The Bajuni had no ruling family and no central government, according to local tradition (Nurse, 1980:36). They claim that they have been pushed around by successive governments after the Somali *Shifita* bandit invasions in the 1950s and 1960s (Nurse & Hinnebusch, 1993:516). They are mere fishermen, scarcely represented in central government. They know little about life on the mainland or government institutions. Most Bajuni have been born, and have lived and died on the islands since their migration from

their former settlement in Shungwaya in the 16<sup>th</sup> and 17<sup>th</sup> centuries after the Orma invasion (Ylvisaker, 1979:67; Middleton, 2004:30).

Disputes or criminal cases are solved by a Muslim judge known as the *Kadhi* (Bajuni.com, n.d.\*; People-in-country profile, n.d.\*). Similar to other societies, the Bajuni identify themselves with a territorial base which forms part of their economic, social and political history. Such a territory gives them a sense of identity and belonging (Yassin, 2003:68).

### 3.2.2.5 *Religious practices*

The Bajuni believe that there is a creator. Among them, as among many agricultural societies, veneration of the ancestors generally played an indispensable role – the Bajuni also cultivate crops, apart from being fishermen, as indicated above. The ancestors were bound to places that they possessed, which included caves, large trees, wells and undeveloped pieces of land. Before one could start tilling a virgin piece of land, offerings were made to the invisible owners (ancestors) by burning incense and strewing maize along the path that was to be burned. The earth was considered the source of life and abundance; thus the onus rested on the ancestors buried there to guarantee the fertility of the soil. The counterpart of mother earth, namely father heaven, brought rain that caused seeds to germinate from the fertile soil. The eternal cycle of death and resurrection was the central element of the Bajuni view of the world. Death was considered temporal (Allen, 1974; Hock, 1987; Horton & Middleton, 2000).

Middleton (2004:30) claims that all the Bajuni have been Muslims from at least the eighth century onwards. However, ancestral worship is still practised within an orthodox Islamic frame of reference. The Bajuni are Shafite Muslims, and usually conduct their lives according to Islamic laws and beliefs. This involves conducting at least five prayers a day, and also washing five times. A small number have also adopted Christianity (Bajuni.com, n.d.\*; People-in-country profile, n.d.\*).

### 3.2.3 *The Sanye*

#### 3.2.3.1 *Historical background*

The Sanye are considered to have the oldest history in Lamu region. There are about 500 Sanye in Lamu. According to their historical narrative, the Sanye originally lived in Shungwaya. Later, they moved to the Tana River banks, referred to as Iwizoon, which is

around 300km north of Mombasa (Ndurya, 2010). Over time, the Sanye spread out to the surrounding forests of the Lamu and Tana River districts. They currently live in the lower Tana River district, mainly in the Witu, Kipini and Mapenya regions, and also in the Lamu district in the Mkunumbi region (Ndurya, 2010:27). The Sanye claim that their ancestors were Boran who became hunters when their cattle turned into wild animals (National Museums of Kenya, n.d.).

The Sanye are a modest community composed of seven clans, namely the Wamanka, Ilam, Walunku, Ebalawa, Digilima, Radhotu, and Simtumi. Their dialect, like the Khoikhoi, San and Nguni languages in South Africa, is characterized by click sounds (Olson, 1996:509; Ng'ang'a 2006:556; Kitelo, 2014; Kenya Museum Societies, n.d.\*). As already indicated in connection with the Aweer, new regulations were implemented in Kenya in 1977 which prohibit hunting. This has forced the Sanye to abandon their economic activities of hunting and gathering, and to adopt agronomy (Landolina, 2010; Ndurya, 2010). However, a combination of resettlement schemes and encroachment by other communities, such as the Pokomo and Mijikenda, has compelled them to leave their original territories. Due to this experience in the past, they have always been suspicious of visitors and outsiders. Hence, the community prefers to stay and hide in the forest, because they feel safer there. From this vantage point, they can easily observe any person who approaches the village and hide if necessary (Olson, 1996:509).

#### 3.2.3.2 *Economic activities*

The Sanye used to hunt rhino, elephant, giraffe, eland, zebra, buffalo, ostrich, waterbuck, impala and gazelle. They sold the skins and dried meat of these animals, as well as ivory and rhino horn, in exchange for grain, clothes, palm wine and beads. Together with the Aweer, they were famous elephant hunters who supplied ivory to the coast for export (Ng'ang'a, 2006:552).

#### 3.2.3.3 *Socio-cultural practices*

The neighbouring communities describe the Sanye as primitive and timid, due to their way of life. However, the Sanye people assert that they are more comfortable living in the traditional way, because they are used to it (Landolina, 2010). They try as much as possible to shun a modern lifestyle. Instead of going to hospitals and dispensaries, they prefer to treat the sick using herbs from the forest. One of the elders was quoted as saying

that despite the fact that some younger men have gone to nearby towns to look for employment, they always came back home, because life at the village is much simpler and less competitive. The Sanye have therefore managed to preserve their cultural identity despite the challenges of modern encroachment (Ndurya, 2010:27).

The Sanye are known for their prowess in hunting, given their knowledge of archery and an extraordinarily powerful bow, which they use as their weapon of choice. They are expert game trackers, as they know how to interpret tracks, droppings and urine, and their sense of hearing, sight and smell is amazing, enabling them to get close to game. They can recognize any animal from its smell before they even catch sight of it, can identify antelopes from the sound of their stride, and even imitate animals' cries to attract game, especially rhinos (Stiles, 1981:43; Ng'ang'a, 2006:554).

The Sanye use herbs referred to as *mavumbani* and honey to prepare a tea-like beverage. One of their staple foods is wild tubers growing around ponds. These are usually prepared for consumption by drying them and grinding them into fine flour. The tuber flour is then cooked and eaten with venison or vegetables (Ndurya, 2010:28).

#### 3.2.3.4 *Authority system*

According to Woodburn (1988) and Lee and Hitchcock (2001:258), 'the internal political organization of hunter gatherer communities everywhere displayed patterns of flexible and relatively egalitarian band organization'. As compared to their pastoral and agricultural neighbours, they tended to be far less rigid and hierarchical. The advantage of this kind of authority system is that it enabled them to survive outside of the 'system', because they would fall back to the desert or rain forest in times of war or famine. The disadvantage of this political pattern was that when outsiders attacked them, they could not easily resist, because there was no hierarchy that enabled them to organize themselves for battle, and so they were soon dominated by others.

The Sanye have a council of elders, with the oldest men assuming the roles of a governing body, and a traditional practitioner, who is the medium to the ancestral spirits (Welsh, Hanley & D'Amboise, 1995).

### 3.2.3.5 *Religious practices*

The Sanye believe in the existence of a superior being, a creator. They also believe in and venerate divine spirits whose intervention is sought, especially when people have to make tough decisions. They have a tradition of gathering every week around a tree, lighting a fire and dancing through the night. The dance is not just a dance, but a ritual. It is usually the last resort for a traditional practitioner if he fails to cure the sick by means of herbs. The Sanye believe that if a person fails to get better, the person has been possessed by an evil spirit which needs to be exorcised. The traditional practitioner uses special chants which are familiar only to him (Welsh *et al.*, 2000; Ndurya, 2010). The Sanye also believe in witchcraft and evil spirits. Even though their traditional religion has been overtaken by Islam and Christianity, some things can only be presented to the ancestors. For instance, there are some sacred sites that can only be accessed when one gets to a certain age (Ndurya, 2010).

### 3.2.4 *The Orma*

#### 3.2.4.1 *Historical background*

The Orma, also referred to as the Wardei, are remnants of the once peaceful Galla people of Ethiopia and Northern Kenya. The Orma are descended from the Oromo in Ethiopia, and come from a province known as Borana. They are eastern Cushites and speak the Orma language, although some understand Somali, Swahili and Borana (Olson, 1996:467; Irungu, 2000:11). War broke out in the 19<sup>th</sup> century, forcing them to migrate south; they then settled in the fertile Tana River delta (IWGIA, 2012:63; Haller, 2013:233). They claim to have migrated from Somalia to escape famine. Middleton (1992) describes them as physically attractive people, with tall, slender physiques and handsome features. They pursue an interesting semi-nomadic pastoral lifestyle. They are very different from their neighbours and isolated from other Galla-speaking groups, which makes them increasingly susceptible to pressures to change. Although the Orma are far from extinct, their numbers today are only a fraction of their former numbers (Fedders & Salvadori, 2006:35).

#### 3.2.4.2 *Economic activities*

The main source of livelihood for the Orma is nomadic pastoralism. They rear cattle, goats and sheep. They also rear donkeys and camels in the semi-arid areas of the Tana River.

They practise traditional pastoralism, although a change in land use patterns has encouraged mixed farming for these former nomads (Wargute, 1991:7). Only a small number practise (mainly subsistence) farming in the riverbed flood zones of the Tana River.

Cattle are a very significant element in their culture, and they mainly keep a distinct fine breed, the long-horned Zebu cattle, which are among the finest in Africa. Zebu cattle are used as marriage goods, and are only slaughtered for special occasions, such as weddings and funerals and sacrifices to the ancestors (Ng'ang'a, 2006; Irungu, 2000:12). The main staple is rice, milk and, occasionally, meat. Those engaged in agronomy mainly consume maize, beans and fish. Tea is the main beverage for all the Orma. They also use wood and doum palm to make household goods, including utensils and furniture such as stools (Olson, 1996:467; Irungu, 2000:12; Ng'ang'a, 2006:495).

#### 3.2.4.3 *Socio-cultural practices*

The Orma live in round wood-framed huts built by women, thatched with grass, and in some cases, woven mats. When there is drought, the family migrates with its herds and the mats, leaving behind the frames of the houses. They often return to the same site when conditions are again favourable. The houses are either hemispherical or beehive-shaped. The Wardei prefer hemispheres about two metres in height, while the Orma prefer the beehive shape. The houses are clustered in *manyattas* or villages, grouped into settlements of about ten homesteads; the largest has about 40 homesteads. Every homestead has a titular leader, from among whom the head of the group of households is selected (Joshua Project, n.d.\*).

The Orma are divided into two exogamous sections (moieties), each of which is subdivided into clans, which are in turn divided into sub-clans (Fedders & Salvadori, 2006:32). The *Gada* system is the most important political organizational form in the Orma community. A man belongs to an age set for life. As a member of his age set, a man passes through five grades, and each age grade or *Gada* spans eight years. The *Gada* system remains an institution central to Orma life, and controls most activities. To celebrate this age grouping system, a ceremony is held every eight years, as a mark of passage of every man's life and the history of the people.

Each of the moieties has a chief priest or ritual leader who presides over religious matters, as opposed to political matters. This has a profound effect on the choice of marriage partners, since a man may marry a woman from the same moiety, but not from the same clan – the Orma practise clan exogamy, according to which a man is not allowed to marry a woman from his own clan (Irungu, 2000:14; Ng'ang'a, 2006). Girls are usually married around the age of 14 years (Brinton & Nee, 2001).

Traditionally an Orma man had only one wife, although polygyny is allowed now that the Orma are almost exclusively Muslim. Marriage goods in the form of the long-horned Zebu cattle are delivered to the bride's family. The line of descent among the Orma is traced patrilineally through the male line (Olson, 1996; Irungu, 2000).

Just as in other communities, each person has specific roles to play, usually determined by gender. Men are the heads of the family, and must ensure that everything runs smoothly in the household. Women are housekeepers, and take care of household chores, including constructing the houses. They are usually assisted by adolescent girls (Irungu, 2000:13; Brinton & Nee, 2001:119). Unmarried girls and teenage men are entrusted with the task of herding the cattle, and spend most of their time in the veld. The role of young boys and girls is to herd smaller livestock around the homestead. The Orma also practise female circumcision when girls reach the age of eight years. This mainly involves infibulation (removal of the female genitalia). The initiates are kept in isolation where they are taught about how to take care of their family (Kenya Museum societies, n.d.\*). The practice is no longer popular among the majority of the population, and it may therefore die out among the Orma. The circumcision ceremonies are also characterized by dances (Brinton & Nee, 2001:122).

Men dress in *kikoi*, which are wrapped around the waist. They also wear headscarves and use walking sticks, which symbolize social status and dignity. Women cover themselves with multi-coloured cloth (*lesos*), and cover their heads with a veil. The women in the Orma community dress in black full-length cloth, knotted over their right shoulder, except for weddings, when they wear white cotton. At weddings, girls carry a beautiful fibre-woven container, elaborately decorated with cowries and leather thongs, which they present full of milk to the groom. Women who have children undergoing circumcision or are getting married wear a *saka*, a cowrie ornament, on their arms and thongs with bells

attached. Young men wear their long hair curled. When at war, they used spears and small round embossed shields of giraffe hide (Ng'ang'a, 2006:493; Joshua Project, n.d.\*).

#### 3.2.4.4 *Authority system*

Politically, the Orma were ruled by a chief (*hayu*) – two chiefs were usually selected from the two exogamous moieties at a time, to rule for eight years. The selection was made by members of the same age group or *gada*, and their role mainly related to presiding over assemblies. The selection was done according to age, with the oldest man assuming the position (Gato, 1992:13). The chiefs had four assistants each, who would preside over minor cases. Currently, the government usually nominates chiefs, which has eliminated the role of the *gada* system in this regard. However, the Orma still have a council of elders (*mangudo*), who play a great role in the social organization, within a complex framework of traditional, Islamic and national law. Examples of these social functions include intervening in matters that fall into the political sphere, representing the element of tribal life, breaking up feuds among members of the community and age grouping (Irungu, 2000:14; Fedders & Salvadori, 2006:39). The Orma now have a population of approximately 8000 in the Lamu District (Lamu Conservation Trust, n.d.\*).

#### 3.2.4.5 *Religious practices*

The original Orma religion included a belief in a creator associated with the sky and the existence of spirits associated with nature. The powerful higher being was referred to as *Waka*, and it was believed that this being forsook them when the moon waned, and blessed them in full moon (Lamu Museum, n.d.). They also recognized the existence of many spirits associated with nature, which included mountain tops, groves, wells, rivers and trees. There were no medicine men or rainmakers, but certain men were respected as 'holy' and were considered to have special powers (Irungu, 2000:16). The majority of the Orma have now converted to Islam – only a small number are still traditional believers (Umar, 2000). Older beliefs are still practised in combination with Islamic beliefs. The Orma see in Islam the promise of 'greater control over their wives who were often seduced by leaders as part of the initiation of women into the spirit cult' (Eastman, 1988:9). As already indicated, traditionally an Orma man had only one wife, but now, since the Orma have turned almost exclusively to Islam, polygyny is allowed (Middleton, 1992; People-in-country profile, n.d.\*).

### 3.3 Similarities and differences

There are a number of similarities and differences between these groups. These are discussed below, grouped according to the order of discussion used in presentation on the individual groups above.

#### 3.3.1 *Historical background*

The Aweer were hunter-gatherers who originally lived at the Juba River in Somalia. They are composed of various sub-groups who speak different dialects, depending on their different locations (Okoth-Okombo, 2011:258; Laher & Sing'Oei, 2014:94).

The Bajuni are believed to have migrated from a place in the north identified as Shungwaya, although they trace their origins to diverse groups of primarily Bantu and Arab descent (Abungu & Abungu, 2009:176). They migrated from Shungwaya due to pressure from the Orma, who are said to have been in Shungwaya too. Initially, they settled between Kismayuu and the Pate Islands in Kenya, where they were again invaded by the Orma in the 16<sup>th</sup> and 17<sup>th</sup> centuries, forcing them to flee to the Islands (Lamu, and Manda). Their language is Tiku or Tikuu, which is a Swahili dialect (Nurse, 2007:2).

The Sanye, like the Bajuni, were originally from Shungwaya, and later moved to the Tana River banks (Ndurya, 2010). Their dialect is characterised by click sounds very similar to those found in the Khoikhoi, San and Nguni languages in South Africa (Olson, 1996:509; Ng'ang'a, 2006:556). They are believed to have the oldest history in the Lamu Archipelago. According to Sanye oral history, they claim that their ancestors were Boran pastorlists who became hunter-gatherers after their cattle turned into wild animals (Stiles, 1993:42).

