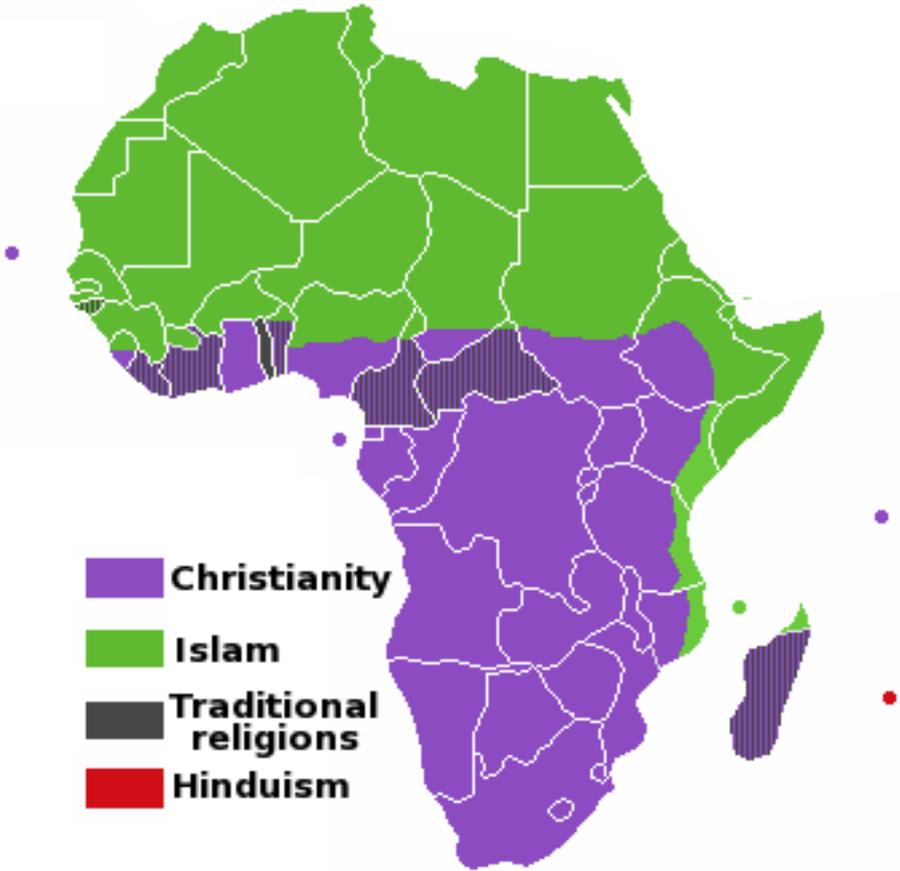


# Religion in Africa

The majority of Africans are adherents of the Abrahamic religions: Islam and Christianity. Both religions are widespread throughout Africa. These religions are often adapted to African cultural contexts and indigenous belief systems. It was estimated in 2000 that Christians form 45% of Africa's population, and Muslims forming 40.6%.



*A map of the Africa, showing the major religions distributed as of today. Map shows only the religion as a whole excluding denominations or sects of the religions, and is colored by how the religions are distributed not by main religion of country.*

## **Christianity**

Although Christianity existed far before the rule of King Ezana the Great of the Kingdom of Axum, the religion took a strong foothold when it was declared a state religion in 330 AD. Pinpointing a date as to when Christianity emerged in Ethiopia will always probably be a mystery.

The earliest and best known reference to the introduction of Christianity was when the evangelist Phillip converted an Ethiopian traveler in the 1st Century AD from the Acts of the Apostles. Although the bible refers to them as Ethiopians, scholars have argued that Ethiopia was a common term used for encompassing the area South-Southeast of Egypt. Other traditions have the convert as a Jew who was a steward in the Queen's court. All accounts do agree on the fact that the traveler was a member of the royal court who successfully succeeded in converting the Queen, which in turn caused a church to be built. Rufinus of Tyre , a noted church historian, also has recorded a personal account as do other church historians such as Socrates and Sozomienus.

