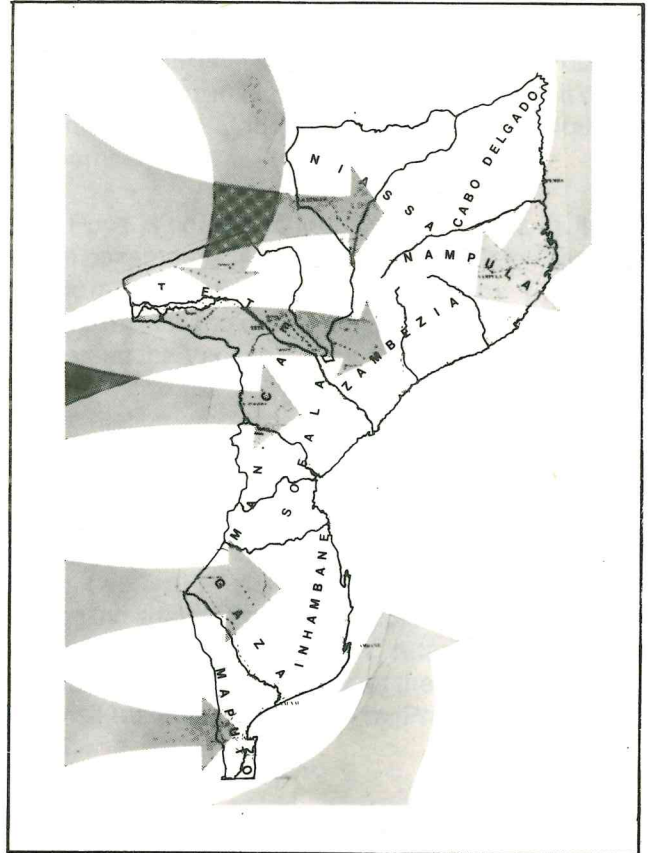


MOZAMBIQUE



RELIGION

INTRODUCTION

There is a growing demand for information about the history and current situation of religion in the People's Republic of Mozambique, intensified by the visit of His Holiness Pope John Paul II to Mozambique in September 1988.

The Pope is coming to Mozambique at the invitation of the government; first proposed by the late President Samora Machel, it was extended by President Joaquim Chissano during a meeting between the two leaders at the Vatican in May 1987.

The invitation was made in the context of a long history of contacts between FRELIMO (Mozambique Liberation Front) and the Vatican, which began in 1970 when the then Pope Paul VI received a FRELIMO delegation in the Vatican, together with delegations from two other African liberation movements struggling against Portuguese colonialism, MPLA and PAIGC. From then on the relationship was in continuous development, one of the high points being the visit made to the Vatican by President Machel in 1985.

Pope John Paul II's visit is thus another important moment for the Mozambican people and State; apart from ensuring the consolidation of relations and mutual understanding between the People's Republic of Mozambique and the Vatican, it will encourage their further development in the future.

This pamphlet aims to reply to the most frequent questions on the subject of religion in Mozambique, providing factual and up-to-date information.

I. ORIGINS

As in the rest of sub-Saharan Africa, animist religions have existed in Mozambique since the distant past. A substantial number of Mozambicans are animists to this day, though sometimes in an amalgam with other religions.

The first contacts with foreign religions date from the seventh century, when the Arabs brought a monotheistic faith. These traders followed Islam, which was at that time being spread throughout Europe and Asia.

Eight centuries later, in 1498, Catholicism arrived in the region when Portuguese sailors led by Vasco da Gama came ashore in Mozambican territory.

The various Protestant churches began to spread at the end of the nineteenth century, when the conflicts of interest between the European colonial powers in Africa became acute. This movement gained impetus as a result of the decisions taken at the Conference of Berlin of 1885.

II. THE SITUATION TODAY

In Mozambique today more than 150 religious congregations are officially registered, of the most varied faiths. Some have large numbers of believers, such as the Islamic, Catholic and Protestant religions. Others are much smaller numerically, such as the Zionist sects, assembling anything from a few dozen to two hundred members.



Id prayers in Maputo, July 1988

a) Islam

There are estimated to be about four million followers of the Islamic faith in Mozambique. The highest number of Moslems is in the north of the country, in Nampula, Cabo Delgado, Zambezia and Niassa provinces. In the south, Inhambane province, the capital Maputo and the urban centres of Maputo and Gaza provinces also have significant communities.

In Mozambique Moslems have two national organisations, the Islamic Council and the Islamic Congress respectively, as well as various local organisations. The Islamic Council of Mozambique belongs to an innovating current in Islam, which can be compared with religious purism; its leader is sheik Aboobacar Ismael Mangirá. The Islamic Congress of Mozambique defines itself as Sunnite and follows orthodox Islamic teaching. Its chairman is Hassane Makdá.

b) The Catholic Church

The Apostolic Roman Catholic Church is the second largest religious faith. It is estimated to have around three million believers spread throughout the country.