The Orma are descendants of the Galla people of Ethiopia, who are Eastern Cushites who speak the Orma language, and Swahili who descended from a province known as Borana (Olson, 1996:467; Irungu, 2000:11). Some sources claim that the Orma also came from Shungwaya, just like the Bajuni and Sanye. The Orma are said to have put pressure on the Bajuni and Sanye to abandon Shungwaya (Nurse, 1980, 2007:2). Their migration south was caused by a war that broke out in the 19<sup>th</sup> century. Eventually they settled in the fertile area of the Tana River delta. Other reasons for migration were famine and drought, which affected their livestock (Fedders & Salvadori, 2006:35).

Except for the Aweer, all the groups appear to have migrated from the same legendary place, Shungwaya, somewhere to the north.

### **3.3.2 *Economic activities***

The Aweer were hunter-gatherers after abandoning pastoralism for various reasons, which included the fact that hunting and gathering was lucrative and more viable. The shift may also been due to natural disasters that wiped out their livestock (Stiles, 1981:23). They also collected honey and fruit from the forests (Ng'ang'a, 2006:555). After the total ban on hunting by the government in the 1970s they adopted agriculture. Hunting continues on a small scale. It served a fourfold purpose, namely initiation, food, trade, and trophies. The Aweer also have special skills which they use to find honey (Nunow, 2012:11; Al-Sayed, 2013). The Sanye were also hunter-gatherers who sold skins, dried meat and ivory. Like the Aweer, they were also famous elephant hunters who supplied ivory to the coast for export (Ng'ang'a, 2006:552). Both the Aweer and the Sanye engaged in trade with other communities, exchanging animal products for grain and other goods.

The Bajuni based their livelihood on fishing, farming, boat-building and craftsmanship, and also travelled far in their boats (Middleton, 1992). The Bajuni men were in charge of business, prepared nets, fished and made boats, while the women took care of their households. Boys accompanied their fathers on fishing trips and girls helped with household chores.

The Orma were primarily nomadic pastoralists, and only a small number were involved in subsistence farming (Irungu, 2000:12). Among the Orma, cattle are a very significant social element of their culture; they keep a distinct, fine breed, the long-horned Zebu cattle.

### **3.3.3 *Socio-cultural practices***

Socio-cultural practices are relevant from the time when a child is born until the child grows up into adulthood, and consequently embraces these practices (Gearhart, 2013). Gender roles are clearly defined in the cultures of the four indigenous groups of Lamu. As children grow up, they are introduced to various gender-specific roles. Accordingly, boys usually accompany their fathers on fishing trips and/or hunting expeditions, are involved in bee-keeping, act as herd boys and assist in different tasks considered to be the domain of males. The girls usually stay at home most of the time, in the company of younger children

and older female relatives. They are involved in various household chores, such as cooking, taking care of young children, weaving and building houses (Poblete, 2007:158; Gearhart, 2013).

The Bajuni are composed of eighteen clans which originated from Shungwaya and whose names represent places on the Somalian or Kenyan North Coast (Gardner & Bushra, 2004:8). Within the Aweer there are also various sub-groups or clans with minor dialectical differences, based on their geographical location (Stiles, 1981:848). Like the Aweer and the Bajuni, the Sanye are also composed of clans (seven clans) (Olson, 1996:506; Ng'ang'a, 2006:556; Kitelo, 2014), while the Orma are divided into two exogamous moieties which are further divided into clans (Fedders & Salvadori, 2006:32).

Since they are predominantly hunter-gatherers, there is no concept of ownership of property among the Aweer (Al-Sayed, 2013), while for the Orma, all life focuses on the ownership of cattle. They keep a distinct breed, the Zebu, which are used for social and religious purposes, such as marriage goods, for meat during weddings and funerals and sacrifices to the ancestors (Irungu, 2000:12).

There are four types of dances among the Aweer, which are said to comprise the complete Aweer dance repertoire. These dances are the *ngomela*, the *bere*, the *erema* and the *mwanarube*. Among the Aweer, women are also responsible for playing the instruments (Stiles, 1981:16). Among the Bajuni, both men and women participate in singing, poetry and storytelling. Their music frequently refers to the period before the displacement of the Bajuni from their original settlements at Shungwaya (Nurse, 2007:7; Bodin & Prell, 2011:78). The Sanye also have a dance which is a spiritual ritual where people gather around a tree and dance through the night (Welsh *et al.*, 1995). Among the Orma, music and dance are part of special occasions, which include circumcision and weddings (Ng'ang'a, 2006:493). Among all four indigenous groups, music is an essential element in virtually all celebrations, such as weddings, initiation ceremonies, circumcision rituals, spirit possession and cult activities (Campbell & Eastman, 1984:467-468).

Initiation was a major component of life among the indigenous communities before they settled in Lamu. It was an important rite of passage from childhood to adulthood. Initiation into manhood for the Aweer was characterized by the killing of game by a boy followed by a *kerar* ceremony, after which he was called a man. The initiation for boys was held

individually. For the females, the technique of infibulation is practised (Stiles, 1981:24). The initiates, boys and girls separately, are secluded from uninitiated boys and girls. It is during this isolation period that they are taught traditional knowledge concerning medicine, hunting, leadership, caring for a family, the history of their clan and indigenous groups (Kenya Museum societies, *n.d.\**). Like the Aweer, the Orma also practise female circumcision through infibulation when the girls get to the age of eight years (Brinton & Nee, 2001:122).

Adulthood is marked by marriage and settlement into a defined family life. Bearing children and taking up more responsibility in the community are important in this stage. Therefore age defines what role one plays in the community. Throughout Africa, weddings are a colourful affair, whether weddings are religious or customary. Even before the introduction of the Lamu Cultural Festival, weddings were among the most elaborate events in terms of rituals, body paintings, clothing and music (Abungu & Abungu, 2009). It is perceived as a union of two spouses and their families; it is the cement that holds the community together. It is through marriage that there is continuity of the family line, through children and sustenance of traditions. The Aweer married among themselves (endogamy) and were very particular about their wives' and daughters' remaining chaste (Prins, 1963:177). The Bajuni also practise endogamy (the custom of marrying within a specific social, cultural, ethnic group) (Gardner & Bushra, 2004:8). The Orma, like most pastoralist communities, practise exogamy, according to which a man is not allowed to marry a woman from his own clan (Ng'ang'a, 2006). Adolescent Orma girls get married at the age of 14 years (Irungu, 2000:13; Brinton & Nee, 2001:119).

#### **3.3.4 Authority system**

The Aweer had a council of headmen as their political authority, assisted by village elders who were selected on the basis of age – the oldest men in the community assumed these positions (Nunow, 2012:11). The headmen had the final authority on most decisions, and the elders presided over religious and cultural ceremonies (Ng'ang'a, 2006:556). As the government no longer recognizes this double headmanship, the Aweer came to accept the judicial authority of Islamic functionaries (Prins, 1963:178). Very similar to the Aweer, the Sanye have a council of elders as a governing body, and a traditional practitioner who is the medium to the ancestral spirits (Welsh *et al.*, 1995).

According to local tradition, the Bajuni had no ruling family or central government (Nurse, 1980:36). The Bajuni moved into Lamu around the same time as the Portuguese, and as far back as the 1830s they were ruled by Arab authorities from Zanzibar. Disputes were solved by a Muslim judge, the *Kadhi*, who was elected by the Arab rulers in Zanzibar.

Politically, the Orma were simultaneously ruled by two chiefs for a period of eight years. These chiefs were selected by members of the relevant *gada* (age group) from the two exogamous clans which composed the tribe. Their function was to preside over assemblies and to solve minor cases (Irungu, 2000:14). The chiefs were assisted by four men who would preside over minor cases. Even though the *gada* system has been eliminated, the Orma still have a council of elders (*mangudo*) similar to some of the other indigenous communities, such as the Sanye Lamu.

### **3.3.5 Religious practices**

Among the Orma, the original religion was belief in a creator, *Waka*, as well as in the skies and spirits associated with nature, which included trees, rivers, caves and wells (Umar, 2000). There were no medicine men or rainmakers, but certain men, referred to as ‘holy’, were believed to have special powers (Irungu, 2000:16). These beliefs are still practised in combination with Islamic beliefs. Traditionally, the Aweer also believed in a supreme being, one high god, who was worshipped at a sacred spot. They also believe in *mizimu* (ancestors), who were and still are represented by trees. They therefore endow trees with great importance, even today. The Bajuni also believed in a creator, and veneration of the ancestors played a major role in their lives. They considered the earth to be a source of life, and therefore relied on burying their ancestors as a way to guarantee the fertility of the soil, while the heavens brought the rains (Adamson, 1967:270). According to Middleton (2004:30), the Bajuni have been Muslim since as early as the 8<sup>th</sup> century, but ancestral worship continued to be practised in an orthodox Islamic frame of reference. Like the other three groups, the Sanye believed in a supreme being, a creator, but also in witchcraft and evil spirits. Knowledge of and intervention from the spiritual realm was respected and thought to hold more value than that of earth-dwelling humans. Decisions based on the ancestral spirits’ intervention were permanent and unchallengeable (Welsh *et al.*, 1995; Ndurya, 2010). Hence, the original religion of all four groups was clearly characterised by a belief in monotheism, manism, naturalism and witchcraft.

The majority of the members of these indigenous groups are now Muslim and a small number have adopted Christianity. Even though the Aweer converted into Islam in the 1950s, they still incorporate their traditional rituals in their religious practices (Waswala-Olewe *et al.*, 2014:40). The Bajuni conduct their lives according to Islamic laws and beliefs. The majority of the Orma have also converted to Islam, although a small number still practise their traditional religion. Islam has replaced the Sanye's traditional religion.

These similarities between the four groups in terms of their traditional religions and their adoption of Islam in particular are relevant for their identity construction in the Lamu context (see Chapter 4).

### **3.4 Mutual relationships**

The four original indigenous communities of Lamu were independent of each other, and each one had its own social, political and economic structures. Each community was autonomous and only interacted with others for the purpose of trade. At the time when they depended on hunting and on the gathering of plants and honey, the Aweer and the Sanye played a significant role in supplying such products to pastoralists. It was a symbiotic relationship with a supportive and cultural role (IWGIA, 2012:6). Interaction between the local communities increased during the colonial era, since the government adopted an assimilation policy, according to which all hunters and gatherers were classified as 'Dorobo' or 'Other'. The assimilation policy resulted in the adoption of various cultural practices between the groups such as initiation, age-set groups and language.

The Sanye traded with the Orma and received vegetables and livestock from them. Although the Orma did engage in peaceful commerce, they still posed a threat, since they were known for attacking their neighbours in the early to mid-19<sup>th</sup> century. In order to engage in peaceful commerce, there had to be an institutional mechanism which permitted the combatants to pledge mutual trust and guarantee the safety of each other's traders. The coast was torn by wars exacerbated by raids conducted by the Orma. However, through mutual trade among the Aweer, Bajuni, Sanye and Orma, local networks were created which acted as ties that bound them and their economic systems together. In the process, intermarriages between these groups occurred, which created kinship links.

Allen (1993:40) identifies Shungwaya as a settlement where people of different cultural and linguistic backgrounds co-existed peacefully, and worked together within one area.

The collaboration of farmers, herders, hunters and fishermen ensured optimal exploitation of the region's resources. The spread of Islam and the gradual adoption of many aspects of Swahili culture, including language, dress and manners, provided an important cross-ethnic link between the indigenous tribes. Hence, fairly strong ties existed among the communities through trade, long before the establishment of colonial rule (Herlehy, 1984:293-308).

There appears to have been particular phonological interactions between the Bajuni and the adjacent Aweer, who were known also to have interacted in other ways, including trade (Nurse *et al.*, 1985). It is possible that for some centuries, the Bajuni were a large and powerful community that attracted Aweer-speakers, whose assimilation in sufficiently large numbers modified Bajuni pronunciation (Nurse *et al.*, 1985). The Bajuni mixed with the Aweer in much more intimate ways, but they also contracted strategic alliances with the Orma. As a result, there are a number of words that the Orma adopted from the Aweer, which the Aweer in their turn, had adopted from the Bajuni (Nurse *et al.*, 1985:269). It is also believed that in times of hardship in the 19<sup>th</sup> century, the Bajuni took refuge in the Boni Forests where the Aweer used to live for a prolonged period (Ylvisaker, 1979:31, 126-127).

Hunter-gatherers are held in low esteem by the Bajuni and Orma, since they are believed to be impure and therefore could pollute the population. The reason for this perception is ascribed to the fact that the hunting peoples eat foods which are regarded by other indigenous groups (in this case, the Bajuni and Orma) as impure, such as wild pigs and porcupines. Notwithstanding their low status, the Aweer and the Sanye were considered to be valuable neighbours, because they supplied much-needed wild animal products for a variety of cultural and economic needs. However, intermarriages between these hunter-gatherers (Aweer and Sanye) and the pastoralists (Bajuni and Orma) were prohibited. Other Bantu-speaking groups, however, allowed marriages with the hunter-gatherers, provided that they had adopted Islam or Christianity.

Early travellers reported that Aweer hunters were required to give one tusk of every elephant killed to the Bajuni (Fitzgerald, 1898:487, cited in Stiles, 1981:854). In return, the hunters received domestic animal products and a certain economic and social political security; the Aweer would trade animal products with the Bajuni in exchange for food,

cloth, iron and other goods. The Aweer also hired themselves out as casual labourers to the Bajuni.

The Orma took up hunting during hard times, for example, when livestock was lost through disease, drought or warfare. They usually returned to pastoralism when conditions improved. On the other hand, the hunter-gatherers assimilated into pastoralism if and when they accumulated enough livestock, and also when their pastoral neighbours deemed them serious pastoralists.

Among the Aweer, a subgroup known as the Aweerghurud occupied the western side of the Tana River. They lived in association with the Orma and spoke the language of the Orma when communicating with the Orma. Among themselves, they spoke Aweer (Stiles, 1981). The Orma referred to them as the Wata-Ormatu to signify the Aweer who could speak their language. These people lived in pastoral settlements which they called *alango* (Stiles, 1981:850). The Aweer have been subjected to the influence of a succession of dominant neighbours, whose influence on their culture is still evident today (Ng'ang'a, 2006:555). In the late 16<sup>th</sup> century, when the Orma took over the Tana hinterland, the Aweer adopted superficial Orma cultural traits for their survival.

The Bajuni settled on the islands after their migration, while the Aweer, Orma and Sanye stayed on the mainland. Some members of these three groups did, however, move to Lamu town when Kenya gained independence in 1963, to work in government offices. The rate at which the wives desert their Aweer husbands to join a mate in Lamu or elsewhere in coastal settlements, and the fact that the Aweer are rapidly becoming Islamized might contribute to the decay of their cultural entity (Amidu, 2004). Among the Aweer, there is some marginalization of traditional practices. For instance, the formation of age sets is still practised, but initiation, which takes place in the forests, has been shortened from a month to a day or two. Also, the Aweer ritual of burying the dead facing northwards, to the mythical origin of the Aweer, is no longer observed. Due to Islamization, the Aweer now bury their dead facing across the sea to Arabia (Faulkner, 2006).

The Orma and the Sanye have been forced to abandon their traditional lifestyle and conform to mainstream society for a number of reasons. For instance, the reduced capacity to move with their animals and to hunt, given government policies protecting wildlife and grazing land, has had a severe impact on these economic practices. This situation has been

aggravated by the forced removal of these peoples from their traditional lands, which has also led to the loss of their shrines. Population density pressure in the wake of the government's resettlement programmes means that they constantly struggle to gain access to scarce resources. Hence, a small number of Orma and Sanye have moved to Lamu town to engage in tourism-related activities (Laher & Sing'Oei, 2014).

### 3.5 Swahili influence

In the first half of the 19<sup>th</sup> century, the Sultan of Zanzibar controlled a ten-mile wide coastal strip from the south of Zanzibar, through Mombasa and Lamu in Kenya, all the way up to Kismayuu and Mogadishu in Somalia. It is believed that his administrators and traders spoke Swahili there (Nurse, 1980; Allen, 1981). It is difficult to constitute all Swahili speakers in one indigenous group, as they have never shared a common political or economic structure, and the geographical area they occupy is too extensive – from southern Somalia to northern Mozambique (Middleton, 1992; Mazrui & Shariff, 1994). There is consensus that the word 'Swahili' is derived from Arabic *sawahil*, which means coasts, while the language Kiswahili has many varied dialects, based on the regions along the East African coast (Yassin, 2003:65).