After being shipwrecked and captured at an early age, Frumentius was carried to Axum where he was treated well with his companion Edesius. At the time, there was a small population of Christians living there who sought refuge from Roman persecution. Once of age, Frumentius and Edesius were allowed to return to their homelands, however they chose to stay at the request of the queen. In doing so, they began to secretly promote Christianity through the lands.

During a trip to meet with church elders, Frumentius met with Athanasius, Archbishop of Alexandria who was second in line to the pope. After recommending that a bishop be sent to proselytize, a council decided that Frumentius be appointed as a bishop to Ethiopia.

By 430 AD, Frumentius returned to Ethiopia, he was welcomed with open arms by the rulers who were at the time not Christian. Ten years later, through the support of the kings, the majority of the kingdom was converted and Christianity was declared the official state religion.

## **Islam**

Islam has adherents throughout Africa and it is one of the most widely practiced religions on the continent. Its historic roots in Africa stem from the time of its founder Muhammad whose relatives and followers migrated on a hijra to Abyssinia in fear of persecution from the pagan Arabs. Islam spread to Africa via passages through the Sinai Peninsula and Egypt and through Islamic Arab and Persian traders and sailors. Islam's first muezzin, Bilal ibn Ribah, was also of Northeast African (Habasha) descent.

Islam is the dominant religion in North Africa and the Horn of Africa, and it is also the predominant and historical religion of the West African interior and the far west coast of the continent as well as the coast of East Africa. Throughout history, there were several Muslim empires in Western Africa who exerted considerable influence notably the Mali Empire, which flourished for several centuries and the Songhai Empire, under the leadership of Sonni Ali and Askia Mohammed.

Islam continued a rapid growth into the twentieth and twenty-first centuries. Islamic values are seen to have much in common with traditional African life: its emphasis on communal living, its clear roles for men and women, its tolerance of polygamy. According to the New York Times, Christianity was alien to most Africans. Today, Muslims have increased success in proselytizing, with a growth rate, by some estimates, that is twice as fast as Christianity in Africa. A notable example includes Rwanda where, according to reports, the percentage of Muslims in Rwanda has doubled or tripled since the genocide, due to Muslim protection of Tutsis and to Hutus wanting to distance themselves from those who committed genocide.

## **Judaism**

Adherents of Judaism too can be found scattered across Africa. Perhaps not as well known as the history of Christianity and Islam in Africa to the outside observer, Judaism has an ancient and rich history on the African continent. Today, there are Jewish communities in many countries; including the Beta Israel of Ethiopia, the Abayudaya of Uganda, the House of Israel in Ghana, the Igbo Jews of Nigeria and the Lemba of Southern Africa.

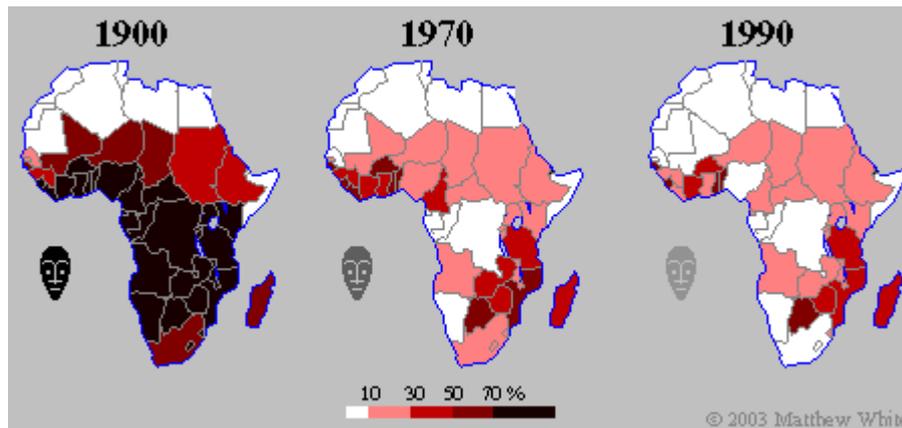
## **Hindusim**

The history of Hinduism in Africa is, by most accounts, very short in comparison to that of Islam, Christianity, or Judaism. However, the presence of its practitioners in Africa dates back to pre-colonial times and even medieval times. There are sizable Hindu populations in South Africa and the East African coastal nations.

