

“Going vertical” in times of insecurity

Constructing proximity and distance through a Kenyan gated high-rise

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Abstract: The global proliferation of elite high-rise apartments is often read as evidence of social failure, of increasing socioeconomic disparity and fragmentation. The Jaffery Complex, a vertiginous gated high-rise being constructed in the Kenyan port of Mombasa, seems to embody Corbusian ideologies of social transformation based on an explicit distancing from the streets below, insulating its incoming residents from the frequently fused threats of terror, poverty, and crime. However, ethnographic attention to the multistory mosque located within the complex challenges readings of elite stacked housing solutions as “vertical cocoons,” and reveals the tension between proximity and distance that this urban redevelopment strives to construct.

Keywords: architecture, Islamic reform, Mombasa, security, tower block, war on terror

Security in Kenya and the rise of gated living

Looking down at the Kenyan port of Mombasa from the rooftop of the Jaffery Complex, a high-rise gated compound whose residential towers now constitute the city's tallest buildings, I find it hard not to be reminded of Michel de Certeau. Writing of New York in the late 1970s, the French sociologist observed, “To be lifted to the summit of the World Trade Center is to be lifted out of the city's grasp” (1984: 92). The towers I am standing on literally tower over the surrounding city, providing a view of Mombasa like I've never seen it. The colonial-era government bungalows due south of the site look miniscule,

as do the Art Deco “shop-houses” that flank the streets around the marketplace to the north. The noise of Nyerere Avenue, the major thoroughfare on which the Jaffery Complex sits, is much muted. Even Kilindini Harbor, East Africa's largest seaport, looks small from this height. Remembering de Certeau in this moment is perhaps unsurprising: not only is the building I look down from deeply imbued with Corbusian (1987) ideologies of progress and security through elevation that de Certeau's observation is predicated on, but the latter's vantage point from a landmark now so inextricably linked with the war on terror speaks volumes to the Mombasan cityscape within which the Jaffery Complex is being built. It is September 2018,



5 years since the Westgate shopping mall attack rocked the Kenyan capital, and almost exactly 20 years since the coordinated US Embassy bombings in Dar es Salaam and Nairobi. These brought al-Qaeda into public notoriety for the first time, and marked the precocious beginning of the war on terror in East Africa.

In the past two decades, European and North American governments have bankrolled the expansion of security infrastructures across the African continent, and Kenya's privileged place within the US's "security empire" (Besteman 2017) is well documented (Otuki 2017). Security, broadly defined here to encompass a range of constructed threats and associated mitigation strategies, pervades Kenyan government policy and everyday life. That this is the case is unsurprising if we consider Zoltán Glück and Setha Low's (2017) recent invitation to study security through the analytic of scale. Security, the authors observe, is both produced by and productive of social and spatial forces operating at multiple, interlocking levels—from the body, to the neighborhood, the city, national and international. As scholars working in Nairobi have pointed out, this interlocking frequently translates into various urban security concerns—such as violent crime and police corruption—being subsumed under the language of "terror" (Glück 2017). Terrorism in Kenya, as elsewhere, is an amorphous and problematic category but is frequently invoked to explain not just large-scale attacks, like that of Westgate, but also everyday events, from violent burglaries—such individuals are "just terrorists" (Smith 2015)—to the need for a 24-hour security guard ("you've seen the terrorist situation here").

I think of this as the "terrorization of security" in Kenya, a process that spurs a host of *spatial* imaginaries and transformations that in turn underpin various class and racialized dynamics. Mirroring the deeply problematic post-9/11 consensus that positions certain kinds of Muslims as the prime security threat of the present era (Kundnani 2014; Mamdani 2002), Kenyan counterterrorism strategies target Muslims of Somali, Swahili, and Arab descent (Prestholdt

2011; Seesemann 2007). Areas of the country that have long hosted large numbers of these racialized Muslim communities have come to be imagined as harboring "terrorists," increasingly avoided and depopulated by others. This geography of fear frames much of the Kenyan coast, including specific pockets of Mombasa, as well as the Nairobi neighborhood of Eastleigh (Carrier 2016). Together with the increasing division of urban space into safe and unsafe zones, the most pervasive spatial consequence of the ascendance of security is the nationwide explosion of gated residences. Gating as a means to construct race and class status has a long history in Kenya, dating from the residential segregation of the colonial era. However, residential enclosure is increasingly ubiquitous, securitized, and vertical—and ever more significant to the demarcation of social boundaries.