Askew (1999:73), in his answer to who the Waswahili are, says: 'Waswahili are neither one nor the other but rather a mixed offspring of Arab African intermarriage, thus occupying structurally, a mediating position between the two ethnic poles.' There is no single definition of the Swahili. Different people in different situations may appropriate this ethnonym or apply it to others, according to their perception of their own advantage. The Swahili are not a discrete, enduring unit, but nor are they members of any other tribe (Willis, 1993:12).

The majority of the members of the four indigenous groups discussed in this chapter speak Kiswahili as their second language to communicate with other migrant tribes in Lamu. They may have learnt the language from the administrators and traders in the region. After the Arab take-over of Lamu town in the 1880s, Arabs intermarried with Africans, giving rise to double-origin Swahili people, and Kiswahili as a language (Mulokozi, 1974:127). Fuller (1969), in her work on the rise of Kiswahili as a national language, declares that long association between the Arabs and Bantus produced Swahili. Since the 1960s, generations of Bajuni children have attended government schools where Kiswahili is the

medium of instruction. The ability to use Kibajuni has thus been severely eroded (Nurse & Hinnebusch, 1993:516).

### **3.6 Conclusion**

Cultural practices are an important aspect of expressing identity in a heterogeneous community. Not only does it determine people's overall sense of self and well-being, but also how they relate to people from other indigenous groups. When individuals identify themselves with a certain culture, they develop a sense of belonging and security. This consequently breaks barriers and builds trust among people, a phenomenon termed social capital. Conversely, wrongly expressed cultural identity can also create barriers between groups, which can in turn create a sense of exclusion, especially for minority groups (Hall, 1990; Geurts, 2003:238; Kenny & Smillie, 2014).

Most of the indigenous communities in Lamu today were once either hunters and gatherers or traditional pastoralists (Berland & Rao, 2004:213; IWGIA, 2012). The hunter-gatherers of East Africa were not socially stratified, since they had no chiefs, headmen or wealthy people. Food and possessions were shared and distributed according to need. Certain individuals, both male and female, could gain prestige and influence by if they had unusual oratory skills, wisdom, or the ability to hunt animals for prized products, or to heal people. These people had a sophisticated knowledge of the behaviour and habitats of the animals that provided meat, skins and horns, and also knew when and where to find the plants that supplied them with grains, tubers, nuts and berries for food and bark cloth, dyes, cosmetics, incense and medicine (Ng'ang'a, 2006:543).

They mainly lived in forests while hunting for meat and collecting honey. In addition, there were also a few communities which were involved in small-scale fishing along the river, such as the Bajuni. These communities were referred to by pastoralists by the term Torobbo or Dorobo, which means without cattle, and is a derogatory term for poor people because cattle were a sign of wealth to pastoralists such as the Orma. Hunters and gatherers were mainly known by the term Boni or Sanye, which is a Somali term meaning 'to gather together' (IWGIA, 2012). They placed great value on forests, as these places ensured their physical, spiritual, economic and cultural well-being, providing medicinal plants and subsistence products and allowed them to perform various customs and practices (Laher & Sing'Oei, 2014:51).

In recent years, the traditional practices and values of these communities have been greatly affected by modernization and conservation measures, as the government increasingly began to emphasize economic development (Spear, 1981:98). Like other hunter-gatherer communities in Africa, the indigenous Aweer and Sanye communities of Lamu are marginalized, and their small numbers make them politically vulnerable. They can no longer practise their traditional cultural practices, because the hunting of all wild animals is banned, and gathering is no longer possible due to a lack of access to forests. Most of the local communities have resorted to small-scale farming, or are employed by the government (Human Rights Commission, 2014:23).

Interdependence of indigenous communities is more evident along the Kenyan coast than in other regions. The Pokomo people who settled along the Tana River in the late 16<sup>th</sup> century interacted and assimilated with the Oromo culture. This interdependence was even more noticeable among the Kiswahili-speaking communities. The towns traded with each other – the people on Lamu Island depended on food from Pokomo cultivators, Aweer and Dahalo hunter-gatherers, as well as the Somali and Oromo pastoralists. In addition, these peoples also provided military assistance to Lamu (Ogot, 2005:272; Hino, 2012:93). Most of the indigenous communities managed to retain part of their individuality and identities, as well as vestiges of their traditional religions, even though these are rapidly giving way to Islam or Christianity, notably in the Aweer and Bajuni communities (IWGIA, 2012:8). However, the indigenous communities still practise initiation, honour traditional marriage practices, and perform traditional dances and music. A large number of the Aweer, Orma and Sanye are still settled in their villages on the mainland and still practise some of their traditional religious practices alongside Islam and Christianity.

Over the years, their interaction has eventually led to intermarriage and a degree of acculturation. Moreover, events such as war and the search for better settlement options caused some of them to migrate and become neighbours of other communities. It is worth noting that three of the indigenous groups (Bajuni, Orma & Sanye) of Lamu came from Shungwaya in the north while the Aweer originally settled between the Juba River in what is today Somalia and the Tana River in what is today Kenya (Okoth-Okombo, 2011:258), and then settled along the coast in the Lamu Archipelago (Poblete, 2007:33). Even though most of them tried to retain their traditional views and beliefs, contact with traders from across the ocean gradually took a toll on their religion and way of life. For over 700 years, there has been continuous settlement in Lamu, and various communities have interacted

with each other in respect of trade, immigration, cultural exchange and marriage. The town is a cultural melting pot, as well as a centre for power (Laher & Sing'Oei, 2014:86).

Cultural similarities and differences between the four indigenous tribes are clearly visible. There is evidence that there were indeed relationships between the indigenous groups before the introduction of the festival. It is also evident that there have been changes in language and the political set-up, and that intermarriages have occurred, mainly due to the introduction of Islam and the adoption of the government's authority structure. The group members in each of the individual tribes share beliefs, values and customs due to their common background. Most of the Aweer, Orma and Sanye are based on the mainland while the Bajuni are almost all on the Islands. The indigenous communities in the villages still share the same beliefs, values and practices. This is in accordance with Kottak's (1996) definition of markers of an ethnic group. Each of these groups still has a collective name, distinct cultural practices, a belief in common descent, a sense of solidarity and an association with specific territories.

The rise of Kiswahili as a *lingua franca* has also played a role in people's perceptions of their identity. Kiswahili is said to have a binding force, creating a common value system, shared cultural practices and a belief in Islam. The introduction of Islam and Christianity has caused fundamental challenges to beliefs in, and the role of ancestral spirits. Individual members of the four indigenous groups have adopted one or the other of these two religions, while others can be regarded as syncretistic, in the sense that their traditional religious beliefs and practices have been influenced by these two dominant religions. There are still some who have not adopted either of these two religions, and still believe in and venerate the ancestral spirits. Large-scale tourism, starting in Lamu and spreading to other islands, commercial development and the projected new Lamu port will change the character of the islands and the mainland. Cultural differences are under threat and the traditional identities of these indigenous groups may be lost in all these developments and changes. The potential role of the Lamu Cultural Festival in the retention or creation of identity is therefore examined in the next chapter.

## CHAPTER 4: THE LAMU CULTURAL FESTIVAL

### 4.1 Introduction

Janiskee (1980:97) defines a festival as a period of pleasurable activity or entertainment celebrating a happening, event or community. By contrast, Falassi (1987:52) describes it as a sacred time of celebration, a cultural event with a series of performances in celebration of a notable person or the harvesting of an important product. Others, such as Getz (1997), see it as a public, themed celebration, showcasing community values and culture, for the community and by the community. For it to qualify as a public, themed celebration, it should take place annually (or at other regular intervals), be open to the public, have a central theme, have a start and end date, and include various events in the same location (Getz, 1991:22, 1997:11; Richards, 2001:8; Yeoman *et al.*, 2004)

These definitions are in accordance with Dunstan's theory (1994, cited in Derrett, 2003a:51) that a festival should provide a forum for a shared purpose, to showcase cultural values and practices relevant to a community-oriented festival. Dugas and Schweitzer (1997, cited in Derrett, 2003a:53) are of the opinion that the ultimate goal of a community cultural festival should be to achieve a sense of community; hence, it should involve the sharing of cultural values, ideology and purpose. Adams and Goldbard (2001, cited in Jepson *et al.*, 2008:11) assert that when a heterogeneous community has shared cultural values, it is able to define and showcase local values in a positive way to visitors. The festival should ensure the involvement, inclusion and support of the local communities (Getz, 1991:24; Derrett, 2003b:51; Jeong & Santos, 2004:650; Lade & Jackson, 2004:6).

According to Derrett (2003a:53) and Robinson *et al.* (2004), festivals play an important role of demonstrating 'sense of place and community' which is held together by culture. Derrett (2003b:49) also emphasizes the importance for festival producers to maintain a sense of community during and after the festival. Festivals should provide an opportunity for community cultural development, fostering cultural and ethnic understanding and to extend or create tourist seasons (Frisby & Getz, 1989; Chacko & Schaffer, 1993; Dunstan, 1994, cited in Derrett, 2003a; Getz, 1997).

Lamu is composed of the four main indigenous groups as (which I discussed in Chapter 3 as the study group). To bring these communities together and create an identity, a vehicle had to be created, and the vehicle chosen was a festival: the Lamu Cultural Festival. Lamu holds this event every year. An estimated 80% of the community participates, which may contribute towards the construction of a joint Lamu identity. To gain a better understanding of the effects of the festival, it is important to consider the high percentage of participation in the context of the content of the festival.

This chapter looks at how the festival is organized, its stakeholders, the participants and the items/events in the festival. Each of the events is discussed in detail. People's motivations for participating in the festival are also discussed. In the final analysis of the festival, I attempt to determine to what extent the Lamu Cultural Festival has achieved its main aim by means of an evaluation of the findings in this chapter.

## 4.2 Historical background

The features of Lamu town make it possible for most of the festival activities to be held in one place. The town is characterized by simple architectural structures, many with verandas and inner courtyards, and embellished with ornately carved wooden doors. This architecture graphically shows the cultural influence over the years by Arabic, European, African and Asian culture. One of the factors that encouraged the initiation of the Lamu festival was therefore the fact that the town is an important hub for education and the preservation of Islamic and indigenous culture (Wishitemi *et al.*, 2007; National Museums of Kenya, n.d.).

The Lamu Cultural Festival was founded by the Lamu Cultural Promotion Group in 2001 when an annual event was suggested to celebrate 2000 years of maritime trade. The proposal was accepted by the group, who decided that such a festival would also serve as a comeback for Lamu town as a tourist destination, after the El Niño rains of 1998 and the Shifta menace before the Alshabab<sup>2</sup> (Mburu, 1999:92; Shinn, 2011; *Daily Nation*, 2014; Lamu County Government, n.d.).

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<sup>2</sup> El Niño rains caused massive flooding that washed away bridges and roads, leaving Lamu inaccessible. The rain also caused widespread landslides and soil erosion, and even loss of human life and loss of livestock. The 'Shifta menace' was a conflict that erupted when ethnic Somalis in Kenya attempted to join their fellow countrymen in Somalia. The Kenyan government named the conflict *shifita* [bandit], and forced civilians into 'protected villages', killing large numbers of livestock kept by pastoralists. The war ended in 1977, but since

This decision coincided with the declaration of Lamu Archipelago as a UNESCO World Heritage Site. This declaration encouraged the Lamu Cultural Promotion Group to decide that the Lamu Cultural Festival should be held every year, in November. Another significant reason for the decision for an annual cultural event was that the religious Maulidi festival, which has been running for over a century in Lamu and which celebrates the birth of the prophet Mohammed, did not have a specifically cultural component. The Lamu festival was designed to be a celebration of both the past and the future, focusing on the beliefs and traditions that are the heart and soul of the Lamu community (Lamu, n.d.\*).

Lamu is a unique town, rich in historical heritage. Its recognition by UNESCO in 2001 as a World Heritage Site encouraged the Kenya National Museums and the Lamu Cultural Promotion Center to preserve the island's unique historical archaeology and culture. UNESCO regarded Lamu as the best-preserved and oldest town in East Africa, since it has retained its traditional functions. This is unlike other historical towns which have deteriorated due to growth in their economy, abandonment or unrestricted development (Poblete, 2007). The festival was therefore introduced with the main aim of preserving the unique cultural heritage of Lamu Island. A group of 16 young entrepreneurs formed the Lamu Cultural Promotion Group in 2001 when they organized the first Lamu Cultural Festival. Today, many stakeholders are involved in the preparation of this event, including various interest groups, especially those concerned with tourism, the local community and the Kenyan Department of Culture. The festival aimed to create a spirit of unity in difficult times by bringing together local communities in a celebration of their own traditional cultures and identity (Lamu Cultural Promotional Group, 2014).

According to the Lamu Cultural Promotion Group (2014), the objectives of the festival are

- to revitalize and promote the [shared] Lamu culture and traditions (identity);<sup>3</sup>
- to make the Lamu community understand, value and appreciate its cultural heritage;
- to promote dialogue between different cultures and civilizations;

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then, there have been occasional raids by Somali bandits on the residents of Lamu, causing large-scale disruption to the way of life of the indigenous peoples of Lamu. More recently, in July 2014, a terrorist organization, Alshabab, which is also based in Somalia, attacked Hindi in Lamu County, killing 29 people, and burning down government buildings and a church.

<sup>3</sup> Lamu culture is defined as the cultural influences that have come together over several hundreds of years from Europe, Arabia and India before the indigenous groups migrated to Lamu Island. Lamu represents crucial cultural phase (the rise and decline of seaports on the East African coast) and is a meeting point of Bantu people, Arabs, Persians, Indians and Europeans, giving rise to Swahili culture. Discussion with members of the Lamu Cultural Promotion Group indicated the implicit aim of developing a common Lamu identity.

- to lay a strong cultural foundation for present and future youths so that they will inherit a strong and stable cultural set-up; and
- to enhance the Lamu tourism industry.

The festival initially lasted one day, but over the years, its duration has expanded to four days to accommodate different activities by the various indigenous groups. The 14<sup>th</sup> annual festival in 2014 only ran for three days due to insecurity caused by unrest (as indicated in Chapter 1), but gave some relief to the residents of Lamu, young and old, as they had a three-day break from the curfew that had been in effect for the previous five months.

### **4.3 The planning process: Event preparation**

The Lamu Cultural Festival is preceded by meticulous preparation that involves various stakeholders and interest groups. The Lamu Cultural Promotion Group office is closed for most of the year, but it reopens every September for the festival planning process. Even though the 30 businessmen and hotel owners do meet several times during the year, this is the crucial time where they engage on a unique platform to plan and construct a local community festival unique to Lamu Island.

Different stakeholders and sponsors are involved in the planning process every year. For the year 2014, when this research was carried out, only a few sponsors were involved in the planning process, due to the security crisis that prevailed that year. The main partner is the Lamu County Government. Other partners include the National Museums of Kenya, and the Lamu Tourist Association. The sponsors involved in 2014 were the Lamu Conservation Trust, the French Embassy, the Kenya Tourism Board and the Ministry of Tourism.

A lot of preparation is done by the local community experts before the celebrations. This includes repairing traditional architecture, and organizing who will participate in the festival. These experts are usually assisted by other stakeholders, such as the National Museums of Kenya, the Ministry of State for National Affairs, the Department of Culture as well as community leaders (Wishitemi *et al.*, 2007). The festival is usually organized so that it coincides with high tides, which provide optimal conditions for the dhow races which are an integral feature of the festival. All the indigenous communities are free to participate in the festival, since its main purpose is to bring the four indigenous groups together. In addition to local groups, international groups from other regions outside Lamu

and Kenya with ancient connections to Lamu are also invited to participate in the event (Rainer *et al.*, 2011).

The week leading up to the festival is like a carnival, with intense preparations by both organizers and participants. This includes encouraging local people to register for participation. Before the event, the best dhows are carefully chosen for the competition, to ensure good speeds and seaworthiness for ocean sailing. The best sailors are also selected by fellow fishermen through a representative of the Lamu Cultural Promotion Group and they are registered for participation in the race. The local people also train for other events, such as swimming, months before the festival. Those who participate in the famous donkey race are usually experienced donkey owners, because handling a donkey requires special skill (Lamu Cultural Promotion Group: pers.comm.).