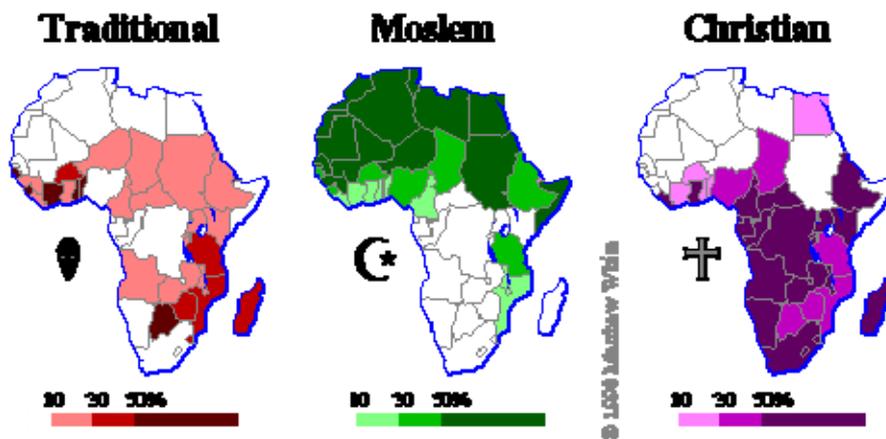
## Traditional religion

Traditional African religion encompasses a widely variety of traditional beliefs. Traditional religious customs are sometimes shared by many African societies, but they are usually unique to specific ethnic groups. Many African Christians and Muslims maintain some aspects of their traditional religions.

Percentage of population practicing traditional tribal religion:



Religious affiliation, 1990:



## Religion in Mozambique

According to the most recent census conducted by the National Institute of Statistics in 1997, half of the population does not profess to practice a religion or creed; however, religious leaders expected the census scheduled for late 2007 to show that virtually all of these persons recognize or practice some form of traditional indigenous religion. According to the 1997 census, 24 percent are Roman Catholic, 22 percent are Protestant, and 20 percent are Muslim. Many Muslim leaders disagree with this statistic, claiming that since Islam is the major religion practiced in the most populous provinces of the country, at least 50 percent of the population must be Muslim

Religious communities are dispersed throughout the country. The northern provinces are predominantly Muslim, particularly along the coastal strip, but some areas of the northern interior have a stronger concentration of Protestant or Catholic communities. Protestants and Catholics are generally more numerous in the southern and central regions, but Muslim minority populations are also present in these areas.

The Roman Catholic Church has established twelve dioceses (Beira, Chimoio, Gurué, Inhambane, Lichinga, Maputo, Nacala, Nampula, Pemba, Quelimane, Tete, and Xai-Xai - archdioceses are Beira, Maputo and Nampula). Statistics for the dioceses range from a low 7.44% Catholics in the population in the diocese of Chimoio, to 87.50% in Quelimane diocese (2006 official Catholic figures).

Muslims are particularly present in the north of the country. They are organised in several "tariqa" or brotherhoods (of the Qadiriya or Shadhuliyyah branch). Two national organisations also exist - the Conselho Islamico de Moçambique (reformists) and the Congresso Islamico de Mocambique (pro-Sufi). There are also important Indo-Pakistani associations as well as some Shia and particularly Ismaili communities.

According to the 1997 census, the Roman Catholic community makes up 23.8 percent of the population of Mozambique. Muslims comprise 17.8 percent of the population, and people of the Protestant community make up 17.5% of the country's population. 17.8% of the people have other beliefs, and 23.1% have no religious beliefs.

The country's leading mosques and the Catholic Church have gradually eliminated many traditional indigenous practices from their places of worship, instituting practices that reflect a stricter interpretation of sacred texts; however, some Christian and Muslim adherents continue to incorporate traditional practices and rituals, and religious authorities have generally been permissive of such practices. [