The Jaffery Complex's marketing slogan "Live in Confidence!" captures this conjunction: it strives to locate its incoming residents "out of the city's grasp" (de Certeau 1984: 92), asserting both social and physical distance as a means to construct increasingly interlaced notions of security and status for those who will take up residence within it. From its emergency backup power provisions, state-of-the-art madrasa classrooms to rooftop pool, the Jaffery Complex seems emblematic of high-rise gated compounds around the world, dramatically affecting the local skyline while insulating its residents-to-be—a relatively wealthy and, as is often the case, racialized elite—from the surrounding city. This fits with Stephen Graham's (2018: 177) description of contemporary vertical residences as enabling elites to "to float serenely above the urban landscape," and *literally* look down on the less wealthy. Encompassing a desire to live within yet apart from the city, Graham describes elite housing solutions as "vertical cocoons" (211), allowing the rich to fulfill their "anti-urban fantasies" (177).

However, closer examination of the architectural forms and rationale that shape the Jaffery Complex's construction challenge straightforward readings of elite tower blocks as evidence

of urban secession. Turning to the high-rise “mosque for all” at the center of the compound, I explore the various features—related to architecture and accessibility—that strive to (re)assert a sense of Muslim unity onto the city. As I will show, these spatial interventions invoke notions of Islamic reform as both a security threat and mitigation strategy; this confluence has received little academic attention in Kenya or elsewhere. Attending to the role of Islamic reform in shaping security discourses and spatial transformations in Mombasa nuances our understanding of religion within contemporary Kenyan security formations and contributes to the sparse literature examining the place of piety in processes of residential enclosure. Moreover, in pointing to the relations of proximity and distance that the Jaffery Complex strives to construct, this article challenges the notion of gated high-rises as “vertical cocoons.”

Here I should note the research that underpins this article was largely conducted in 2014 and 2015, when the Jaffery Complex was still under construction. At the time, the looming towers described earlier were merely foundations, and the mosque was still a shell of a building. Thus, the arguments I consider here outline the socio-spatial relations the complex was intended to construct; whether it has achieved these goals is a question for future research.

The Jaffery Complex and its incoming residents

The Jaffery Complex is being constructed by Khoja Ithna-Asheris (hereafter Khojas), Shia Muslims of Gujarati origin who count generations of residence in Mombasa. Khojas constitute one community within Mombasa’s heterogeneous Muslim landscape¹ and tend to be glossed by others as part of the country’s racialized “Asian” minority,² a label with which some also self-identify in particular contexts. Many trace their family’s arrival in East Africa to the mid-nineteenth century but remain excluded from hegemonic national narratives, a legacy of co-

lonial strategies of division (Mangat 1969; Theroux 1997). Today, the minority continue to be referred to as *wageni* (meaning foreigners or guests in Swahili), and stereotyped as insular and exploitative. Although perpetuating narratives that bring their Kenyan-ness into question, Khojas’ ascription as “Asian” means they are *not* the target of police roundups in the way other racialized communities of Muslim background are. Unlike those of Somali, Swahili, and Arab descent, Khojas are generally not assumed to be “terrorists” in the national imaginary, and remain largely protected from counterterrorism initiatives by enduring notions of race and class privilege. However, as I will demonstrate through the example of the Jaffery Complex, their lives and daily struggles are deeply implicated in the processes of securitization that have structured urban life for two decades.