Given the Festival's stated aims, it is surprising and crucial that the four indigenous groups were not involved in the planning process from the start. They were not even consulted concerning their participation in the festival. This contradicts the objectives of the festival and views in the literature about community involvement and inclusion (Getz, 1991:22, 1997:6; Hall, 1992; Grimes, 1994:12; Goldblatt, 1997, Derrett, 2003a:53; Jeong & Santos, 2004:648). Chacko and Schaffer (1993:479) and Mayfield and Crompton (1995:18) argue that the lack of local participation in the planning process of the Lamu Cultural Festival limited community empowerment. Only when a local community is involved in the planning process is it likely that a sense of community will be achieved and that local ownership of the festival is likely to happen (Mayfield & Crompton, 1995; Derrett, 2003b:49).

#### **4.4 Motivations for participation in the festival**

Motivation is a complex process; it is a need, a driving force towards choosing different types of activities preferred by participants (Backman *et al.*, 1995:15). Middleton (1994:5) defines motivation as 'the internal, psychological influences affecting individuals' choice'. Iso-Ahola (1982:258) defines a motive as an internal factor that arouses, directs and integrates a person's behaviour, whereas Crompton and McKay (1997) indicate that motives are the starting point for an individual's decision-making. In the same light, Uysal *et al.* (1993:7) state that motives are the reasons for people to behave the way they do at

specific moments and to engage in certain actions. In addition, motives vary from individual to individual (Fodness, 1994).

Mannel and Iso-Ahola (1987) state that people engage in leisure activities and travel in order to escape from aspects of their usual personal and interpersonal environment. They seek specific benefits, and hope to find socially rewarding experiences and achieve self-development. According to Van Zyl (2002:13), the desire to escape is often expressed as a ‘push factor’ while the ‘pull factors’ are associated with seeking aspects of the festival. Push factors in the case of a festival deal with an attendee’s motivation to visit the festival – intangible forces arising within the individual that create a desire to satisfy a need. Pull factors in this context refer to the tangible aspects or features of a destination or festival that attract attendees. In this context, anything that acts as an attraction is a pull factor (Schofield & Thompson, 2007:330). Van Zyl (2002:14) explains that push and pull factors motivate local residents to attend and participate in a local festival.

Thus far, not much research has been carried out on participants’ motivations for *participating* in festival activities. Most of the existing research has focused on the motivations for visitors’ *attending* festivals (Crompton 1979; Iso-Ahola, 1982; Pearce 1993). This is also true in respect of Lamu, as prior research has mostly considered visitors’ motivations for visiting ‘a major cultural tourist attraction’ (Okech 2011:189; cf. also Formica & Uysal 1998; Faulkner *et al.*, 1999). However, in the context of this study, it is crucial to understand what motivates the host community to attend and participate in a festival, because the host community’s involvement can influence the sustainability of a festival (Getz, 1997:269; Van Zyl & Botha, 2004:214). Possible reasons for the host community’s engagement are explored below.

#### ***4.4.1 Social identification among the members of the host community***

According to Tajfel and Turner (1986), a desire for social identity is why people identify with and act in social groups. Social identity refers to the ways in which individuals perceive and categorize themselves, mostly relative to relationships with other groups (cf. Getz *et al.*, 2014:55). Identities are shaped by group membership; in this case, identity may foster *communitas*, social prestige and self-esteem. A cultural festival triggers the social identity of the community, and acts as a platform for binding community members together. Showcasing a special community feature such as the donkey races at the Lamu

festival is an example of the celebration of community or individual achievement and identity (Frisby & Getz, 1989:11; Dunstan, 1994, cited in Derrett, 2003a:51). People from different indigenous groups are involved in the donkey races, a practice that existed even before the introduction of the festival. Hence, the races serve as a binding factor, since it has become common practice among the different communities to participate in it. The fact that the different indigenous groups are drawn together by their special interests (the donkey and dhow races) creates a sense of belonging, and hence enhances social interaction.

#### **4.4.2 Individual and collective pride among the host community**

According to Derrett (2003b:38), cultural festivals play a big role in both individual and collective pride, creating a sense of community. Likewise, Frisby and Getz (1989) and Dunstan (1994, cited in Derrett, 2003a) argue that festivals and cultural events provide a forum for community pride to be manifested. In this regard, in my study, individuals said they seek stimulation through activities and a lively atmosphere. People get a feeling of attachment to their particular community once they represent their community in various festival items. As for people who were participating in groups, like in the dances, all members felt proud to represent their specific indigenous community in the dances.

#### **4.4.3 Education of the host community**

Festivals help to educate participants about ways to preserve their cultural, social and natural environment (Uysal *et al.*, 1993:7). Sensitisation and education take into consideration social, cultural and religious factors within the Lamu community before decisions are made and action is taken. According to De Beer and Swanepoel (1998), community-based programmes help communities with the identification of problems and increase awareness of how to manage them. An example is the Lamu Conservation Trust, which has a stand at the Lamu Cultural Festival to educate the residents on sustainable practices in order to conserve the ecology of Lamu, and on proper methods of waste disposal (Lamu Conservation Trust, 2013). The Trust makes the people aware of means of preserving the environment, increases their awareness of what can be done, and helps them select from a range of conservation practices.

Moreover, during public gatherings at the town square, the Lamu Conservation Trust, together with the Lamu County Council, addresses threats to the integrity of the Lamu

cultural heritage. These threats include the influx of foreigners, migration of the indigenous tribes to other parts of the country, and informal settlements on the Island. It is important for the indigenous Lamu communities to understand their roles in the preservation and conservation of their individual cultural and social environments, if they want their cultural heritage to be retained and to move into the future as a sustainable form of human development. Action needs to be taken by conservation agencies such as UNESCO and the National Museums of Kenya in order for the people of Lamu to prosper in this World Heritage Site (Wiggins, 2010).

The Lamu Conservation Trust also disseminates information to locals with regard to the proposed port and its potential impact on the historical sites in Lamu, the traditional homes of the indigenous communities, as well as the natural environment – these all form part of a lecture given by the Trust during the Lamu Cultural Festival. The conservation of natural resources for the present and future generation is a means to emphasize shared values amidst cultural and community diversity for sustainable development (Okech, 2011:341).

#### ***4.4.4 Family cohesion***

Several authors have reported a desire for family togetherness as a motivation to participate in festivals. As people grow older they tend to feel more attached to their community, and therefore tend to give a higher rating to the community values underlying family cohesion (Uysal *et al.* 1993; Getz, 1997). The need to belong to and to act as a representative of their family motivates participants to take part in festival activities. In some of the festival items, such as the Swahili bridal show, women and their daughters participate in a family context. Women from the same family usually prepare a daughter as a bride for the ceremony, making up the girl for the bridal show, dressing her in wedding attire and painting henna on her hands and feet. Being together for this specific ceremony in Lamu is a motivation for family members to attend the festival.

#### ***4.4.5 Enjoyment, escape from routine, and relaxing***

Festivals provide an opportunity for community members to socialize. A festival is a public activity with no social exclusion. It actively involves all the celebrants who take time off from their normal schedule (Van Zyl, 2002:36). Some are motivated to participate in festival activities to escape, to have a change from daily routine, a change of pace from everyday life, and to get away from the demands of life. This trend was noted particularly

among the youth and the children participating in the swimming competitions, who enjoyed feeling free. Other participants participated in order to escape from the mainland, to interact with visitors at the festival for the excitement and thrill of it, as a personal reward. Raybould (1998:238) confirms that younger subjects usually have a greater desire to seek entertainment and new experiences through escape from their normal environment.

Van Zyl and Botha (2004) and Bowen and Daniels (2005) explain that people seek to socialize with others outside their immediate family and friends, because they want to be in the same space with others who share the same cultural interests. In this study, some of the people interviewed said that being in a friendly zone where almost everyone spoke to them was a good feeling.

#### ***4.4.6 Revitalization of ethnic culture***

According to Long *et al.* (2004), festivals provide a local community with an opportunity to preserve their culture and history through performances, arts and crafts. This is also supported by the research of Van Zyl (2002:37) on the annual Aardklop Festival in South Africa as a means to preserve and enhance the Afrikaans language and culture. This is largely in agreement with the findings of Formica and Uysal (1998:16), who say that the celebration of tradition and culture, through reviving old traditions together with enjoying living culture, revitalizes ethnic culture. At the Lamu Cultural Festival, old traditions are celebrated through dances, crafts and oral performances. The elders in the different communities tell stories to the crowd, in particular the young people, telling them details about their history and migration, and tell of how they settled in their current homes. The arts and crafts support their narratives on how they conducted their lives in the past. This is believed to revitalize the cultural consciousness of the different communities.

### **4.5 Stakeholders of the Lamu Cultural Festival**

#### ***4.5.1 Identification of key stakeholders***

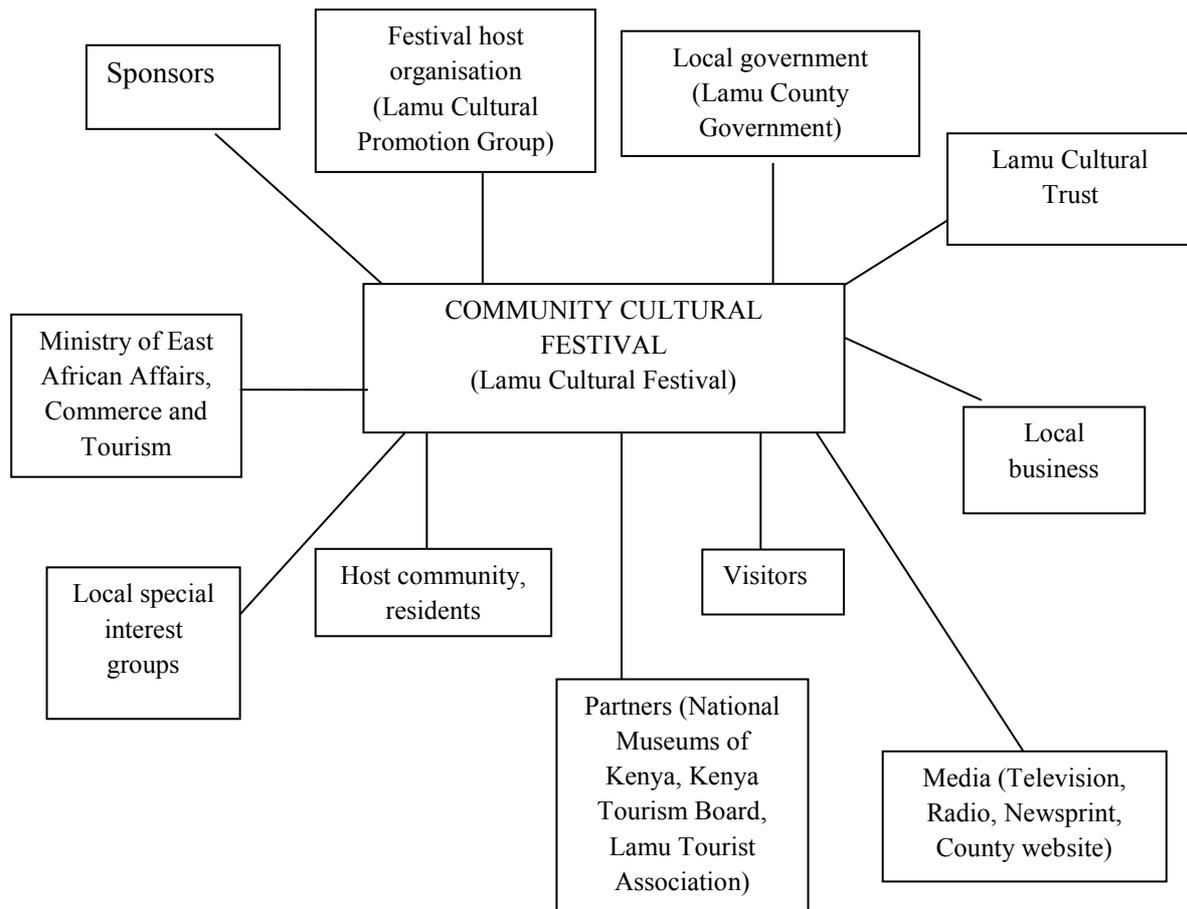
Freeman (1984:25, cited in Andersson & Getz, 2008:201) defines stakeholders as groups or individuals who can affect or are affected by the achievement of an organization's objectives. Clarkson (1995) regards stakeholders as people or groups that have a claim to or ownership rights, or interests in a corporation and its activities – past, present and future. Getz (1997:15) states that stakeholders 'are those people and groups with a stake in

the event and its outcomes, including all groups participating in the event production, sponsors and grant-givers, community representatives, and anyone impacted by the event'. Larson's (2002) model indicates stakeholders as festival organizers, media industry, artist industry, public authorities and sponsors. Arcodia and Reid (2005) classify festival stakeholders in two categories, based on dependence, namely a primary category (the host community, local government, volunteers, sponsors, suppliers, spectators, attendees, participants) and a secondary category (essential services, media, tourist organizations, businesses). However, Hede (2007:17) considers those entities in Arcodia and Reid's (2005) secondary category to be primary stakeholders, since without their support and their commitment to the festival, it would not survive. Getz *et al.* (2007) define stakeholders as facilitators, regulators, co-producers, allies, collaborators and those impacted, such as the audience and community.

According to Reid and Arcodia (2002), incorporating stakeholders in the planning process of a festival is a prerequisite for a successful festival, combined with community satisfaction. Various stakeholders have different motivations and expectations, and these determine their respective associations with festivals (Hall & Sharples, 2008). Watt (1998:43) notes that festival partners are beneficial, as they may have special skills and access to resources and funds they can attract to the event from donors.

Bowdin *et al.* (2006) remark that for the success of a major event, several stakeholders from different sectors, including government, the community, and the corporate and non-profit sectors come together. The stakeholders in these sectors are all interconnected, which directly or indirectly influences the planning process of the event.

Ali-Knight (2009:110) has developed a model of the relation of stakeholders in a festival. These stakeholders (in this case, in the Lamu Cultural Festival) and their relation to each other are depicted in Figure 4.1, overleaf.



**Figure 4.1: Key stakeholders in the Lamu Cultural Festival**

Source: Adapted from Ali-Knight (2009:110)

Sponsors are indispensable stakeholders in festivals and events. Most events, whether local, national or international, are largely dependent on them. This is also true in respect of volunteers who ensure that a festival or event runs smoothly due to their hard work and support. According to Getz (1998), festivals and events are most effective and beneficial to the host community when event organizers collaborate with tourism agencies. Positive benefits of festivals and events are both economic and socio-cultural (Hede, Deery & Jago, 2002). In fact, in the process, a favourable symbiosis may develop between certain types of tourism, such as festival tourism, and sustainable development (O’Sullivan & Jackson, 2002:325). In the case of the Lamu Cultural Festival, sponsors include the Lamu Conservation Trust, international embassies, the Ministry of East African Affairs, Trade and Commerce, and the local county government. Their main contribution is the funds that they channel to the event through the Lamu Cultural Promotion Group (Lamu Cultural

Promotion Group, 2014:8). The sponsors' motivations for and expectations from sponsoring the Lamu Cultural Festival are discussed further in the Sections 4.5.2 to 4.5.10.

A study conducted by Quinn (2006:229) on two well-established festivals in Ireland, the Wexford Festival Opera and the Galway Arts festival, shows that they both achieved success as a tourist attraction because they attracted support from corporate sponsors. The success and survival of such an event depends on an organization's ability to provide value, wealth and satisfaction to all the primary stakeholders. Sponsorship is a philanthropic activity. Sponsors get a sense of fulfilment when they donate towards a festival. Sponsorship is a mutually beneficial relationship, in which the sponsor is looking for a 'return' in the form of a raised corporate profile, the promotion of a particular product or an improved public relations image of the stakeholder (Hughes, 2000:25).

