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(91) CHRISTIANITY IN TANZANIA

Laurenti Magesa

Religion	Pop 2010	Pct 2010	Pop 2025	Pct 2025	Gr Pct 1970 2025
Christians	25,303,000	55.4%	41,939,000	58.2%	3.4%
Independents	998,000	2.2%	1,700,000	2.4%	3.6%
African initiated	239,000	0.5%			
Orthodox	13,100	0.0%	13,300	0.0%	0.1%
Protestants	13,955,000	30.6%	19,300,000	26.8%	2.2%
Lutheran	5,601,000	12.3%			
Anglicans	3,318,000	7.3%			
Pentecostal	1,799,000	3.9%			
Baptist	1,035,000	2.3%			
Nondenominational	762,000	1.7%			
Adventist	619,000	1.4%			
Moravian	587,000	1.3%			
Roman Catholics	12,826,000	28.1%	20,600,000	28.6%	3.2%
<i>Evangelicals</i>	7,541,000	16.5%	10,962,000	15.2%	2.5%
<i>Pentecostals/Charismatics</i>	4,906,000	10.7%	7,500,000	10.4%	2.9%
Muslims	14,221,000	31.2%	22,420,000	31.1%	3.1%
adherents of traditional African religions	5,327,000	11.7%	6,405,000	8.9%	1.2%
Hindus	389,000	0.9%	620,000	0.9%	3.2%
Baha'is	191,000	0.4%	310,000	0.4%	3.3%
Chinese folk-religionists	23,800	0.1%	35,000	0.0%	2.6%
Sikhs	13,500	0.0%	20,000	0.0%	2.7%
Buddhists	10,200	0.0%	15,000	0.0%	2.6%
Jains	9,900	0.0%	13,000	0.0%	1.9%
Jews	290	0.0%	300	0.0%	0.1%
Zoroastrians	140	0.0%	150	0.0%	0.7%
people professing no religion	160,000	0.4%	255,000	0.4%	3.1%
Total population	45,649,000	100.0%	72,033,000	100.0%	3.1%

Source: Centre for the Study of World Christianity (CSGC), Boston, Gordon-Conwell TS

Introduction

Tanzania lies on the east coast of Africa, between 28 and 41 degrees longitude and 1 and 12 degrees latitude south. It borders the Indian Ocean to the east, Lake Victoria, Kenya and Uganda to the north,

Rwanda and Burundi to the north-east, Lake Tanganyika and the Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC) to the west, Zambia to the south-west, and Lake Malawi (or Nyasa), Malawi, and the Ruvuma River and Mozambique to the south. Its total land area is 945,087 square kilometres or 364,900 square miles, inclusive of the offshore the Island of Zanzibar.¹

The United Republic of Tanzania (*Jamhuri ya Muungano wa Tanzania* in Kiswahili, Tanzania's national language) came into existence following a political union in 1964 between the mainland, Tanganyika, and Zanzibar. According to the 2012 national census, Tanzania has a total population of approximately 45 million people, with 43.6 million on the mainland and 1.4 in Zanzibar. The population is divided almost equally between genders. The great majority of the people (approximately 80%) live in rural areas, although there is now a rapid movement to urban centres.²

Official surveys by religious affiliation were outlawed in Tanzania since 1967. Therefore, apart from imprecise estimates by private observers, sociologists and religious leaders, there is no accurate data about this. Indications are, however, that Muslims, Christians and adherents of African Indigenous Religion comprise about 90% of the population, each with approximately 30%. The remaining 10% is made up of various other faiths, including African Initiated/Independent churches (AICs). Buddhism, Hinduism and Sikhism originated mainly from India and the Far East, and their membership is practically confined to the people of these ethnicities. Whereas there is an uneven mixture of these religions in mainland Tanzania, Zanzibar is 98-99% Muslim.³

Early Christian Missions

The denominations to which most Tanzanian Christians belong include the Roman Catholic, Anglican and Lutheran churches. There also exist, in smaller numbers, the Salvation Army, the Seventh Day Adventists, the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter Day Saints, the African Inland Mission/Church, the Mennonite Church and the Jehovah's Witnesses. Apart from the earlier Pentecostal missions in the country, such as the Assemblies of God, the Swedish Free Mission, the Pentecostal Assemblies of God and the Pentecostal Evangelistic Fellowship, there are now a growing number of new Evangelical and Pentecostal groups, many originating from overseas. In the last fifty years, there have also arisen a number of African Initiated Churches (also known as African Independent or African Founded Churches, or AICs). All these are found in varying degrees of influence across the country.