The Jaffery Complex is being built on an area of prime real estate toward the southern end of the island that forms central Mombasa. This particular patch of land—not much bigger than the cricket field it encompasses—has been owned by the Khoja *jamaat* since the early twentieth century, donated to the community for use as a sports ground by the wealthy scions who originally owned it. The site has housed a cricket pitch and a modest Art Deco sports pavilion since the 1930s and has long served as a gathering point for Khoja men. This changed in 2012 when ground was broken to commence construction of the Jaffery Complex. The new site’s impressive verticality stems in part from the decision to preserve the cricket pitch at its heart: this is hallowed community ground, regardless of the fact that cricket now lags well behind Facebook and soccer as a source of urban amusement. When completed, the pitch will be hemmed in by a host of high-rise buildings, including three residential towers (currently the tallest buildings in Mombasa), a multistory mosque and an adjacent suite of religious facilities, as well as a leisure center, a commercial zone, and a “nerve center” that centralizes the complex’s extensive security features. The site is enclosed by a perimeter wall, topped with

barbed wire and glass, with a single entrance controlled by private security guards. The stringency of entrance regulations has yet to be investigated; however, at least in principle, access is granted to anyone wishing to attend the mosque on Fridays.

In line with its goals of promoting living standards and security via the complex, the Khoja *jamaat* has institutionalized a three-tier payment system to enable individuals and families of varying socioeconomic status to relocate. Wealthy members of the community are encouraged to buy outright, while a second tier of apartments provides for those who can afford 8- to 10-year payment schemes. A third category of flats will be given freely or rented out for “bare minimum rates,” enabling, in one project manager’s words, “poorer households to start saving.” The Jaffery Complex will not only promote Khoja residential relocation, but also replaces the religious institutions—two mosques and an *imambargah* (congregation hall)—that have been the focal point of community life for more than a century. These religious buildings were located in Mombasa’s Old Town, an area that in 2014 also housed about 40 percent of Khojas, according to *jamaat* estimates. As the name suggests, Old Town is the historic heart of the city, and long served as its residential, commercial, and religious epicenter. Today, the area more frequently emerges in public discourse as a site of poverty, religious fundamentalism, and drug-abuse. Moreover, echoing the fusing of crime and terror observed in Nairobi (Glück 2017; Smith 2015), Old Town’s labyrinthine streets are seen as particularly difficult to police and secure: many worry that “terrorists” and gangsters lurk in their depths.

Coping with insecurity in Mombasa: Constructing safety and status through vertical secession

A cursory glance at NGO and press reports from around 2014 gives a sense of the cycles of violence in and around Mombasa during the

period in which the bulk of this research was carried out. In addition to the systematic persecution of Muslim men by the police³ (HAKI Africa 2016; Muhuri 2013), violent raids on mosques and the shooting of Muslim clerics and youth leaders occurred frequently, almost always at the hands of state security forces (Al Jazeera 2014; New Humanitarian 2014). During this same period, grenade attacks on buses and police vehicles, targeted shootings, and the recovery of explosives were regular occurrences in Mombasa. An egregious attack on the town of Mpeketoni some three hundred kilometers north—in which armed attackers murdered some 60 people—was linked by senior Kenyan politicians to the Mombasa Republican Council, a secessionist organization whose prominence has waxed and waned at the coast over the past two decades (The Star 2014). Despite being claimed by al-Shabaab, this discursive linkage by prominent public figures further cemented the perceived connection between Mombasa and terror. Among Mombasan residents themselves, the shooting of two white, female tourists in separate incidents in Old Town in June and July 2014 did much to fuel this imaginary. While the first was initially assumed to be a robbery gone wrong, the second shooting, less than two weeks later, left the city on edge. The latter involved a young woman, killed in broad daylight near the northern edge of the neighborhood. She was shot in the back of the neck, a fact confirmed via the photographs that circulated like wildfire on WhatsApp. Although nothing conclusive emerged from investigations into these incidents, the targeted nature of the killing led many to believe al-Shabaab was responsible. In the aftermath of these killings, Old Town was plastered with wanted posters, offering rewards for men found “dead or alive.” The posters did not specify what these men were suspected of but served to underscore the imaginary of Old Town as a perilous place.

The changing character of Old Town—from residential and religious hub to a place many would now rather abandon—is also frequently linked to the large numbers of Somalis who

have settled there since the intensification of the Somali Civil War in the 1990s. In the words of Fatima,⁴ an aging Khoja preacher, “Old Town used to be so safe. Now it’s full of druggies and terrorists. It’s all since the Somalis came.” Fatima, who had been allocated an apartment in the Jaffery Complex in thanks for her services to the community, could not wait to get out of the area. Her fear of “others”—a driving force behind gating more broadly (Low 2004)—speaks to national narratives that position Somalis as a key threat to security because of their shared ethnicity and alleged sympathies with the Somalia-based militant group al-Shabaab.