Stakeholders provide social capacity and receive recognition by providing a platform for locals to meet face to face in a celebratory atmosphere. Residents' skills levels are improved through their participation in festival items, and various parties are brought together for decision-making and improved structure. Getz *et al.* (2007) highlight the importance of networking with festival partners, and categorize these partners' roles as those of regulators, facilitators, co-producers, suppliers, collaborators and audience members. The involvement of these stakeholders in the planning process could be on an annual basis, occasional, or even once-off only. The strongest body among the stakeholders is usually the festival organizer, in this case, the Lamu Cultural Promotion Group, which has the authority to decide whom to include and whom to exclude as stakeholders in the planning process (Getz *et al.*, 2007:106). The other vital and irreplaceable partner is local government (in this case, the Lamu County Government), which has the authority that formulates policy and decides if and when the festival is to be organized (Larson, 2002:126).

Festival partners are essential to the success of a community festival. Festivals take advantage of multiple partners that exist individually for their support, placing substantial responsibility on each of the partners. Festivals evolve and change as different organizations drive them. The level of participation of each partner varies, depending on the structure of the partner, its history in public engagement and their interests in the location (Ali-Knight *et al.*, 2008:109). Partners for the Lamu Cultural Festival include the Lamu Tourist Association, National Museums of Kenya (Lamu Museum) and the Kenya

Tourism Board, which partner with the Lamu Cultural Promotion Group to offer support to ensure the success of the Lamu Cultural Festival. Their support is usually in kind, mainly facilitating the movement and accommodation of the different indigenous communities participating in the festival activities. The motivations and expectations of these partners are discussed later in this chapter. Derrett (2009, cited in Ali-Knight *et al.*, 2009:110) asserts that when partners invest in a festival, they support the host community's sense of self and its place, which in return helps to build confidence in the community.

Furthermore, decision-making and festival planning are orchestrated by the festival organizers and are always future-oriented, focusing on the formulation of goals and the means to achieve them (Getz, 1997:72). In the case of Lamu, the stakeholders other than the Lamu Cultural Promotion Group were passive, as they worked with the information provided by the Group. Getz (1991) suggests that there is increased professionalism in planning and management of cultural festivals as the host community continues to accumulate more experience in running a festival. I found that this was also the case with the organizers of the Lamu Cultural Festival, who have gained experience in event organizing through the years, as they have managed to get more donors and sponsors on board, ensuring the success of the festival.

The Lamu Cultural Promotion Group is the centre of the festival since they organize and collaborate with all the other stakeholders and partners. All share a common goal, namely to see another annual festival succeed. The National Museums of Kenya provides its venue for free. The local government is the regulator which gives grants and provides security and even acts as an organizer when circumstances require it to. Tourism organizations, together with the media, are vital partners in promoting and marketing the festival (Getz *et al.*, 2007:114). The other sponsors play a more passive role, allocating funds to the Lamu Cultural Festival. Funds are then channelled to festival organizing and to various festival items.

#### **4.5.2 Lamu Cultural Promotion Group**

##### *4.5.2.1 Historical background and composition*

The Lamu Cultural Promotion Group was founded in 2001 when several hotel owners and business people came together to plan the celebration of 2000 years of maritime trade on the Lamu Archipelago.

The Lamu Cultural Promotion Group is community-based. It is comprised of 16 members, divided into different committees, which include the organizing, marketing and finance committees. The role of the organizing committee is to get permission from the authorities to hold the festival, and to get in touch with the festival participants. They also organize for participants' transport to and from Lamu Island, and for their accommodation during the festival. The function of the marketing committee is to advertise the festival, in conjunction with the Kenya Tourism Board. The finance committee's mandate is to seek funding, and allocate monies for the different festival items.

It is a non-political organization whose main mandate is the conservation and promotion of indigenous tangible and intangible culture. The relationship between Lamu Cultural Promotion Group and all the other institutions is focused on the long-term sustainability of the Lamu Cultural Festival, because without these institutions, the festival would not be sustainable. The Lamu Cultural Promotion Group relies on these institutions for resource acquisition and service delivery platforms.

#### *4.5.2.2 Motivations*

The Lamu Cultural Promotion Group has gained increasing support from international embassies, local stakeholders and the Kenyan authorities to make a success of the festival. The conservation efforts made by the Kenya National Museums made a great contribution to the Lamu Cultural Festival's success, because these efforts include a conservation plan, entailing the identification and protection of traditional buildings and artefacts. Moreover, the conservation needs of Lamu's old town were assessed and a framework to protect the cultural heritage site was developed accordingly. Various local attractions are open to the public during the festival, including the Lamu Museum, which showcases Swahili culture, the Lamu fort built in 1821 by Oman Sultan after winning the battle of Shela, the Swahili house museum, and also the German post office museum. There are also a lot of sites that demonstrate Swahili civilization in the 15<sup>th</sup> century. Visitors can also see the donkey sanctuary and visit the dhow-making village (Lamu Cultural Promotion Group, 2014:pers.comm.; UNESCO, 2015; Lamu Museum, n.d.).

According to the Lamu Cultural Promotion Group offices (n.d.), the objectives of the Lamu Cultural Promotion group are

- to promote local culture and preserve Lamu's heritage by organizing cultural events;

- to use cultural events as a marketing tool to increase visitors to Lamu to boost the tourism sector locally and internationally;
- to make the Lamu communities understand, value and appreciate their cultural heritage;
- to promote dialogue between the different cultures;
- to lay a strong cultural foundation for the youth of today and the future youths, so that they inherit a strong and stable cultural set-up; and
- to celebrate Lamu as the hub of Swahili culture (Wiggins, 2010)<sup>4</sup> and heritage in the East African region.

The third, fourth and fifth objectives strongly support the main objective of the Lamu Cultural Festival, namely to contribute to the construction of a shared Lamu cultural identity. The question is to what extent these objectives have been achieved.

#### *4.5.2.3 Functions*

The Lamu Cultural Promotion Group has been the organiser of the festival every year since its inception. Every year, the members gather to outsource funds from other stakeholders and donors, recruit participants for the different festival items and make succession strategies. Because it is comprised of locals who understand their local beliefs and values, the Lamu Cultural Promotion Group is in an excellent position to establish relationships with stakeholders and donors.

#### **4.5.3 Lamu Tourist Association**

##### *4.5.3.1 Historical background and composition*

The Lamu Tourist Association is an umbrella organization made up of Lamu's independent tourism businesses – its members range from hotel owners to dhow captains and shopkeepers and fishermen, and from airlines to bus companies. The organization provides a voice to support the issues and concerns of these businesses.

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<sup>4</sup> Lamu town has been described as the hub of Swahili cultural heritage in East Africa, established by the extensive trade networks over the Indian Ocean. This enabled Lamu to interact with the outside world, which led to intermarriages between traders from Europe, India and Arabia, who formed new families with the African population, creating a unique ethnically Swahili people. Hence, one of the objectives of the Festival is to celebrate the Swahili identity.

Membership is open to all tourism-related businesses in Lamu at an annual fee. Not only are Lamu-based businesses welcome, but non-Lamu individuals and businesses can also join as ‘Friends of Lamu’.

#### *4.5.3.2 Motivations*

Its aims are to help raise Lamu’s profile both at home and abroad, to ensure that tourism developments and practices are culturally sensitive and sustainable, to protect Lamu’s World Heritage status and to lobby for a green island and environment. The Lamu Tourist Association proclaims that it is proud to be in step with local culture and values. The association’s objectives are

- to serve as a local forum for Lamu’s tourism-related businesses;
- to act as a pressure group engaging with national and international tourism bodies;
- to promote Lamu as a unique unspoiled tourism destination of World Heritage importance;
- to provide practical support for local tourism-related initiatives; and
- to ensure sustainable tourism practices.

#### *4.5.3.3 Functions*

The Lamu Tourist Association supports the festival in kind by providing complimentary accommodation to festival participants who come from the mainland and other islands to participate in the festival activities. It also facilitates the transport of the different groups participating in the festival activities from their villages on the mainland to Lamu Island. The Lamu Tourist Association assists visitors in discovering Lamu by providing tourist guides.

### **4.5.4 Kenya Tourism Board**

#### *4.5.4.1 Historical background and composition*

The Kenya Tourism Board is a state corporation that operates under the auspices of the Ministry of East African Affairs, Commerce and Tourism (formerly the Ministry of Tourism), whose role is to market Kenya as a tourism destination to domestic, regional and international markets. Its other activities include the supervision and co-ordination of private sector tourism development, and infrastructure development in tourist locations

(Ondicho, 2003). The board was established in 1996 alongside the Tourist Police Unit. This was part of the policy and institutional measures taken after the depressed market conditions that resulted in fewer arrivals in the early 1990s. The government allocates funds in its annual budget to the Kenya Tourism Board, but also relies heavily on donors and private sector contributions.

#### *4.5.4.2 Motivations*

Another major role of the Kenya Tourism Board is product diversification strategies to market Kenya as a diverse destination. One of the areas advertised is archaeological and heritage tourism, working closely with the National Museums of Kenya. The Museums are directly under the Ministry of Culture, showcasing Kenya from the perspective of its diverse archaeological attractions. The Board's focus on Kenya's diversity is the main reason for its sponsoring the Lamu Cultural Festival and the Loyangalani Cultural Festival. The Kenya Tourism Board is also responsible for ensuring that the markets, international or regional, are well informed about the exact security situation in the country. The Board does this by appointing agents in key source markets to ensure that the correct information is relayed.

#### *4.5.4.3 Functions*

In recent years, the role of the internet in promoting tourism has expanded rapidly. Hence the designing of government-sponsored tourism websites has become very significant in international advertising of the county's destinations and the local cultures of particular tourist destinations (Horng & Tsai, 2010:74). The Kenya Tourism Board runs the Magical Kenya website, which is the official government website used to market Kenya as a destination, both internationally and locally. With regard to the Lamu Cultural Festival, the website provides detailed information on the festival, and an introduction of the different cultures in Lamu, and on the variety of activities to expect at the Lamu Cultural Festival.

### **4.5.5 National Museums of Kenya**

#### *4.5.5.1 Historical background and composition*

The Lamu museum aims to interpret the heritage of Kenya to stimulate appreciation and learning (National Museums of Kenya, n.d.\*). The museum houses some of the most celebrated collections of history, culture and art from East Africa and Kenya in particular.

The museum, built in 1910, was initiated by the then East African Natural History Society (EANHS). The museum was officially opened on 22 September 1930 and named the Coryndon Museum in honour of Sir Robert Coryndon, one-time Governor of Kenya (National Museums of Kenya, n.d.\*). It was renamed the National Museum of Kenya when Kenya attained independence in 1963.

Lamu Museum is part of the many regional museums managed by the National Museums of Kenya, a state corporation established by an Act of Parliament, and the *Museums and Heritage Act, 2006* (cited in National Museums of Kenya, n.d.\*). National Museums of Kenya is a multi-disciplinary institution that collects, preserves, studies, documents and presents Kenya's past and present cultural and natural heritage (National Museums of Kenya, n.d.\*). The building which now houses the Lamu Museum served as a prison from 1910 to 1984, to both the British colonial regime and the Kenyan government, before being handed over to the National Museums of Kenya in 1984 and being turned into a museum with technical and financial assistance from a Swedish International Development Agency (National Museums of Kenya, n.d.\*). The Lamu Museum exhibits a wide collection of rare ethnographic material from the different indigenous communities of Lamu and other coastal communities; the material represents the material culture of the various coastal peoples (National Museums of Kenya, n.d.\*).

#### 4.5.5.2 Functions

The Lamu Museum, which is managed by the National Museums of Kenya, plays a large role in the planning process of the Lamu Cultural Festival, providing institutional support and facilities for the festival. These facilities include the town square,<sup>5</sup> the Lamu Fort (Hoyle, 2001:308)<sup>6</sup> and the *Mwanaarafa*<sup>7</sup> building for workshops and displays. These facilities are used during the festival at no cost. In attendance are the regional heads and the staff at the museum.

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<sup>5</sup> Lamu town square (*Mkunguni*) is an open space in front of the Lamu Fort used for meetings.

<sup>6</sup> The Lamu Fort dates back to 1813. Upon its completion in 1821, it marked the southern corner of the traditional stone town, and as a result it encouraged new buildings around it. Merchants erected shopfront buildings with beautiful verandas overlooking the harbour. It has been the image of the community serving as a community centre for the people of Lamu. The courtyard is available for weddings and meetings.

<sup>7</sup> The *Mwanaarafa* building is a public hall.

#### **4.5.6 Ministry of East African Affairs, Commerce and Tourism**

Formerly known as the Ministry of Tourism, the Ministry of East African Affairs, Commerce and Tourism is in charge of all matters pertaining to the development and management of the national tourism industry. Its mandate is to formulate tourism policy and planning. In collaboration with the Department of Planning, it undertakes research, planning, monitoring and evaluation of projects, and the Tourism Department is in charge of marketing and promotion (Akama, 2002:11; Masau & Prideux, 2003:199).

The Ministry also oversees the operations of various other national institutions, including the Kenya Wildlife Service (the managers of biodiversity), the Kenya Tourism Development Corporation, Bomas of Kenya (a conservatory of cultural heritage), and the Kenya Tourism Board (whose mission is to market Kenya) (Akama & Mayaka, 2005:302).

When it comes to the Lamu Cultural Festival, the Ministry gives grants, markets the festival and initiates collaboration with other sponsors, such as the international embassies.

#### **4.5.7 Media**

##### *4.5.7.1 Motivations*

The media are crucial stakeholders for broadcasting and advertising festivals and events. The media are also very important in facilitating communication with stakeholder groups during the festival organization. They provide significant coverage before, during and after the festival (Derrett, 2009:114, cited in Ali-Knight *et al.*, 2008). The media also generate archives for future reference, which encourages sponsorship for festivals to come.

##### *4.5.7.2 Functions*

In 2014, there was a lot of suspense ahead of the Lamu Cultural Festival due to a curfew imposed indiscriminately on the entire Lamu County. Unlike in other years, there was little visibility of the festival in the local and other media. Little was known about the sponsors and the partners, and even getting a logo was difficult. The festival recorded a low turnout of sponsors and tourists – the 14<sup>th</sup> festival was a turning point in the realization of peace and stability in the county (Lamu Cultural Promotion Group: pers.comm.). To send out the message of peace and co-existence, other cultures in Lamu, apart from the indigenous groups, were incorporated. As the festival started, there were live television and radio

broadcasts from major local and other media houses, with on-site announcers broadcasting various events at the festival.

#### **4.5.8 Lamu County Government**

##### *4.5.8.1 Composition*

Social media was the largest platform for the 14<sup>th</sup> annual Lamu Cultural Festival to inform the public that the festival would still take place. These platforms included Facebook, Twitter, Instagram and WhatsApp. The sponsors posted on their social media pages, making an extra effort to encourage visitors to visit and participate in the festival (Thome, 2014).

##### *4.5.8.2 Motivations*

The local government body is vital and it is irreplaceable, as it is the authority that decides if and when a festival will be organized (Larson, 2002:126). It supports events officers in the planning process and provides infrastructural support. In the case of Lamu, the county government has a Department of Tourism whose mandate includes the development of tourism, the promotion of cultural activities and the preservation of heritage and culture. Together with National Museums of Kenya, the Lamu County Government improves amenities for both locals and visitors. They have rehabilitated the Lamu seafront. This included painting and renovating buildings, putting up signage of sites, and cleaning up the seafront through community collaboration in a bid to improve the visual aesthetics of the seafront.

##### *4.5.8.3 Functions*

The Lamu County Government deployed the Kenya Defense Forces during the 14<sup>th</sup> festival to provide security to both the tourists and the local communities at the festival. This festival was held in 2014, when the research was conducted, after attacks by Alshabab on residents of Lamu. Otherwise, the county government normally provides funding to support the festival programme in kind.

#### **4.5.9 Lamu Conservation Trust**

##### *4.5.9.1 Historical background*

The Lamu Conservation Trust is a non-governmental organization that endeavours to conserve the indigenous cultures, wildlife and marine ecologies of the Lamu eco-region. It was founded in 2011 with the support of the David Sheldrick Wildlife Trust. Its mission is to provide cultural security for the benefit of the people of Lamu and future generations. The Trust empowers the community to conserve indigenous cultures by balancing the social and economic needs of the community with maintaining healthy ecosystems through sustainable economic development (Lamu Conservation Trust, 2015).