Although some Catholic Dominican and Augustinian friars had done some missionary work in Zanzibar by the very end of the sixteenth century in the wake of the Portuguese exploration of the East Coast of Africa, results were meagre. Christianity soon disappeared there until the mid-nineteenth century.⁴ Under the umbrella of the Anglican Church Missionary Society (CMS) from London, Johann Ludwig Krapf arrived in Zanzibar in 1844, to be joined shortly by Johann Rebmann. Krapf's interests, however, lay among the Oromo of Ethiopia, so that he almost immediately moved his operational headquarters to Rabai Mpya in Kilifi, Kenya. There he composed the first-ever Swahili-English dictionary and translated various books of the Bible into Kiswahili, exceptional legacies for mission work, even for Tanzania. Although Rebmann visited the Kilimanjaro region, he did not engage in any significant evangelizing there.

¹ <http://geography.about.com/library/cia/blctanzania.htm>.

² The United Republic of Tanzania. *Tanzania in Figures 2012* www.nbs.go.tz/takwimu/references/Tanzania_in_figures2012.pdf (accessed 12 February 2015) and <http://ccs.ukzn.ac.za/files/madulu.pfd>

³ John Baur, *2000 Years of Christianity in Africa: An African Church History* (Nairobi: Paulines Publications Africa, second edn. 2009), 439.

⁴ Lucas Malishi, *A History of the Catholic Church in Tanzania* (Dar es Salaam: Tanzania Episcopal Conference, 1990), 11-13.

Missions with an Enduring Impact⁵

Protestant Missions

The beginning of Christian missions in Tanzania with a lasting impact may be dated to the 1860s. In 1864, Bishop William Georg Tozer and Dr Edward Steere of the London-based Universities Mission to Central Africa (UMCA) arrived in Zanzibar in response to the appeals of the traveller David Livingstone. Tozer and Steere began their work by redeeming and baptizing slaves. Soon they were joined by others, including some women missionaries. The UMCA established a college and printing press in Zanzibar. The mission quickly moved northwards to the Usambara region, at Magila near Tanga. Other mission stations were later established at Masasi and Likoma Island in Lake Nyasa, as well as other places in southern Tanzania.

In the wake of the German occupation of coastal Tanzania after the 1884-1885 Berlin Conference that agreed on the partitioning of Africa among the European powers of the day, missionaries of the German Lutheran Evangelical Missionary Society (EMS) for East Africa, or Berlin III (later to be renamed the Bethel Mission) came to Tanzania. Johann Jacob Greiner arrived in Dar es Salaam at Kigamboni in 1887. Despite resistance from the Arabs, the Bethel Mission expanded to Kisarawe and beyond. Three years later, August Kramer established a mission and school in Tanga. Within a few years, more stations were opened in several areas around the Usambara Mountains and elsewhere in the country. In 1910, Ernst Johansen arrived in Bukoba, northwest of Lake Victoria, and established mission stations there.

Evangelists from the Berlin Missionary Society, or Berlin I, settled at Ipagika or Pipagika near Lake Nyasa in 1891. They quickly spread out towards Mbeya and Iringa in the Southern Highlands region. Then, in 1893, another group of German missionaries from the Leipzig Mission Society, took up residence in Old Moshi, Machame, and elsewhere in the Kilimanjaro, Pare and Meru regions in north-eastern Tanzania.⁶ At almost the same time, the Moravians, also from Germany, settled in the Rungwe area north of Lake Nyasa, and soon moved further north to Rukwa around Lake Tanganyika and Unyamwezi in the Tabora region.

The Lonon- Missionary Society, to which Livingstone belonged, had missionaries in Nassa on the east of Lake Victoria by 1887. They were replaced there by the American-founded African Inland Mission/Church (AIM/AIC) in 1897. The Seventh Day Adventists (SDA), also of American origin, arrived in Tanzania in 1903. From Dar es Salaam, they spread to Pare and north-westwards to Mara and Shinyanga around Lake Victoria. By the beginning of the twentieth century, Anglican and Lutheran missions were already present in many parts of the country.⁷

Catholic Missions

Priests of the Catholic Congregation of the Holy Ghost Fathers (HGF) arrived in Zanzibar in 1863. Like the Anglicans, they also evangelized ransomed slaves. In 1868, they established a mission station at Bagamoyo. From there they built other stations in the neighbouring Morogoro area. Some HGF went northward and worked among the Chagga people around Mount Kilimanjaro. Another group of Catholic

⁵ Carl-Erick Sahlberg, *From Krapf to Rugambwa: A Church History of Tanzania* (Nairobi: Evangel Publishing House, 1986) provides an excellent presentation on this subject.