It was against this backdrop that the Jaffery Complex was being built. Reflecting the security discourses that divide Nairobi into safe and unsafe zones, one of its primary goals is to construct distance from Old Town, an area increasingly imagined as both dangerous and impoverished. Anisa, a Khoja teacher and part-time graphic designer, explained her family’s decision to register for an apartment within the Jaffery Complex as coming right after the shootings of the white tourists. “This terrorist situation, it’s worrying,” she confided one day as we were waiting for an afternoon majlis (sermon) to start. “Look at these two shot in Old Town . . . our family elsewhere are ringing us, worried. Mombasa is not such a place.” Anisa shook her head and continued, “We’re planning to move to Jaffery—inshallah the apartments will be completed soon. But I don’t know, everything depends on what happens with all this *fujjo* [chaos].” Detailing the features of the Jaffery Complex that helped assuage her growing sense of insecurity in the city, Anisa was particularly impressed by the plans to install a biodigester, a water and waste treatment facility that uses osmosis to process water on-site. “Just imagine if they bombed the bridges . . .” she paused pensively, referring to the city center’s alleged vulnerability to being cut off from the surrounding mainland.⁵ “At least with the biodigester, we’ll have water.” This is emblematic of the increasingly ubiquitous and domesticated nature of efforts to

reduce the threat of insecurity in the contemporary era, and indicates the preemptive form of such risk management strategies: as Jon Coaffee and David Murakami Wood (2006: 504) observed more than a decade ago, “security is coming home.”

Old Town not only potentially harbors terrorists but is also now positioned as a particularly poor neighborhood. To quote one of the complex’s key architects, the project is motivated in part by the need to provide social and economic “upliftment” for Khojas who continue to live there. The juxtaposition between the Jaffery Complex and the religious and residential facilities it is intended to replace is emphasized in various progress reports available online. In one YouTube clip, the camera depicts tuk-tuks and cyclists struggling past the waterlogged, dilapidated entrance of Hyderi, the main Khoja religious hall in Old Town (in use until mid-2015). We then pan to an aerial view of the pristine new mosque at the Jaffery Complex—gleaming cars parked carefully in front of the looming, freshly painted building. Moreover, when I mentioned the biodigester Anisa had valorized in security terms to Faraj, the chairperson of a local school, he smiled broadly: “Top of the range! None of the other communities have this.” His approval indicates the close interplay of security and class that has become a defining feature of urban living in Kenya and beyond (Davis 1992; Searle 2013). As Constance Smith has observed in Nairobi, “architectures of security are also markers of exclusivity” (2015: 144). She describes the securitization of domestic space on a colonial-era housing estate—with houses increasingly protected via hedges, fences, and padlocked verandas—in terms of the “desirability of [the] enclave” (145).

These infrastructures mimic images portrayed on billboards throughout Nairobi (as well as in Kenyan cyberspace), and materialized in the elaborate security apparatuses that envelop sites of leisure and residency frequented by the city’s elite. Fences are symbolic of having “made it”—precisely because they tap into globally circulating and nationally omnipres-

ent security ideologies. Similarly, via the Jaffery Complex, Khojas often presented themselves as "catching up" with other Mombasan communities who have already sought estate-style residential segregation. Chatting with Sabiha one morning as she fried samosas in a cauldron of oil, I came to see Mombasa through the hierarchy of gating that she painted. Invoking two other Muslim communities of Gujarati origin, Sabiha remarked, "The Ismailis have had proper housing for so long, even the Memons now have. It's time we joined the club!" Detailing the amenities and security afforded by such compounds, there was no mistaking that "proper" was associated with gating in Sabiha's discourse, implying the sense of social inadequacy associated with its lack. Her comments construe a variegated middle class, status within which is in part measured via the enclave.