##### *4.5.9.2 Motivations*

The Lamu Conservation Trust's motivation for participating in the festival is to educate the local communities on community-based conservation, develop culturally adaptive systems and ensure a sustainable solid income for the communities, local government and county councils (Lamu Conservation Trust, 2013).

##### *4.5.9.3 Functions*

The Lamu Conservation Trust is a facilitator valued for providing cash grants and sponsorships. It also educates the community on sustainable environmental practices. In the 14<sup>th</sup> festival, the organization had some of its employees participate in the dhow race. It also had a booth displaying its good work in conserving the environment.

#### **4.5.10 Host community**

##### *4.5.10.1 Background and composition*

Getz (1997) notes that, without a host community, there would be no festival. The host community is a very important component of every festival and is perceived as a binding factor – it is the community that stages and hosts a festival (Van Zyl & Botha, 2004:14). It is crucial to understand what motivates a community to attend and participate in a festival, as such motivations are a key factor that could influence the success of other festivals. The host community in the Lamu Cultural Festival is composed of women, men and children from all four indigenous communities.

#### *4.5.10.2 Functions*

Women take part in the Swahili bridal ceremony, traditional dances by the indigenous groups, henna painting and poetry, which are discussed in more detail in other sections of this chapter. Young girls also participate in the henna painting, while older women mainly participate in the traditional dances. The Swahili bridal ceremony is reserved strictly for women, therefore women of all age groups participate.

On the other hand, the dhow competition (see Section 4.6.1), the donkey race (see Section 4.6.4) and the Bao game (see Section 4.6.6) are strictly reserved for men. Some dances and poetry recitals are also performed by men. In the dhow competition, middle-aged men with great skill and build are the captains. The Bao game is for older men, usually above the age of 40 years, who can withstand frequent mocking and criticism from onlookers.

Children participate in the swimming competitions. A number of young boys also take part in the donkey race. Boys may also take part in the dhow racing, not as captains but as crew. Most children participating were between 9 and 18 years of age, mostly in the company of adults.

#### *4.5.10.3 Motivations*

The different traditional dances are a means of revitalizing the different traditions of the four indigenous groups. Through the dances, the distinct differences in the cultural backgrounds and the traditions of the various groups are showcased. In the process, the dances contribute towards retaining the various groups' cultural identities.

The Bao game, which has been referred to as the oldest game known to humanity (Driedger, 1972; Lamu Museum, n.d.), is a symbol of Lamu's cultural heritage. It has been part of the Lamu community for centuries and, as a result, the different indigenous groups have learned to play the game, giving them a sense of belonging. The dhow is an icon for promoting dialogue between the different cultures in Lamu, from the construction of the boats to the dhow race itself. Poetry is used to make the different indigenous groups understand, value and appreciate their cultural heritage. The youth are able to learn about their distinct histories before the introduction of the Lamu Cultural Festival and before some of the community members moved to Lamu Island. Among the reasons for the introduction of the Lamu Cultural Festival was to reach out to the youth of the indigenous

groups because of the concern that they were losing their heritage due to the influence of the western world.

The main purpose of the swimming competitions and the donkey race is to lay a strong cultural foundation so that the youth will inherit a strong and stable Lamu culture, where different indigenous groups come together and celebrate their distinct identities. Different indigenous groups participate in the donkey race. People from different indigenous groups have been introduced to a practice that existed even before the introduction of the Lamu Cultural Festival, and hence the race serves as a bonding factor.

All these different activities have been with the indigenous groups of Lamu for centuries, and bring the people together, some to participate, and others to observe and learn. The organisers of the Lamu Cultural Festival bring people together in a bid to construct a Lamu identity through the festival, while the different indigenous groups join in the festival to strengthen and retain their cultural identity. The Lamu Cultural Festival has provided an opportunity for ethnic understanding for the different communities by preserving and promoting local traditions, history and their culture through the various festival items.

## **4.6 Festival items**

The festival features a number of items, notably the dhow race and swimming competition, items featuring the performing arts plus displays of handicrafts and skills, the donkey race, the Bao game, and the Swahili bridal ceremony and henna painting. These items are discussed in more detail below.

### **4.6.1 The dhow race**

This race is an important activity during the Lamu cultural festival. It is the first event of the festival and usually includes large dhows known as *jahazi* and small dhows called *kasa* (Lamu Conservation Trust, 2013). The competition starts with the captains gathering along Shela town on the shores of Lamu with their well-built dhows. There are usually about 15 racing dhows. The crew members and the vessels are praised by followers in order to attract the town people's attention in an attempt to gain more support. The spectators are both residents and tourists, and everyone cheers for his or her favourite captain. Determined spectators may squeeze into one of the dhows in order to have a first-hand experience of the race, while others may follow the dhows with motorboats to cheer them

on. The competition has two phases: the preliminary phase is a knock-out trial on the first day, followed by the finals the next day.



**Figure 4.2: Dhow race**

(Source: Author)

The dhow race helps to preserve and encourage the art of dhow sailing, which is threatened by engine-powered boats. Once the finest dhows have been selected to compete, the captains race under sail, manoeuvring the dhows through a series of complicated turns (see Figure 4.2). This requires great skill. The Bajuni are regarded as the best dhow captains, as they have been in the dhow-making business for centuries. The winners are rewarded with tokens of money. The race requires about four hours of sailing.

Each team is composed of a captain and his crew members, who belong to the same indigenous group. Most of the dhow captains are Bajuni – these people have been fishermen for centuries, and have therefore perfected the art of dhow sailing. Other indigenous communities have also acquired the art of dhow sailing, but are not regarded as being quite as good as the Bajuni. In the 14<sup>th</sup> festival, only four dhows did not belong to Bajuni. Each of the other three indigenous groups had one dhow, and the fourth belonged to the Lamu Conservation Trust. Hence, it appears that the ethnically homogeneous composition of the dhow crews could contribute to the retention of ethnic consciousness.

The dhow is a cultural icon of Lamu. Given the introduction of motorboats, there is a risk that the dhows will become extinct in future. The dhow race thus forms an indispensable item of the Lamu cultural festival and of the endeavour to conserve the dhow as part of Lamu culture. The older dhow captains pass on their knowledge to the youth, contributing to the construction of a Lamu identity.

#### ***4.6.2 The swimming competition***

This competition also takes place on the first day of the festival, after the dhow competition. Swimming is a popular activity in Lamu. Children, especially boys, grow up swimming and even playing various games under water. This includes diving and competing to see who stays under water the longest. Therefore, the swimming competition is also a popular event of the Lamu Cultural Festival. Normally only experienced swimmers participate in the event (Wanderi, 2011). Just as with the dhow competition, the swimming competition also has two phases, with the knock-out heats on the first day, and the race finals on the second day.

Only boys under the age of 18 years from all the different indigenous groups may participate. Each team is composed of swimmers belonging to the same indigenous group. The competition brings together children from the various indigenous cultural backgrounds, with a number of boys representing each group (see Figure 4.3). As with the dhow race, the Bajuni are the dominant group in the competition.



**Figure 4.3: Boys after a swimming competition**

(Source: Author)

#### 4.6.3 *Performing arts (poetry, story-telling, song and dance)*

The first day usually ends with traditional dances, mostly in the evening, accompanied by singing and poetry from the local communities who reside on various islands in Lamu and also around Lamu region. These activities include groups such as the Sanye dancers, and other performances from the Boni, Orma and Pokomo tribes (Lamu Conservation Trust, 2013). These traditional dances are known as *ngoma* and are a significant expression of the rivalry that existed between the indigenous communities in their original settlements.

The Aweer men perform the *ngomela* (a men's dance named after the drum), by forming a semicircle and clapping to the rhythm of the drums. The *kirumbizi* dance by the Bajuni involves dancing with sticks. Each of the communities performs one dance, except for the Bajuni, who perform several dances. These dances are a celebration of the past, as it seems that people look at the past for identity. Thus these dances are the dances discussed in Chapter 3, which are performed during social cultural practices and for religious purposes. This means that these dances are strongly based on tradition and thus contribute towards sustaining tradition and cultural identity. Through dance, the various communities performing can tell the other communities and tourists about themselves. The performance of these dances is a strong element of the preservation of traditional cultural practices as a form of intangible cultural heritage. Most of the songs that accompany the dances are romantic and soothing (Senoga-Zake, 1986). These dances are symbolic of the individual ethnic identities of the indigenous groups performing them. The dances are a means of preserving traditional cultures and fostering appreciation for the local practices of other communities. Dances are therefore linked to a sense of belonging and cohesion related to a particular community and place.

On the last day of the 14<sup>th</sup> festival, the Anidan and Bloko del Valle children's band played, accompanied by a Basque guitarist. Their performance was a symbol of how different people from various backgrounds other than the original indigenous groups have come together to send out the message of peace and coexistence among all.

Oral performances such as storytelling and poetry recitals are regarded as one of the oldest methods of communicating ideas and images. Story telling is also used in the communication of beliefs, norms and practices. A story can be told in a number of different ways, both verbally and non-verbally, incorporating the arts, pictures,

ceremonies, theatre, re-enactment, dances and puppetry. Regarded as the most common and most powerful vehicle to talk about life, stories communicate facts and could provoke positive actions that promote heritage conservation. In this regard, Rubie (1996) remarks that the main function of stories/oral performance is to explore human emotions, values and beliefs.

Traditional performances (story telling) for the purpose of heritage conservation are conveyed from person to person of all ages, class and gender. Traditional performances are interwoven with the social political structures and systems which ensure the authenticity, validity and reliability of the performances. These socio-political structures and systems include kinship, lineage, priesthood, kingship and chieftainship – they define the structure of traditions and how they are passed on. They are kept simple and direct but are structured to hold the interest of the audience. The narrator/performer of the oral performance creates the experiences through animated narration to enable the audience to create personal mental images of the age-old conservation traditions (Bukonya, Kabira & Okombo, 1997:3; Kitula, 2005:4)

Traditionally poetry has been very important as a medium of expressing ideas, values and viewpoints about Lamu's culture (Rettova, 2010:34). Both men and women from the various indigenous groups participate in poetry recital. One is usually amazed by the richness of the poetry presented, using old poetry skills. It is an important avenue of communication to the public, who learn from the different orators – poetry is thus a means of social interaction. The stories are historically based, and telling them strengthens the cultural consciousness of the people who perform, and those who listen. The fact that traditional poetry recital is still practised at the Lamu Cultural Festival is an indication of the strength and value of the different indigenous cultures of Lamu.

According to West and Ndlovu (2010:233), every successive generation interprets and reinterprets its cultural legacy through oral performances. Historical events are narrated by means of oral histories, rites, songs and festivals. Therefore the indigenous groups decide what is suitable to remember and what should be forgotten. In this regard, Byrne (2010) states that cultural identity is achieved by drawing on the past when indigenous groups improvise cultural representations of the past. During the Lamu Cultural Festival, different indigenous groups present a narration of their own respective pasts through the elders.

Some enact events of the past to demonstrate their history to the present generation to enable them to obtain a better understanding of their own past.

#### **4.6.4 Traditional handicrafts and skills**

The festival provides a forum to showcase local skills and handicrafts. Displays usually start on the second day and extend to the final day of the festival (see Figure 4.4). Making the things on display involves different skills and knowledge in the making of traditional items, such as the making of traditional hats, calligraphy, henna decorations, furniture manufacturing, the milling process, as well as the making of utensils using locally available materials. Visitors and locals can observe various artists at work as they carve wood or weave palms. The event is significant because it demonstrates how various communities used to survive before modernization by making their own household items (Laher & Sing'Oei, 2014). Different indigenous groups have separate displays that showcase their traditional arts and crafts.

Through these traditional artefacts, members of the different indigenous communities are able to learn about one another's traditions and the tools used in their social cultural practices. This is in accordance with the objectives of the Lamu Cultural Festival, which aims to create a Lamu identity when members of the different indigenous groups learn about their heritage and culture. These artefacts renew a great sense of pride in these ancient traditions to ensure the sustainability of these crafts in a modern world. The cultural identity and cohesion of the specific indigenous communities depend on the retention of these vestiges of traditional culture. The unique pieces are also sold to tourists, enhancing Lamu's tourism industry and generating income for those who make the items.

The festival also features traditional Swahili cuisine, allowing visitors and locals to enjoy different kinds of food typical of the local Swahili culture and of other Lamu communities. The foods on offer include seafood, tropical fruits, *bhajia* (a flat potato cake, coated in flour and fried in butter), *mshikaki* (skewered meat) and samosas (a fried savoury snack with a meat or vegetable filling). Many of these foods are also accompanied by South Asian dishes such as *chapatti* (unleavened flat bread), *biriani* and *pilau* (spicy rice dishes) (Walker, 1991).



**Figure 4.4: Traditional display**

(Source: Author)

#### **4.6.5 The donkey race**

This event takes place on the second day of the festival. The day starts with the donkey race in the streets, which attracts a lot of spectators. The local donkey owners are usually very excited about this race and spend the rest of the year preparing for the event. This race requires not only a strong donkey, but also a jockey of a small stature who is skilful (see Figure 4.5). The jockey must have the ability to ensure that a stubborn donkey remains on the course. The jockeys represent the different indigenous groups, and several members from the same indigenous group take part in the donkey race. The winner of this race wears his title with great pride (see Figure 4.6).

The donkey race is a strong representation of Lamu's cultural heritage and is the highlight of the festival, since donkeys are the most appealing symbol of Lamu town, which is unique in Kenya for being the only town where donkeys remain the main mode of transport on land (Wishitemi *et al.*, 2007). They also perform key roles in agriculture. They were the only form of transportation until very recently, due to the narrow streets of Lamu (Lamu Conservation Trust, 2013). The race aims to contribute towards laying a strong cultural foundation for the community to understand, value and appreciate their cultural heritage.



**Figure 4.5: A donkey jockey during the donkey race at the Lamu Cultural Festival**

(Source: Author)



**Figure 4.6: The winner of the donkey race**

(Source: Author)

#### 4.6.6 *The Bao game*

The Bao game is probably the oldest and most widely played board game in the world (Driedger, 1972; Lamu Museum, n.d.). Archaeological evidence suggests that it is the oldest game known to humans, and has been played throughout Africa and the Middle East for thousands of years (Lamu Museum, n.d.). Bao is the Swahili name for a wooden board with carved holes (Lamu Museum, n.d.). Different regions refer to the game with different names, and all have slightly different rules. In the Middle East it is known as the Mancala, in Malawi it is referred to as *Bawo*, in Northern Madagascar it is known as *Sakalava*, and in Zanzibar as *Bao*. In Lamu it is called Bao la Kete. Bao was first described in 1658 as the *Fifangha* by a French traveller, Flacourt, who had seen it in North West Madagascar. In the 1820s, a Swahili Poet, Mayaka Bin Haji of Mombasa, wrote the Bao poem ‘*Bao Nalingwa*’ (Driedger, 1972:3; Boyd, 1979:84).

It is a two person/two team board game played on a wooden board with holes. The board is usually carved from the hard wood of the *Mkumbakusi* (*Azalia quanzensis*/Mahogany bean) tree. Alternatively, these holes are scooped out of the ground or rock. Each player or team owns half of the game. All the pieces are usually seeds or stones, which are ‘sowed’ around the board in an anti-clockwise movement. The player who captures the majority of the seeds (*kete/komwe*) is the winner (see Figure 4.7).



**Figure 4.7: Men playing the Bao game**

(Source: Author)

A game lasts 10 to 15 minutes. The rules of Bao are said to be the most difficult and complex to learn of all the *mancala* (board) games. Bao is a social game, and players have to accept frequent teasing, mocking and criticism by onlookers. It is played in public by men only. The game is played only in the late afternoon on the porches of houses by friends, neighbours and relatives. In Lamu, the Bajuni appear to be the masters of the Bao game; hence they are referred to as *fundi* (artists) or *bingwa* (masters) (Townshend, 1982:182; MagicalKenya, n.d.\*).

The Bao has been part of Lamu for many centuries now. It is a game that has been passed on from generation to generation, with the elders teaching the younger generation. Apart from the Bajuni, who are the masters of the game, the other indigenous communities are also learning to play the game, bringing the groups together.