⁶ These German-founded Lutheran churches entered into an alliance in 1938 called the Federation of Lutheran Churches in Tanganyika. In 1964, it became the Evangelical Lutheran Church in Tanzania (ELCT). The Church has 22 Dioceses: North Western, North Eastern, Pare, Northern, North Central, Karagwe, Central, Southern, Konde, South Central, Ulanga /Kilombero, Eastern and Coastal, Mbulu, Iringa, Dodoma, East of Lake Victoria, Mara, Meru, South Western, Morogoro, South East of Lake Victoria, and South Eastern. www.elct.org

⁷ At the moment, the Anglican Dioceses in Tanzania are: Central Tanganyika, Dar es Salaam, Kagera, Kibondo, Kondoa, Lweru, Mara, Masasi, Morogoro, Mount Kilimanjaro, Mpwapwa, Newala, Rift Valley, Ruaha, Rorya, Ruvuma, Shinyanga, South-West Tanganyika, Southern Highlands, Tabora, Tanga, Tarime, Victoria Nyanza, Western Tanganyika, Zanzibar, Kiteto, and Lake Rukwa. See www.episcopalchurch.org/anglican.province/anglican-church-tanzania

missionaries, the White Fathers (WF) arrived in Zanzibar in 1878, and in the 1890s successively established posts at Bukumbi near Mwanza and in the Tabora, Kabanga and Karema regions, the latter two near Lake Tanganyika. At the same time, another group of WF arrived in Bukoba from Uganda and founded stations at Rubya, Kagondo and Kashozi. Their female counterparts, the White Sisters, joined them in 1902.

Arriving in Tanzania in January 1888, the Roman Catholic Benedictine Friars (OSB) and Sisters settled at Pugu near Dar es Salaam. The Order had to withdraw briefly on account of political complications, but they returned to Kurasini the following year. They expanded their missions southwards to the Lindi, Masasi and Iringa regions (at Lukuledi, Nyangao, Peramiho and Tosomaganga). Later they set up other stations at Ndanda, Mahenge, and in Dodoma at Bihawana. By the 1890s, they were working in Kibosho and Kilema (Kilimanjaro) and Tanga. Carl-Erik Sahlberg notes that, by 1914, the Catholic Church had established six main administrative centres on the Tanzanian mainland: Kilimanjaro and Bagamoyo (under HGF), Dar es Salaam (OSB), Tabora, Karema and Bukoba (WF).⁸

Under widespread anti-German feeling after World War I, German missionaries, both Catholic and Protestant, had to leave the country practically en masse. However, by 1930, they had returned to most of their former stations. Other groups also arrived during this period: the Passionists (to Dodoma), the Pallotines (Singida and Mbulu), the Maryknoll Fathers (Shinyanga), the Rosminians (Tanga) and the Salvatorians (Nachingwea). After World War II in 1945, the German missionaries again were compelled to leave and were replaced by the Swiss.

Newer and Indigenous Missions

New missions (apart from the Lutherans, Catholics and Anglicans) arrived in the country from the 1950s with Dar es Salaam as the launching ground. Among them were the Presbyterians (1950) who went to Tanga, the Salvation Army (1953) in Mbeya, Tarime and Moshi, and the Mennonites, north-east of Lake Victoria, in Musoma, Shirati and their vicinity. Between 1950 and 1960, the Baptists founded stations in Mbeya, Tanga, Kigoma, Masasi, Mbozi, Mwanza, Moshi and Arusha. The Greek Orthodox Church came in 1963. This church is small in Tanzania and is concentrated in towns across the country, serving almost exclusively immigrants of Greek origin.