However, the flimsy tin gates, low-rise walls, and itinerant security guards that protect older housing colonies in parts of Mombasa are being eclipsed by increasingly vertical and securitized residences, understood to better respond to the threats of the contemporary era. Verticality, class, and security here should be understood as fundamentally linked: living in what is ultimately a high-rise advertisement of class privilege simultaneously asserts wealth and confidence in the security structures that protect that wealth. Khojas mobilize securitized infrastructures in order to improve their sense of safety through the reinscription of class and racial distance—distinctions acutely marked in space through height.

As shown, many of the site's features insulate Jaffery from the urban fabric that surrounds it, projecting status and separation onto an unequal urban landscape infused with security fears. However, rather than simply being evidence of urban secession, the complex is also a means through which Khojas attempt to assert and construct new solidarities onto the cityscape. The Jaffery Complex, I want to suggest, is as much about outreach as it is retreat. This becomes especially clear if we turn to its mosque and the issue of Islamic reform.

Islamic reform in Mombasa: Intersections with security and space

The Mombasan Muslims I spent time with—whether of Swahili, Arab, or Gujarati origin—were universally critical of the Kenyan state's broad-brush attacks on Muslims in general, condemning government raids on mosques and roundups of coastal youth. However, a persistent and widespread concern posited a link between rising insecurity and the resurgence of Islamic reform in the region, a confluence absent from existing ethnographies of security in Kenya or, to my knowledge, elsewhere. Glossing significant geographic and temporal variations that are beyond the scope of this article, the term Islamic reform links "projects whose specific focus is the brining into line of religious beliefs and practices with what are held to be the core foundations of Islam" (Osella and Osella 2013: xi), and its resurgence has a long history along the Kenyan coast. The evolutionary narrative painted by my interlocutors from a broad range of Sunni and Shia communities depicted a harmonious Muslim past, marked by acceptance of the diversity of beliefs and practices found among littoral Muslims. This harmony is said to have started to fracture in the 1970s—frequently aligned explicitly to the Saudi oil boom and ensuing expansion of "Wahhabism" at the coast. Wahhabi is a term used by people in Mombasa who do *not* imagine themselves as part of this social category, glossing a broad constellation of Muslims who are construed as linked to financial and doctrinal sources stemming from the Arabian Gulf, and imagined by their others as a group—united by their "rejection of a wide range of practices . . . [cast] as unacceptable religious innovation (*bid'a*)" (Kresse 2007: 230).

In the early 2000s, a vitriolic war of words was being waged through pamphlets circulating between reformists and their others at the coast, debating the Islamic foundations—or their lack—of practices such as Muharram commemorations or the celebration of the Prophet's birthday (Kresse 2007). As observed among Muslim

communities around the world (e.g., Osella and Osella 2013), a straightforward dichotomy between Wahhabis and their others does not stand up to ethnographic scrutiny: not only are reformist positions far more heterogeneous than the “Wahhabi” label allows, many allegedly “customary” practices encompass histories that trouble their categorization as *bidʿa* (e.g., Seesemann 2006). However, so foundational are discussions around what counts as *bidʿa* and what does not that Kai Kresse (2006) has argued the debate is *itself* an integral aspect of Muslim life along the Kenyan coast. Reform, in other words, infuses belief and practice for all of Mombasa’s Muslims, including for the many who despise and deride Wahhabis.

By the time of my research, a decade after the aforementioned publications from Kresse, sectarian tensions were widely perceived to have worsened. Indeed, especially given the growing prominence and prevalence of attacks committed by militant group al-Shabaab—known for its adherence to the theology of al-Wahhab and hostility toward allegedly less reformist Muslims—many feared it was only a matter of time before disagreements over orthodoxy translated into violence. A broad spectrum of the Mombasans I spent time with believed a violent attack at the hands of reformists was a question of when, not if. “Wahhabis kill other Muslims because they say we have deviated, that we are doing *bidʿa*,” Reza noted, moving slowly over the word kill for emphasis. He believed Khojas were a particularly likely future target because of their adherence to Shiism: “If a Wahhabi sheds the blood of a Shia, they believe he goes straight to *jannah* [paradise].” For Reza, the only solution to this impending security threat was the abandonment of communal insularity for which Khojas are stereotyped and themselves frequently decried: “We’re always going to be cold targets for Wahhabis until we open our doors.”