#### **4.6.7 Swahili bridal ceremony**

Social practices and religious aspects define a marriage. There is a religious ceremony referred to as *nikaha* or *nikah*, which usually takes place in the evening after the men have performed their traditional dance, the *kirumbizi*. The marriage is officially contracted during the *nikaha* ceremony, and takes place in a mosque or at the groom's home. The people present are the *Kadhi* (a legal officer who officiates in the marriage), the groom, a male witness, and the groom's father, and the bride is represented by her father or a male relative (Middleton, 1992; Fuglesang, 1994).

When a girl (*mwanamwali*) goes through the 'rite of passage' of initiation, she leaves behind the status of a young girl and becomes a woman (*mwanamke*). A wedding (*Harusi*) is held to complete the passage to social adulthood, in terms of the beliefs and practices or *mila* (culture or custom) of the Swahili (Van Gennep, 1960; Fuglesang 1992; Horton & Middleton, 2000; Middleton, 2004). The wedding ceremony usually takes place on the final day of the Lamu Cultural Festival, complete with Vugo songs and poetic rituals (see Figure 4.8). Women usually come together before the Swahili bridal ceremony. This is referred to as '*kupamba*', and it is a symbolic pre-wedding party, a celebration which consists of female friends and other women in order to prepare a bride for marriage. Female visitors are therefore treated to a Swahili bridal ceremony by being adorned with various ornaments, such as henna painting and traditional face make-up (Lamu Conservation Trust, 2013) (see Figure 4.8).



**Figure 4.8: Women's procession during the bridal ceremony**

(Source: Author)

The significance of this event is to display the processes that usually take place before a woman is married among the Swahili in Lamu. The bride is given advice by older and married women on how to behave towards her husband, what to do and also what not to do (Berland & Rao, 2004). The ceremony is shortened for the festival, and hence differs from a bridal ceremony outside the festival which takes place over a period of three days.

Most of the community members from the original indigenous groups that have relocated to the Island have adopted Swahili culture (language, dress and manners) as their way of life. To some extent, the Lamu Cultural Festival has contributed to the adoption of Swahili culture. When the individuals from the various indigenous groups go to Lamu to participate in the festival activities, they interact with the Swahili and get to experience Swahili culture, leading some of them to adopt the culture. Most of them are now Muslim, and some have left their indigenous partners (notably Aweer wives) and married a Swahili mate. Since Swahili is the dominant culture on Lamu Island, the indigenous groups who have moved to Lamu Island tend to adopt Swahili practices. This happens particularly when the indigenous communities from the mainland (Aweer, Orma and Sanye) move to the Island and adopt the Swahili practices on the Lamu Island, not like on the mainland where they still maintain their original cultural practices. As cultural identity is founded on tradition, lifestyle, values and protocol, adoption of the Swahili culture by some of the

indigenous communities combined with their indigenous cultural practices contributes towards the construction of a Lamu cultural identity.

#### **4.6.8 Henna painting**

Henna is a type of dye used for body paintings, which is a female art form with intricate patterns which is carried out during weddings and on religious holidays. The earliest mention of henna painting as an art form used to adorn a bride occurs in the Ugaritic legend of Baal and Anath, dating back to 2100 BC. The substance applied is known by many different names, including Al-Khanna, Jamaican Mignonette, Egyptian Privet and Smooth Lawsonia. The art of application is referred to as Henna painting. The dye comes from the *Lawsonia inermis* plant, which grows four to eight feet high in areas with a hot climate in Iran, Pakistan, Syria, Persia, Morocco, Uganda, Tanzania, Kenya, Ethiopia, Eritrea, Senegal and India (Lamu Museums, n.d.). To prepare the dye, the leaves and twigs of the plant are ground into a fine powder, which is then mixed with lemon juice or black tea or any other mildly acidic liquid to make a preparation with a toothpaste-like consistency. The henna is then used to draw finely detailed body art of varying designs to depict different meanings, varying from region to region, such as symbols of good health, fertility, wisdom, protection and spiritual enlightenment (see Figure 4.9).



**Figure 4.9: Henna painting on a woman's hands and feet**

(Source: Author)

As mentioned, the most popular use is linked to weddings and the preparation of brides. The designs are mainly done on a woman's feet and forearms and sometimes on her shins. The art lasts between two and 12 weeks, depending on the quality of the henna, skin type and the care taken to preserve the design (Lamu Museums, n.d.).

#### **4.7 Relation of activities to the construction of a Lamu identity**

Festival items as discussed above bring people together for a common purpose; in particular they enhance social cohesion, a sense of belonging and identity (Frisby & Getz, 1989; Chacko & Schaffer, 1993; Getz, 1997; De Bres & Davis, 2001:327). As Epstein (1978:112) explains, social identity is based on shared rituals and habits, a shared worldview, common territory and religion (in this case, Islam). Of particular significance for this study is that festival items combine time and space to create identity of location. It is a celebration of both group and place identity. Festivals also provide an opportunity and a platform for showcasing a destination's variety of rich tangible and intangible cultural heritage, local traditions and different indigenous backgrounds (Hall, 1990:223; Copley & Robson, 1996:19). Hence, festival items are an expression of local culture production, creating opportunities for shared histories and cultural values, and the festival offers a setting for social interaction (traditional dances, oral performances). Traditions deemed as being in danger of becoming extinct in the area (such as the dhow race, henna painting, traditional arts and crafts, traditional dances, poetry and the Bao game) must be instilled and reinforced in the population of a community to maintain a common identity.

Members of indigenous groups occupy different positions, and play different roles. Depending on the effectiveness of their different role fulfilments, they are recognised and accepted by others as valued members of the indigenous group. This is also the case in Lamu. When a member of a particular indigenous community represents that person's community in the festival items, the person becomes a valued member of the particular indigenous community. An individual is valued more highly when he or she is crowned as a winner. Representing the community in the festival items also creates a sense of belonging and self-identity (Brewer & Roccas, 2011). Role fulfilment usually involves a collective rather than an individual activity, according to the cultural values and norms of a particular community. Hence, in essence, every participant actually participates on behalf of his or her community (Turino, 2004).

The dominant group among the four indigenous groups are the Bajuni. In constructing a Lamu identity, several indigenous groups come into contact with each other. Because the Bajuni are the dominant group in all festival items, they tend to define the regional identity. The other three indigenous groups (the Aweer, Sanye and Orma) tend not to be strong enough in a heterogeneous society (Saleh & Ryan, 1993:290) to shape the regional identity to the same extent. Observation shows that the Lamu Cultural Festival's intention to offer an opportunity to create a shared Lamu identity was only realised to a limited extent, as the different indigenous groups used the opportunity to sustain their respective different cultural identities.

Together with various stakeholders, the Lamu Cultural Promotion Group has been able to organize the Lamu Cultural Festival since its inception in 2001 as a celebration of both the past and future, focusing on the beliefs and traditions of the Lamu Archipelago communities. The Lamu Cultural Promotion Group has successfully secured funds from donors to co-ordinate the festival items. The various partners and stakeholders have different motivations, which include the construction and conservation of Lamu's heritage and culture(s), to raise Lamu's profile for tourism, to ensure culturally sensitive tourism development, to educate the local communities on culturally adaptive systems and to market and advertise the Lamu Cultural Festival.

Based on my observation and interactions with members of the host communities during the 14<sup>th</sup> festival, it seems that the host community's motivation to participate in the festival items includes a variety of elements, as summarised below.

- *Social identification:*

In the Lamu Cultural Festival, the local community members participate in various group and individual activities in order to identify with their respective indigenous communities and to belong and be accepted as active members of their respective indigenous groups. The competing groups are composed of individuals from the four indigenous groups, and the Bajuni are the dominant group among the immigrant groups to Lamu Island. Most of the participants interviewed said that they were involved in the social cultural practices of their respective indigenous communities and that they identified with their respective traditional cultural backgrounds. In their traditional homes, the participants performed their social cultural practices, so the dances,

wedding ceremonies and other practices showcased in the festival were a continuation of the norm.

- *Family cohesion:*

Being together as a family ranked high with the elderly, who felt the need to support family members participating in the festival activities. An example is parents who cheer their young sons and grandsons in the swimming competition. Nostalgia is another motivation, as the adults relive their own days of participating in these activities. A man might direct his son on how to control his donkey during the donkey race, which is the highlight of the Lamu Cultural Festival. He then demonstrates how he did it in his younger years.

Some of the interviewees felt it was a good time for the family to do something together. An example is the women who accompany their daughters to the Swahili bridal ceremony and also have the henna painting done on themselves as part of the preparations for the celebrations before the ceremony takes place.

- *Enjoyment, escape from routine:*

A large number of the community members had not been to Lamu town since the curfew was imposed on the whole county, including the island of Lamu. Since the curfew was lifted for the duration of the festival, people took advantage of the opportunity to come out at night, and enjoy the atmosphere and relax. The young people especially enjoyed the entertainment at night which had previously been impossible due to the curfew that ran from 6 pm to 6 am. A number of the participants, especially the younger people and the children, said that they participated because it was fun and also to get free promotional T-shirts and goodies from the sponsors.

- *Individual and collective pride:*

About 70% of the respondents in all age categories interviewed felt that they were fulfilling some social obligation and that the Lamu Cultural Festival provided a way to be actively involved in their traditional community. This would contribute to community cohesion and social benefits, enhancing the community's image to outsiders. The festival has become a part of life for some participants, as they have

been participating since the inception of the Lamu Cultural Festival in 2001. They also have a shared vision of one day achieving a Lamu identity through working together on Lamu community issues. One of the participants said that his role was both exhausting and difficult, but he continued because of pride, as he felt the responsibility of upholding the Lamu Cultural Festival tradition.

- *Meeting other members of the cultural community:*

The Lamu Cultural Festival is viewed as a means of reinforcing social networking. It is also a tool for educating the next generation on the culture of the community. In participating in the various festival items, not only do the members of a particular community meet members from other indigenous groups, but they also meet other members from their own groups who compose the teams.

- *Education and entertainment:*

Education and entertainment were common themes, irrespective of the cultural background of the respondents. The Save Lamu Organization was on the ground to educate the community on ways of proper waste disposal, and conserving Lamu as a World Heritage Site. This ranked highly with the elderly respondents, who used the period of the festival to educate children about their culture in order to reinforce social identity. About 80% of the participants interviewed in the various activities said they participated because they were curious to learn more about the unique performances. An example is the men in the dhow races who joined others to learn the skills of manoeuvring their way through other dhow competitors, which is a skill one acquires through practice. Education on indigenous culture also serves as a way for parents to reinforce their cultural identity and pass it on to their children. This was done in indigenous group context through oral performances, where the youth listened to the elderly talking about their origins, norms, religion, their cultural practices and values.

- *Revitalization of ethnic culture:*

The locals feel the need to protect their respective ethnic cultures. The government has also recognized that the indigenous communities were initially being assimilated into the dominant communities. The continued production of arts and crafts and the participation of the youth in cultural dances are also contributing to revitalizing the

respective cultures of the different indigenous groups of Lamu. All the participants interviewed identified with their respective indigenous groups. The elderly felt that through participation, the youth would keep their respective ethnic cultures alive. There has also been reconstruction of family ties when younger members become interested in their traditions in order to participate in the community performances. Therefore, the Lamu Cultural Festival has revived and strengthened the construction of individual ethnic identities, as opposed to one of its intended aims, which is to achieve the construction of a shared Lamu identity.

#### **4.8 Conclusion**

The aim of this chapter was to look at how the Lamu Cultural Festival is organized, the partners and the stakeholder collaboration for the success of the festival. It was evident that without stakeholders and all other partners, the festival would not survive. It was also clear that the local communities are the backbone of the festival, for without the involvement of the public, the festival would not be sustainable. The organizers of the Lamu Cultural Festival incorporated a theme of ‘peace and co-existence’ bringing people together, which is what a community festival should be about (Derrett, 2003b; Getz, 1991; Jeong & Santos, 2004; Lade & Jackson, 2004).

Festivals that are performed on architectural and historical heritage sites represent a holistic process in the conservation of local heritage. Since most of the participants participated both formally and informally, the presence of essential local indigenous cultures and communal life ensured education to both the visitors and the local community, but also the preservation and transfer of culture to the future generation. Historians and heritage managers have constantly relied on manuscript and/or archaeological materials, as well as oral sources usually derived from popular traditions and the memory of the members of the community (Rainer *et al.*, 2011). The elders of the respective indigenous groups have vast knowledge with regard to their origins and traditions. The oral performances at the festival were based on events of the past, transferring knowledge to the younger generations, who will in turn continue the trend. Therefore, the importance of the Lamu Cultural Festival and the activities performed at the event in respect of cultural and archaeological preservation is undisputed.

In addition, the event provides an opportunity for the country to advertise its tourist attractions, since it provides a unique experience to visitors of a medieval atmosphere, architectural magnificence and undisturbed beaches.

The festival aims to continue to create a spirit of unity in difficult times by bringing together the distinct local communities in a celebration of their own traditional cultures and identities (Lamu Cultural Promotional Group, 2014:pers.comm.). However, due to the composition of the various festival items, where members of the same indigenous group participate in team context, the Lamu Cultural Festival has not yet been able to achieve its intended purpose of constructing a shared Lamu cultural identity. Instead, it has promoted the construction and even reconstruction of ethnic identity. This has been due to the revitalization of ethnic culture through the different festival items, where people participate with others from the same indigenous group. The fact that the different indigenous groups compete *against* each other has to a large extent contributed to the fact that Lamu has a weak *shared* cultural identity. It may thus be argued that if the teams in the festival items were composed of members from the *different* indigenous groups, the situation might have been different in respect of the construction of a Lamu cultural identity. Instead, the Lamu Cultural Festival has become a means for the indigenous groups to retain their own cultures. It is likely that Swahili culture will continue to grow in dominance and will eventually absorb the distinct indigenous groups. There are already indications that this is happening, such as Aweer women who desert their husbands for Swahili men in Lamu town. Hence, Swahili culture rather than a Lamu culture seems to be a realistic outcome, with the Lamu Cultural Festival playing an arresting rather than an expediting role.

The festival could not be viewed as a demonstration of community opinion, as the local communities' views were controlled by the organizers, meaning that the local identity was defined by the dominant group (the Bajuni). The organizers' limited knowledge of the various local cultures led them to underestimate the existence and presence of the different cultures. As a result they did not create a festival programme that would focus on the construction of a new Lamu cultural identity. Hence the respective indigenous groups made use of the opportunity to revive their own histories and cultural practices. History and heritage do play a prominent role in the festival events, resulting in the revitalization of the ethnic cultures of the respective indigenous groups.

To some extent, the events do promote dialogue between the different cultures, for example, the Bao game, where the Aweer, Orma and Sanye learn how to play the game from the Bajuni, who are the masters of the game. However, the Lamu Cultural Festival has not yet succeeded in creating a sense of place, because of the exclusion of some local communities from the planning process, contributing to consciousness of a separate cultural identity that does not form part of the bigger Lamu identity. Indigenous minorities were under-represented, because they are not included sufficiently in the planning process and in some festival events. Some items, like the dhow race and the donkey race, tend to overshadow the rest of the festival items, such as poetry and the display of various crafts. Only a small segment of the three indigenous groups (Aweer, Orma and Sanye) are reached by the organisers' selection of more exclusive festival items, privileging some communities, such as the Bajuni (Fiske, 1989).

## **CHAPTER 5: CONCLUSION**

### **5.1 Introduction**

The last chapter analyses the findings in view of the research objectives. Here, findings of whether the festival has been a success in constructing cultural identity will emerge. I compare my findings to the existing literature, and consider different views and schools of thought as already presented in the chapters of the dissertation.

I also discuss the outcomes of the study in terms of the objectives of the research, to determine to what extent the research has achieved them.

### **5.2 The sense of a cultural identity before the introduction of the Lamu Cultural Festival**

A distinct indigenous group shares a common name, origin and history. This implies that the group share certain beliefs, values, habits, customs and norms. This can lead to both tangible and intangible cultural products. Tangible cultural products include tools, food, musical instruments, arts and crafts, and intangible cultural products include language, religion, social, economic and political institutions. To determine the sense of cultural identity that existed among the indigenous groups of Lamu before the introduction of the Lamu Cultural Festival, I used a range of identity markers: a collective name, historical background, economic activities, socio-cultural practices, authority systems and religious practices.