In 1985 the Catholic Church created three ecclesiastical provinces: the Ecclesiastical Province of Maputo, which covers the city and province of Maputo, Gaza and Inhambane; the Ecclesiastical Province of Sofala, covering Sofala, Manica, Tete and Zambezia; and the Ecclesiastical Province of Nampula, covering Nampula, Cabo Delgado and Niassa. The provinces are led by archbishops, with Cardinal D. Alexandre José Maria dos Santos, the highest dignitary in the Mozambican hierarchy, in charge of the Province of Maputo.

The supreme body of the Catholic Church in Mozambique is the Episcopal Conference, comprising the bishops and archbishops, which meets twice a year. Its current chairman is the bishop of Tete, D. Paulo Mandlate.

c) The Protestant Churches

The Protestant Churches can be divided into three groups.

The largest group is gathered in the Christian Council of Mozambique, founded in 1948 and currently comprising 18 congregations. It is estimated to represent around two million believers.

The CCM has most influence in the central and southern regions of Mozambique. Its chairman is the Reverend Osias Mucache, head of the Presbyterian Church (Swiss Mission), and its secretary-general is the Reverend Filipe Sique Mbanze of the Free Methodist Church.

The CCM is an ecumenical organisation that carries out a coordinating function through bodies such as the

Senate, the Standing Committee and the Annual Conference. Its member congregations are: the Anglican Church, the United Congregational Church, the Church of Christ North, the Church of Christ Centre, the Salvation Army, the United Methodist Church, the Free Methodist Church, the Wesleyan Methodist Church, the African Episcopal Methodist Church, the Reformed Church, the Nazarene Church, the Good Shepherd Church, the Baptist Union, the Presbyterian Church, the Episcopal Light African Church, the Bible Society (distributor of religious literature), and as of this year the Emmanuel Wesleyan Church and the Church of Christ of Zambezia.

The second group of Protestant Churches is composed of independent congregations: the Assembly of God, the Seventh Day Adventists and the Baptist Convention.

The final group is formed by the Zionist Churches, different sects united by a common practice which is characterised by the incorporation of traditional customs. These churches usually have their



Members of a Zionist sect at a religious ceremony on Maputo beach, March 1988

headquarters in neighbouring countries such as South Africa, Zimbabwe and Malawi. Their influence is mainly in the border areas.

d) Other Religions

A number of other faiths are present in Mozambique. Among them, for example, is the Hindu religion, whose practitioners are mainly to be found in Maputo city and the provincial capitals. The Greek Orthodox Church

is in the same situation; it now has only a small number of believers, mostly members of the foreign community.

The Ismaili religion, followed by people of Pakistani origin, has recently been undergoing a revival, after many of its followers had left the country at the time of independence.

The Baha'i religion is another faith that is officially represented. Founded in the former Persia in 1844, it appeared in Mozambique in the 1950s. The existing National Baha'i Spiritual Assembly was established in 1985, and there are estimated to be around two thousand believers throughout the country.

III. RELIGION IN THE POST-COLONIAL PERIOD

a) Equality for All

The independence of the People's Republic of Mozambique, on 25 June 1975, opened a new era for relations between the religious faiths and society.

Immediately after independence FRELIMO began by restoring equality to all Mozambicans, without distinction of sex, ethnic origin, religious belief or residence. This had been one of the main aspirations of the anti-colonial struggle, laid down in FRELIMO's Programme and Statutes since its foundation in 1962.

On the question of religion, the Republic's Constitution guarantees equality between all religious faiths before the State. Article 19 establishes that:

"The People's Republic of Mozambique is a lay State, with an absolute separation between the State and religious institutions.

In the People's Republic of Mozambique religious activity must be compatible with the laws of the State."

Religious freedom is unequivocally guaranteed in Article 33, whose second paragraph states:

"In the People's Republic of Mozambique the State guarantees citizens the right to practise a religion or not."



President Chissano was welcomed by representatives of the religious communities when he visited Niassa province in May 1988

Equality in rights and duties are established in Article 26:

"Every citizen of the People's Republic of Mozambique enjoys the same rights and is subject to the same duties, independently of his or her colour, race, sex, ethnic origin, place of birth, religion, level of education, social position or profession."

Any act seeking to damage social harmony, creating divisions or situations of privilege on the basis of colour, race, sex, ethnic origin, place of birth, religion, level of education, social position or profession is punishable by law."