Malik, a friend who described himself as Mombasa’s second most successful spare parts dealer, proffered a similar conclusion: “Today, there is *some* anti-Shia sentiment in Mombasa.

But a time will come when there’s violence as in other places—think of Iraq, India, Nigeria. Before it comes, let us tell them who we are. We are too insular. We need to accommodate everyone. Wahhabis accept everyone. This is one lesson we can learn from them.” Apparent confirmation of the gradually encroaching sectarian violence evoked by Reza and Malik came in the wake of a deadly attack on a Shia mosque in the South African city of Durban in 2018, some four years after these conversations. Hayat, another of my interlocutors sent me a WhatsApp message: “You see? It’s getting closer.”

The pervasive effects of reform, as both foundational to coastal Muslim life *and* a threat in the shape of Wahhabism, manifest spatially in various ways. Reform marks space sonorously—Andrew Eisenberg (2013) finds marked differences between the khutbah (Friday sermon) broadcast from reformist mosques, which focus on global Muslim politics much more than the attention to pious behavior heard from older Swahili mosques—as much as in concrete. Any mosque that is particularly lavishly refurbished is “known” to have been taken over by Wahhabis, seen as evidence of the Saudi wealth frequently associated with the theology. Particular mosques and areas of the city, especially in the northern part of Old Town and the neighborhood of Majengo, are thought to be Wahhabi strongholds and avoided by others. Here, the fear of Wahhabis conflates with and exacerbates the perceived threat posed by Somalis, who are frequently believed to follow the same theology of al-Shabaab. That most ethnic Somalis are Shafiʿi Sunni (not Wahhabi), and that Wahhabism has a long history in Mombasa that well predates the expansion of the city’s Somali population, does little to dislodge these stereotypes.

While critiques of Wahhabism manifest discursively and spatially, it is important to note that almost all mosques built in the past 20 years nevertheless demonstrate an engagement with reform as highlighted by Kresse (2006). The vast majority of recent mosque design in Mombasa, regardless of who is building, avoids what are now thought of as “traditional” features, such as

the onion-shaped domes or ornate plasterwork of the nineteenth- and early twentieth-century mosques built by communities of Gujarati origin, or the iconic cone shape of Swahili mosques from earlier eras. As Nooria surmised on one occasion, “Those domes mean you’re still stuck in tradition.” Also out of fashion is the religious institution that blends with the surrounding environment, failing to advertise itself as a Muslim place of worship: to quote Nooria again, “A mosque needs to look like a mosque!” Similar architectural trends have been noted in the literature on mosque design in Europe (Saleem 2013; Verkaaik 2012) and indicate the widespread significance of the reformist dictum to shed allegedly “un-Islamic” cultural practices and forms of expression: communities who are heavily critical of Wahhabism nevertheless evidence their dialogues with reform in concrete.

High-rise solidarities? Islamic reform and the pursuit of security

The multistory mosque at the heart of the Jaffery Complex was opened in May 2015, long before the residential towers were completed. With the opening only a few weeks away, I asked Malik how he felt about the upcoming move, away from the religious institutions in Old Town that had long been the focal point of Khoja community life. “Oh, it’s great!” he exclaimed, referencing the fact that the two older mosques and religious hall would be transformed into a hospital and school for the area’s residents. “Plus,” he went on, “you can walk past Hyderi without even knowing it’s a mosque. With Jaffery, we’re going vertical! All of Mombasa can see our connection to Allah.” Here Malik contrasts Hyderi—the low-rise building on a narrow, mostly pedestrian street in Old Town that does not bear any “obvious” indications of being a Muslim place of worship from street level—with the Jaffery Complex mosque. For Malik, the mosque’s height, location on one of Mombasa’s central arteries, and “Islamic” architectural features—such as the elongated tower from which the *adhan* (call

to prayer) is broadcast—served to underscore Khoja Muslim-ness in a way that Hyderi had not. The mosque’s verticality is significant here, a proud assertion of Islam for all of Mombasa to see. Not only was the Jaffery mosque far more visible and visibly Muslim, but for Malik it symbolized a much-valored Muslim unity: “The design says it all,” he asserted. “This is a mosque for all Muslims.”