There are not many AICs in Tanzania. Only a few have made their presence felt: Watch Tower (1919), Last Church of God and His Christ, or Ba-Ngemela after its leader (1925), in the Mbeya region, African National Church (1935), Holy Spirit Church (1953) in Bukoba, Maria Legio of Africa (1960) in north-eastern Tanzania, and Zion Tabernacle Church or Hema ya Sayuni (mid-1940s) in the Kilimanjaro region.⁹

In contrast with the missionary churches, most of whose official stance was to discourage African spiritual customs and practices like polygamy, initiation rites, and belief in witchcraft, many AICs were founded precisely to align belief in Jesus Christ with African spirituality. Although they are often described as reactions against mission Christianity, T.O. Ranger points out helpfully that 'most offer solutions which they believe to be positively good instead of resting content with negative criticism of the missions'. Their characteristics include, but transcend, the usual categorization of the politically-oriented 'Ethiopian' or spiritually-leaning 'Zionist' churches to include also those based on 'a whole series of African answers' to African problems.¹⁰

⁸ Currently, the Catholic Church in Tanzania consists of 34 dioceses: Arusha, Bukoba, Bunda, Dar-es-Salaam, Dodoma, Geita, Ifakara, Iringa, Kahama, Kayunga, Kigoma, Kondo, Kondo, Lindi, Mahenge, Mbeya, Mbinga, Mbulu, Morogoro, Moshi, Mpanda, Mtwara, Musoma, Mwanza, Njombe, Rulenge-Ngara, Same, Shinyanga, Singida, Songea, Sumbawanga, Tabora, Tanga, Tunduru-Masasi, and Zanzibar. See www.catholic-hierarchy.org/country/dtz2.html

⁹ T.O. Ranger. *The African Churches of Tanzania* (Nairobi: East African Publishing House, 1972).

¹⁰ Ranger, *The African Churches of Tanzania*, 4-5.

Church Activities

The churches' situation after World War II facilitated the formal development of indigenous leadership in all the Christian denominations. The period also marked the expansion of evangelization around the country with an inevitably African, albeit muted, flavour. After the 1960s, the churches in Tanzania began to make the transition from European-focused to Africa-centred mission in terms of self-government, self-support and self-propagation.

Most missions, with the conspicuous exception of the Pentecostals who seemed suspicious of involvement in 'secular' affairs, had from the start placed an emphasis on investing in schools and healthcare facilities wherever they went. The Catholics were especially disposed to educational work, seeing it as a prime way of getting converts: 'Where it is impossible to carry on both the immediate task of evangelization and your educational work,' declared English Cardinal Arthur Hinsley on a visit to Tanganyika in the 1920s, 'neglect your churches in order to perfect your schools.'¹¹ Missionaries had from the beginning also emphasised the training of local church leaders.

Among the Wahaya of Bukoba and along the Kagera River, for example, much of the evangelization work was done by indigenous converts. Notable among them were Andrea Kajerero, Zakaria Ikate, Abraham Mpandakyaro and Josiah Kibira. Others included Canon Cecil Majaliwa, Deacon John Swedi and Sub-deacon George Farajallah who had already been ministering in various places under the UMCA since the 1870s. There were also Pastor Yakobo Ng'ombe with the Lutherans in the Tanga region in the 1920s, and Evangelists Tugulmiwe Wikungu and Yohannes Kipamila (Moravian) in the early 1900s in Urambo and Rungwe. Among the Catholics were Doctor and Catechist Adrien Atiman in Karema.

Thus, from the 1950s, Africans were beginning to be missionaries to themselves and audaciously building local, not missionary, churches, with previous encouragement. Bishop C.A. Chambers (CMS) of Central Tanganyika had intimated that, 'The future hope of Tanganyika [Christianity] lies in a sufficient supply of earnest, well-equipped Africans, who will go out to their brethren and preach and teach and live Christ.'¹² The same sentiments had been echoed in the Catholic Church by Popes Benedict XV (in *Maximun Illud*, 1919) and Pius XI (*Rerum Ecclesiae*, 1926). To this end, Cardinal Lavigerie's WFs had established a seminary at Kipalapala in Tabora in 1925, the Benedictines at Peramiho and Ndanda, and the HGF in Moshi and Morogoro. Consequently, in 1958, the presidency of the Lutheran Church in northern Tanganyika was given to the indigenous churchman, Pastor Stefano Moshi. Among the Catholics, Laurian Rugambwa was consecrated Bishop for Rubato (1953), Charles Msakila for Karema (1960), and Joseph Kilasara for Moshi (1960). Also in 1960, Rugambwa was made Cardinal, the first-ever black African.

Ecumenical and Interreligious Relations

From the outset of mission work in Tanzania, the Anglican churches (UMCA and CMS), on the one hand, and the Lutheran churches (Berlin, Bethel, Leipzig, and Moravian), on the other, collaborated. They often assisted one another in pastoral activities, even establishing certain infrastructure projects together. In Morogoro in 1911, both groups set up a joint school to counter Muslim influence there. The SDA and AIM churches, however, have tended to shun such collaboration. So has the Catholic Church, particularly before the Second Vatican Council (1962-65), refusing to join the World Council of Churches in 1948. This stance was reflected in Catholic missionary work in Tanzania. The Pentecostal churches have in general also not been enthusiastic about ecumenical co-operation.