The Aweer, who were hunter-gatherers, originally lived between the Juba River in Somalia and the Tana River in Kenya (Okoth-Okombo, 2011:258). Traditionally, they had no concept of ownership. They practised endogamy and had expert medicine men. Socially they had (and still have) four types of dances that are said to be the complete Aweer dance repertoire. Politically, like many hunter-gatherer communities, they lacked a central political authority. Traditionally, they believed in one supreme God and accorded the forests great importance, as they believed that the trees represented their ancestors (see Section 3.2.1).

The Bajuni speak a distinct dialect of Kiswahili, namely *Kitikuu*. They originally migrated from Shungwaya due to pressure from the Orma. They base their livelihood on fishing, farming, boat-building and general craftsmanship (Middleton, 1992). They are composed of eighteen clans and also practised endogamy (Gardner & Bushra, 2004:8). A wealth of song and poetry abounds among the Bajuni; the women play the musical instruments (Adamson, 1967:270). The Bajuni are said to have moved into Lamu at the same time as the Portuguese, and then fell under the rule of Arab rulers from Zanzibar. They believed in a creator, and still venerate the ancestors, even within an orthodox Islamic frame of reference. The Bajuni have been Muslim from as early as the 18<sup>th</sup> century.

The Sanye have the oldest history in Lamu and are the smallest in number; the group is only 500 strong. They also originally came from Shungwaya and are composed of seven clans who speak a language which is similar to that of the Khoikhoi, San and Nguni speakers of South Africa in that it is characterised by click sounds (Olson, 1996:509; Ng'ang'a, 2006:556; Kitelo, 2014). They practised hunting in the forests and were known for their prowess in hunting. Like most other hunter-gatherer communities, the Sanye displayed patterns of flexible and relatively egalitarian band organisation, with a council of elders as the governing body. They believed in a supreme being and also believed in the veneration of divine spirits.

The Orma descended from Ethiopia and are said to be remnants of the Galla people of Ethiopia. They have a tall slender physique, and pursue a pastoral lifestyle. They own a distinct breed of cattle, the long-horned Zebu. They are divided into two exogamous sections, further divided into clans which are further divided into sub-clans (Fedders & Salvadori, 2006:32). Traditionally, they only practised monogamy, but with mass conversion to Islam, polygyny came to be allowed. The Orma were ruled by a *Hayu*, who was assisted by two chiefs selected from the two exogamous clans of which the Orma were composed. They had a council of elders selected from the two exogamous clans, who play a great role in social organization. The council's political role is to preside over assemblies and intervene on matters in the political sphere. The social roles of the council include representing the element of tribal life and breaking up feuds among members of their community (Irungu, 2000:14; Fedders & Salvadori, 2006:39). They believed in a higher being associated with the sky, and also in the existence of spirits associated with nature. The majority have converted to Islam, with only a small number still practising the

traditional religion. Where these beliefs are still practised, they are combined with Islamic beliefs (Umar, 2000).

It is evident from the cultural practices before the introduction of the Lamu Cultural Festival that the four indigenous groups were independent of each other, only interacting in the course of trade. The Aweer and the Sanye, being hunter-gatherers, supplied meat products to the pastoralists and agriculturalists (the Orma) in exchange for vegetables and livestock. After emigrating from their original settlements, the Bajuni settled on the Bajun Islands, while the Aweer, Orma and Sanye settled on mainland Lamu. It is also evident that some of the cultural practices of these indigenous communities have been abandoned, due to the introduction of Islam and Christianity, the ban on hunting by the Kenyan government and their removal from their traditional lands (see Section 3.3.5).

Even though the distinct indigenous groups had some contact in the past, there is no evidence that it has been of any significance in contributing towards the goal of the Lamu Cultural Festival organisers to construct a shared Lamu cultural identity. The distinct indigenous groups still conduct their lives independently of each other (as well as of the other ethnic groups), just as they used to do before their migration to Lamu.

### **5.3 Characteristics of the Lamu Cultural Festival**

The Lamu Cultural Festival qualifies as a festival because it is a public, themed celebration for the public, by the public, with a series of performances celebrating the community (Janiskee, 1980:97; Falassi, 1987:52; Getz, 1997). The Lamu Cultural Festival was initiated in 2001 as a celebration of 2000 years of maritime trade and as a festival that had an element of culture, a celebration of both the past and the future, and focuses on the beliefs and traditions of the indigenous communities of Lamu.

The first objective of the Lamu Cultural Festival is promoting a Lamu culture and traditions (identity). According to Okech (2011:197), the Lamu Cultural Festival aspires to create a unifying cultural identity by including various objects from the indigenous groups of Lamu (Aweer, Bajuni, Orma and Sanye). In this regard, Taylor (2001:16) and Waitt (2000:842) comment that the core values in a festival entail maintaining and disseminating the traditional elements of identity, language, territory, history, a common culture and religion, which link festivals not only to identity construction, but simultaneously also to issues of authenticity. However, in many ways, the festival has achieved exactly the

opposite. By bringing the ethnic communities together, the Lamu Cultural Festival has provided an opportunity for them to showcase their cultural values and practices at the Lamu Cultural Festival, and in the process strengthen and even revive distinct ethnic identities, instead of constructing a shared Lamu cultural identity. This is in accordance with Saleh and Ryan's (1993:290) assertion that where several cultural groups are in contact with each other, the distinct indigenous groups tend to cluster in their distinct groups. This argument is also confirmed by Adams and Goldbard (2001, cited in Jepson *et al.*, 2008:11) who claim that through festivals, heterogeneous communities are able to showcase their individual cultural values and ideologies.

The second objective of the festival is to make the people of Lamu understand, value and appreciate their (Lamu) cultural heritage. In the works of a (1994, cited in Derrett, 2003a:49), Frisby and Getz (1989:9) and Getz (1991:22; 1997:19), social and cultural values and experiences are thought to be at the heart of public celebrations. Again, the opposite has been achieved, since the various festival items have given the different indigenous ethnic groups an opportunity to understand, appreciate, revive and preserve their *own* respective cultural heritages, rather than a shared heritage.

The third objective is to promote dialogue between different cultures and civilizations. Festivals are a unique opportunity for communities to promote ethnic understanding through a celebration of local traditions and culture, which is achievable if the festival involves the community and ensures its inclusion and support (Frisby & Getz, 1989; Getz, 1991:24,44, 1997:76; Chacko & Schaffer, 1993:476; Dunstan, 1994, cited in Derrett, 2003a:51; Jeong & Santos, 2004:650; Lade & Jackson, 2004:6). In addition, festivals are closely linked to the values and views that a local community regards as essential to its social identity, history and survival (Falassi, 1987:2). In this respect, the Lamu Cultural Festival has become a platform for the different cultural groups to strengthen and revive their cultural practices and hence their respective ethnic identities. Old traditions are celebrated through dances, crafts and oral performances. The elders tell the youth about their history, and the arts and crafts support narratives on how they conducted their lives in the past. The dances by the different indigenous groups are celebrations of the past, manifestations of the preservation of traditional cultural practices.

The fourth objective is to lay a strong cultural foundation for the present and future youth, so that they will inherit a strong and stable cultural set-up. Research carried out by Owen

(2010:67) on the communities of Lamu suggests that the reasons for the initiation of the festival included reaching out to the youth, who, the elders feared, were losing their cultural values and practices to modernisation. It appears that the Lamu Cultural Festival has indeed created an interest among the youth in their own respective cultural practices and values by representing their respective indigenous groups in the festival activities. From the elders, the youth are able to learn and understand more about their histories and acquaint themselves with their respective traditional trades and skills. Hence, even among the youth, the Lamu Cultural Festival has not succeeded in the construction of a shared Lamu cultural identity, but has strengthened individual group identities.

The fifth objective is to enhance the Lamu tourism industry. In recent years, festivals have become one of the fastest growing tourist attractions globally (Crompton & McKay, 1997; Getz, 1997; Thrane, 2002). Despite the fact that the Lamu Cultural Festival has not succeeded in constructing a Lamu identity, it has stimulated tourism on the island. The Lamu Cultural Festival was created not only to celebrate 2000 years of maritime trade in Lamu, but also to create another tourism season in addition to the Maulidi festival. As a result of the success of the Lamu Cultural Festival, other festivals have been initiated in Lamu, such as the Shela Hat Contest, the Painters' Festival, the Lamu Yoga Festival and the Lamu Food Festival, making Lamu Island the 'Island of Festivals'. In this process, the Lamu Cultural Festival has indeed contributed to promoting Lamu as a tourist destination.

## **5.4 The extent to which the study's aim has been achieved**

### ***5.4.1 Festival items' contribution towards a Lamu identity***

A Lamu cultural identity was not strongly projected through the festival items. Instead, the ethnic identities of the *distinct* indigenous communities were strengthened through the festival items. This is evident in the composition of the teams in the various festival items with the distinct indigenous groups competing against each other. For a festival to qualify as a community festival, it has to include the community's cultural values and practices. Ulrich (1998, cited in Derrett, 2003a:53) and Zukin (1991, cited in Jeong & Santos, 2004:649) indicate a traditional evolutionary pattern according to which community values and practices are developed at the initial stages of the development of any festival. For community festivals to be successful, the community has to be placed at the centre, for without its involvement in the planning and management thereof, it is to be doubted

whether the community, and thus its culture, will be well represented (Dunstan, 1994, cited in Derrett, 2003a:53; Getz, 1991:84; Lade & Jackson, 2004:7).

One of the cultural values and practices that has been accommodated in the Lamu Cultural Festival is the dhow race, which was originally a Bajuni practice. Each dhow has a captain and crew composed of the same indigenous group. Although the dhow is almost a cultural icon of Lamu, few other indigenous communities have learnt the art of dhow sailing. The Bajuni adopted the dhow from the Arab merchants that they traded with after migration from Shungwaya to the Islands (*Star Newspaper*, n.d.\*). The same can be said about the donkey race, another cultural icon that strongly represents Lamu's cultural heritage. With no roads for cars on the island, the donkey is the main mode of transport not only for the Bajuni, but also for the other communities on the other islands. Although most of the different cultural groups participate in the donkey race, it is done in indigenous group context. Therefore the role that it has played in binding the different communities together is dubious. The participation of members of all the distinct indigenous groups in the donkey and dhow races could at best be regarded as the most appealing glimmering of a contribution towards a Lamu collectivity.

As for the dances, the distinct indigenous groups performed their different traditional dances, with three indigenous groups (the Aweer, Orma and Sanye) each performing only a single dance, while the Bajuni and other migrant groups (not originally from Lamu) performed several dances. The dances are a celebration of their past, performed during social cultural practices and for religious purposes. They foster appreciation for the individual identities, as they are linked to a sense of belonging to a particular indigenous group. The dances are strongly based on tradition, thus contributing towards sustaining the respective cultural traditions and cultural identities (see Section 4.6).

Poetry and story-telling, which is a common practice among the four indigenous groups, was also presented at the festival. It served not only to inform the youth of the respective indigenous groups' own historical events, but also about the other cultures in Lamu. Traditional handicrafts and skills demonstrating how the indigenous communities survived before modernization are on display. The artefacts renew a great sense of pride in these ancient traditions to ensure their sustainability in the modern world. These items and skills are also displayed separately, with different indigenous groups showcasing their arts and

crafts. Swimming, which is an everyday event for the Bajuni, is also accommodated in the Lamu Cultural Festival, with other communities also taking part in the competition.

The Bao game, which is regarded as possibly the oldest game in history, and one for the Bajuni are acknowledged for their mastery, is also a festival item. Hence it is almost regarded as a Bajuni's game, with the other communities being the contending groups. Games from the other three communities are not showcased at the Lamu Cultural Festival. The Swahili bridal show and henna painting, which form part of the wedding ceremony, are also part of the Lamu Cultural Festival. Even though the Swahili bridal ceremony is not a traditional practice of any of the four indigenous groups, the Bajuni have completely adopted it, with many members from the other indigenous groups who have also adopted the practice. This could be interpreted as a well-structured attempt to contribute towards a Lamu identity.

It is evident that a number of the Bajuni's cultural practices and values are emphasized at the Lamu Cultural Festival. Of the cultural practices included in the festival, dhow sailing is one of the indigenous groups' practices that has been introduced and accepted by the Lamu festival organisers. It could be argued that if the indigenous groups could be more fully involved in the planning of the Lamu Cultural Festival, more cultural practices can be expected to be itemised, and hence provide more exposure of the indigenous cultures. This could contribute significantly to the construction of the much idealised Lamu cultural identity.

At the Lamu Cultural Festival, different communities take part in the festival items as a way to fulfil their social responsibility towards their specific ethnic group. The production of arts and crafts and the elders teaching the youth about their traditions are ways of revitalizing ethnic culture. During the festival, I found it striking that the youth displayed a keen interest in the festival and specifically in their own cultural practices by means of their participation in these events. With the migration of other communities into Lamu, there is pressure from outside on the indigenous communities to maintain their cultural values and practices. The moment when culture is put under external pressure, things become important; the distinct indigenous groups draw together to protect what is theirs. An example is the Armenians in Bulgaria who have managed to preserve their identity (Tonoyan, 2010). They are skilled artisans in skills traditional to their community. They have tight relationships, support each other and do their best to maintain and conserve their

culture (Tonoyan, 2010). For them, the church plays a great role to bring the Armenians together to preserve their religion and other aspects of their culture (Tonoyan, 2010).

However, one has to realise that culture is complex and that an annual festival such as the Lamu Cultural Festival can contribute much to an eventually shared identity, but can never achieve it by itself. The festival takes place over a period of three to four days in a year, which is insufficient to construct a Lamu cultural identity, since intercultural contact is extremely limited. According to Redfield *et al.* (1936), continuous first-hand contact between individuals of different cultures is an essential ingredient for acculturation to take place. For instance, the Chewa of Malawi have adopted some values from the Tumbuka, with whom they have been in contact since as early as the 16<sup>th</sup> century. This long period of contact has allowed for interactions and an exchange of cultural elements that has encouraged acculturation (Nthala, 2012).

#### **5.4.2 Recommendations**

This dissertation has highlighted the importance of the local community as the backbone of a cultural festival and the role of festivals in creating a cultural identity. The fact that the organisers of the Lamu Cultural Festival did not involve members from all the indigenous groups in the planning process has had the outcome of their not successfully achieving all the stated aims of the festival. The local communities were not involved at any stage, unless it was in a group that was taking part in the festival items, but even this involvement was limited. To turn this trend around, the indigenous groups should come forward with ideas and be consulted in order to make an impact in the planning process. Discussions around areas of the distinct indigenous communities' cultures and identification of their cultural diversity should take place to give the communities a direct voice in the planning and structuring of the Lamu Cultural Festival.

One of the most important recommendations that emerges from the finding is that there is a need to develop practical guidelines for community inclusion in the planning process to achieve the aim of constructing a cultural identity. Limited consultation and the omission of the indigenous communities from the planning process of the festival was evident. The festival organisers and stakeholders need to become aware of their position and the impact they have on festival production in order to remain neutral and support the same goals. Organisers ignored the particular indigenous groups in the planning process, and these

groups were not consulted about their cultural practices. This has to be noted as one of the main shortcomings of the Lamu Cultural Festival, and its failure to make significant progress over a period of at least 15 years since its introduction in constructing a Lamu cultural identity. Hence, consultation with all distinct communities should become a non-negotiable requirement if the organizers are really serious about achieving their main aim.

There is also need to research and understand a heterogeneous community if they are to participate in cultural festivals. The groups' respective cultural practices and values should be understood in order to realise the potential they have in contributing towards the creation of a cultural identity. Such research could provide significant information for the organizers to design a programme that would contribute towards the construction of a shared cultural identity.

To conclude, one might also ask whether the idea of the Lamu Cultural Festival as a vehicle to construct a shared Lamu cultural identity is not too ambitious. Should this festival not rather be approached as a means to learn about one another's cultures in order to develop dialogue, and reciprocal respect and appreciation of one another's cultures? This can be achieved by the involvement of people from all the groups in the planning of the festival. The principle in the planning process should be the creation of opportunities for an appreciation of others' cultures, which would make it more attractive to exchange cultural elements.

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