Reference to the “mosque for all” was repeated by most I talked to about the Jaffery Complex, who, like Malik, were keen to emphasize the appeals to Muslim unity enshrined in the architecture itself. On my first tour of the site, when many buildings were still only foundations, Rabi Jalal, chief overseer of the construction work, described his efforts to communicate “neutrality” through the design of the arches that adorn the exterior of the mosque and adjacent religious complex. Asking what afforded these arches, which rise in an ogee-style pinnacle, their “neutrality,” Rabi explained it was the lengths he had gone to in ensuring they did not conjure immediate associations with a particular Muslim tradition. “I looked at many books and websites, researching what is a coastal arch, a Persian, a Turkish,” Rabi explained, “I wanted to make sure that [our arch] doesn’t reflect any particular thing. I wanted a neutral thing.” Rabi similarly lauded the tiles, then stacked on the floor and now plastered to the exterior and interior of the mosque: “They all say very neutral things, like the names of Allah.” He went on to joke, “As you can see, there’s no cultural baggage here.”

Rabi framed his desire for pan-Islamic neutrality squarely in terms of outreach. Attentive to the geographical and sectarian histories embedded in specific architectural features, these were precisely the particularities Rabi was concerned to avoid. This public relations project was essential, according to Rabi and others, in light of the growing sectarian tensions in the city. Echoing Reza and Malik’s assertions of the need for greater outreach described earlier, the building’s verticality and “pan-Islamic” features—presented as conspicuously Muslim but not sectarian—attempt to mark in concrete the

affinities between Khojas and other Muslims at the coast, as much as Khoja commitment to a culturally “unadulterated” Islam. Here we see that Jaffery draws on an architectural vocabulary of reform in order to emphasize Muslimness over Khoja-ness, enabling Khojas to downplay their difference and assert their place as Muslims within Mombasa and the wider *umma* (community) (for a similar analysis of the Comorian reform movement in interwar Zanzibar, see Bang, forthcoming). Reform may be a particularly significant and useful strategy for Khojas, given their status as a racialized and Shia minority within the city’s heterogeneous Muslim landscape. In creating a highly visible, visibly Muslim, and explicitly nonsectarian mosque open to all, Khojas seek to shed some of the associations seen to divide them from other Muslims at the coast.

Moreover, the mosque, although not open at the time of my initial research, has institutionalized an open-door policy for Friday prayers, a marked contrast to older Khoja religious institutions, which, although not specifically off-limits to outsiders, were largely perceived as inaccessible to non-Khojas. Those I have spoken to since the Jaffery mosque opened have lauded the growing non-Khoja population who attend on Fridays, as well as the frequent events held in the grounds in front of the mosque; these include the fast-breaking iftar during Ramadan and free medical camps for less wealthy communities, bringing together Muslims from across the city. The mosque remains enclosed within a gated compound, and the extent to which outsiders feel welcome and able to access its religious facilities has yet to be ascertained. However, at least in principle, the Jaffery Complex strives to reach out to a wider Muslim populace, and serves as an antidote to the divisions mobilized by Wahhabis.

These decisions relating to architecture and access index intersections between notions of security and Islamic reform, and their effects on urban space. The relationship between these two globally circulating discourses is largely absent from the sparse literature on religious residen-

tial enclosure (Çavdar 2016; Ukah 2016), and merely alluded to in the literature on mosque construction (Saleem 2013; Verkaaik 2012). Building on this scholarship, my contention here is that Khojas respond to fears of violent attack from Wahhabis through architectural appeals to Islamic reform. Even if Wahhabis are also frequently critiqued, demonstrating one’s commitment to an Islam *positioned* as unbounded by history and geography has become a way of mitigating insecurity in a context marked by growing fears of religiously motivated violence. The open-door policy, arches, and tile work of the Jaffery Complex attempt to mark in concrete the religious affinities between Khojas and other Muslims at the coast, striving to reduce the specter of sectarian violence associated with the oft-linked rise of Wahhabism and terror in the region. Demonstrating one’s adherence to Islamic reform, at least to a certain extent, is seen to both reduce the risk of attack by Wahhabis and help (re)assert the Muslim solidarity imagined as needed to combat the violence associated with growing sectarianism.