Except the SDA and PAG, most of the Protestant churches are members of the Christian Council of Tanzania (CCT), based in Dodoma. The Catholic Church co-operates with the Council in various projects

¹¹ Sahlberg, *From Krapf to Rugambwa*, 134.

¹² Sahlberg, *From Krapf to Rugambwa*, 128.

of mutual interest as a form of practical ecumenism. For example, the churches have a joint medical committee and present common broadcast programmes on national radio. In terms of spiritual ecumenism, there are joint prayers among all Christian churches during the Week of Prayer for Christian Unity every January. Far-reaching ecumenical initiatives, such as the shared training of ministers, common catechetical programmes or intercommunion, however, though desirable, are not yet a reality.

As already mentioned, apart from the intuition of a few visionary individuals, like Father (later Bishop) William Vincent Lucas (UMCA) in Masasi, Pastor Traugott Backman (Moravian) in Rungwe, and Pastor Bruno Gutmann (Leipzig Mission) in Kilimanjaro, who held a deep respect for indigenous customs and actively sought to integrate them into Christian belief and practices, little or no attempt has been made by the mission churches to enter into serious formal dialogue with African religion. In fact, those who tried faced opposition from their missions and were accused of 'heathenizing' Christianity.¹³

Relations between Christian missions and Islam in Tanzania have been characterized by suspicion on both sides, despite the fact that, for decades, Christians and Muslims had lived cordially side-by-side. The situation seems to have worsened since the 1980s.¹⁴ Relations with the civil administration have also often been ambiguous. Since Independence, and especially after the 1967 Arusha Declaration that attempted to turn the country into a socialist state, the uncertain relationship between the Christian churches and the state, continues in different forms.¹⁵

Yet, involvement by the churches in the social life of the nation has been significant and is often openly sought by the state. Up to 1961, most of the literate individuals were products of mission schools, and the churches, as we have noted already, also provided most of the health care infrastructure. Christian churches established development projects of one kind or another in various places: carpentry, animal husbandry, farming of different crops, and so on. Girls and women especially benefitted from mission social work through education and mother-and-child care, advancing their status in society. Women missionaries who accompanied their male counterparts were instrumental in this evolution, as do their indigenous counterparts today. Thanks also to the churches, the Kiswahili language spread throughout the country.

Contemporary Developments

The most conspicuous developments in the Christian churches in Tanzania since Independence have taken place within the churches themselves, in terms of growth in numbers, theology, models of worship, and justice and peace activities. Even if in the past there were inevitably elements of African spirituality in Christian practice among African Christians, this was hidden because it was generally disapproved of as 'heathen'. Converts were required to abjure African religiosity altogether as a primary condition of membership of the churches. With the rise of an educated African clergy, however, this blanket censure came to be seen as unacceptable. The development of African theology with its double emphasis on 'enculturation' and 'liberation' has been instrumental in this transformation.

African theology has also inspired changes in the symbols and style of worship in the main mission churches, if not in the Pentecostal churches. Moreover, in most churches, there is increasing appreciation of lay ministries, awareness of care for the environment and a wider involvement in matters of justice and peace. If 'there is growing recognition that the African Church has an increasing global voice and that there

¹³ Sahlberg, *From Krapf to Rugambwa*, 78-79. Also Klaus Fiedler, *Christianity and African Culture: Conservative German Protestant Missionaries in Tanzania, 1900-1940* (Leiden: E.J. Brill, 1996). For Lucas see www.dacb.org/stories/tanzania/lucas_williamv.html

¹⁴ Frans Wijzen and Bernadin Mfumbusa, *Seeds of Conflict: Religious Tensions in Tanzania* (Nairobi: Paulines Publications, 2004).

¹⁵ John C. Sivalon, *Kanisa Katoliki na Siasa ya Tanzania Bara 1953 hadi 1985* (Peramiho: Benedictine Publications Ndanda, 1992).

are distinctive cultural, religious and human values that Africa can offer to the world',¹⁶ it is also due to the assiduous efforts being undertaken by the Christian churches in Tanzania.

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¹⁶ Baur, *2000 Years of Christianity*, 428.