Conclusion: Elite stacked housing beyond the “vertical cocoon”

This article has traced some of the socio-spatial transformations enacted by a Muslim community in Mombasa in response to intersecting security concerns. The Jaffery Complex pursues security for Khojas through retreat, carving an enclosed urban space that is believed to be more resistant to a range of threats, from terrorist attacks to crime and poverty. Many of the features that provide security also assert status, confirming the centrality of gating to spatialized configurations of class and race in contemporary Kenya. As I have highlighted, Jaffery’s verticality emphasizes distance and difference even more so than older patterns of gating, and the heightened visibility afforded by verticality suggests confidence in the security apparatuses that protect its exclusivity. With extensive security features and on-site amenities that keep Khojas

insulated from the surrounding city, the Jaffery Complex fits appropriately under the banner of “vertical cocoon” (Graham 2018: 211) and in many ways emerges as emblematic of the global trend to construct security and status through vertical urban secession.

However, as I have shown, the multistory mosque at the center of the site complicates this picture. The mosque, which overlooks a prominent thoroughfare and is visible from some distance, draws on architectural features portrayed as explicitly Muslim but nonsectarian as a means to reassert Muslim unity in a moment of heightened divisions. Features such as “neutral” arches and tile work enable Khojas, a racialized and Shia minority, to downplay their differences with other Muslims, employing architectural appeals to Islamic reform as a means of mitigating the sectarianism believed to have been stoked by Wahhabi reformists. In this sense, Khojas mobilize an extremely visible and vertical materialization of reform as a means to assert themselves as part of the local and global *umma*, and stress their reformist credentials in a moment when attack from more hardline reformists is increasingly feared. Islamic reform emerges as a security threat within Mombasan narratives, as much as a means to mitigate that threat. Returning to the approach to security offered by Glück and Low (2017), we see security is both produced by and productive of Islamic reform, with consequences that materialize in urban transformations and the social relations these strive to construct.

The Jaffery Complex nuances our understanding of the intersections of security, piety, and urban space. I have argued ethnographic attention to the gated high-rise challenges straightforward readings of the “vertical cocoon,” and exposes the tensions between proximity and distance that residences such as Jaffery strive to construct. Elite stacked housing solutions should not simply be analyzed as evidence of urban failure and fragmentation; rather, these infrastructures may attempt to perpetuate various forms of social division while reducing others. The Jaffery Complex also draws attention

to the significance of piety and religion within the global phenomenon of elite verticalization, and highlights the significance of Islamic reform within contemporary security formations. These entanglements call for further research within Kenya and beyond.

Acknowledgments

Many thanks to Constance Smith and Saffron Woodcraft for instigating and supporting this *Focaal* theme section, as well as to the three anonymous reviewers, whose suggestions significantly strengthened this article. I am deeply grateful to the Mombasans whose experiences form the basis of the argument presented here, as well as to Edward Simpson and Parvathi Raman for their input into earlier iterations of these ideas. This research was generously supported by the UK Economic and Social Research Council.

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Notes

1. Mombasan Muslims define themselves in relation to each other in terms of both sectarian affiliation and genealogy. Shafi'i Sunnis are the most numerous, both in Mombasa and throughout East Africa; in Mombasa, these include Swahilis, Somalis, and people from Mijikenda communities who trace their origins to the coastal hinterland. A large number of Muslim communities of Gujarati origin reside in the city, each counting a few thousand members. These include Hanafi Sunnis (such as Memons, Luhars,

and Bhadalas), as well as Shias (Daudi Bohras, Khoja Ismailis, and Khoja Ithna-Asheris. There is also a growing number of Ithna-Asheri converts of Swahili and Mijikenda descent). Finally, an increasing number of Mombasans are said to adhere to the doctrine of the eighteenth century theologian Muhammad ibn Abd al-Wahhab.

2. In Kenya, "Asian" refers exclusively to those of South Asian provenance.
3. HAKI Africa, a Mombasa-based human rights organization, documented 80 cases of killings and disappearances on the Kenyan coast between 2012 and 2016.
4. Informants' names are pseudonyms.
5. Mombasa is centered on an island, connected to the surrounding mainland by Nyalı Bridge, Makupa Causeway, and the Likoni Ferry.

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