These articles take on a particular importance by virtue of the fact that the colonial administration had used the church as a divisive weapon. In the 1940 Concordat, Portugal conferred the statute of state religion on Catholicism, and as a result, the other religious faiths found themselves discriminated against.

b) A New Relationship In Evolution

Following national independence there were some difficult moments in the church-state relationship. The main cause for this can be found in the history of the church hierarchy during the colonial period.

The 1940 Concordat involved the Catholic church hierarchy in participation in the colonial power structures. Catholic church dignitaries had a high-profile presence in all the activities of the colonial government, even in relation to such areas as the army, the policy and the judicial authorities. Accustomed to preferential treatment, the Catholic hierarchy was thus ill-prepared for a new relationship based on equality with all the other religious faiths. Its involvement with the colonial government became the first obstacle that had to be overcome.

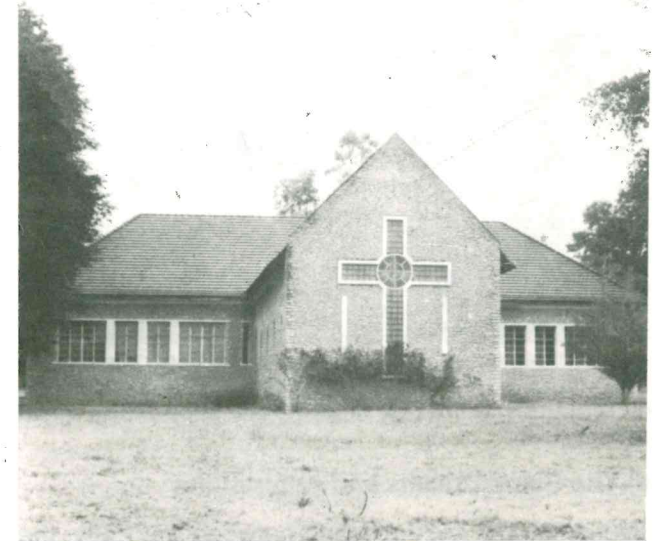
On the other hand, the nationalisation of important social sectors such as health and education was not well received by all, in particular by the Catholic church. This was due to the fact that the Mozambican state removed from the churches the role ascribed to them by the colonial authorities. Various colleges, schools and hospitals throughout the country that had been in the hands of religious congregations were taken over by the state. There were, also, some irregularities in implementing the nationalisations programme.

However, as in other sectors of Mozambican society, relations between the state and the religious congregations have been a continuous object of analysis, looking towards a new, socially useful relationship. As part of this process, in December 1982 the Party and the Government held a meeting with representatives of the different faiths, a meeting that was to lay the foundations for mutual trust. It was there that the late President Samora Machel explained that the Mozambican state had separated itself from religion in order to free the practice of religious belief from a commitment to colonial-style discrimination, to foster unity and the participation of everyone in national reconstruction.

One result of the work done since that meeting was the declaration, of 24 June 1988, announcing the return to their original owners of places of worship and pastoral centres which, physically located in centres covered by the nationalisation of health and education, had been closed down or occupied illegally. The meeting also resulted in the establishment of a state body within the Ministry of Justice responsible for relations with the various churches. This is the Department for Religious Affairs - DAR.

c) Churches-Mozambican People: Victims of the Same Enemy

During the colonial period various religious congregations recognised an identity between their faith and the struggle against colonialism. Despite the repression of the time, these priests took courageous positions in denouncing the abuses of the colonial state and army. Notable among them were the Roman Catholic orders of the Burgos Fathers and the White Fathers, the bishop of Nampula, D. Manuel Vieira Pinto, Mozambican religious leaders of the Presbyterian church such as Pastor Zedequias Manganheia, Swiss missionaries and Sheikhs Saleh of Mocimboa da Praia and Hamido Camuendo of Moma. They were successively arrested, expelled or murdered by the colonial secret police, the PIDE.



Cambine, Inhambane: headquarters of the United Methodist Church in Mozambique. Built in 1927, the mission has been attacked by the bandits several times, most recently on 17 May 1988

Today in Mozambique, the churches are faced with the same fate as the thousands of Mozambican war

victims. The war of destabilisation waged against Mozambique from abroad sows death indiscriminately and counts among its victims priests, nuns, pastors and lay people. In addition to schools, hospitals and factories places of worship and installations belonging to religious congregations are attacked and burnt down; cars transporting the sick and wounded being treated by priests and nuns are burnt. Men and women of religion are among those kidnapped by the armed bandits.



Joao Muthombene, director of the projects department of the CCM, looks at the effects of drought. The churches are increasingly involved in projects supporting rural development.

d) The Same Dreams and Aspirations

Ever since the 1982 meeting between the Party, the State and the religious representatives, the different faiths have become increasingly active in national development programmes. Many national and international religious organisations have signed agreements with the government or with religious institutions for the implementation of emergency and

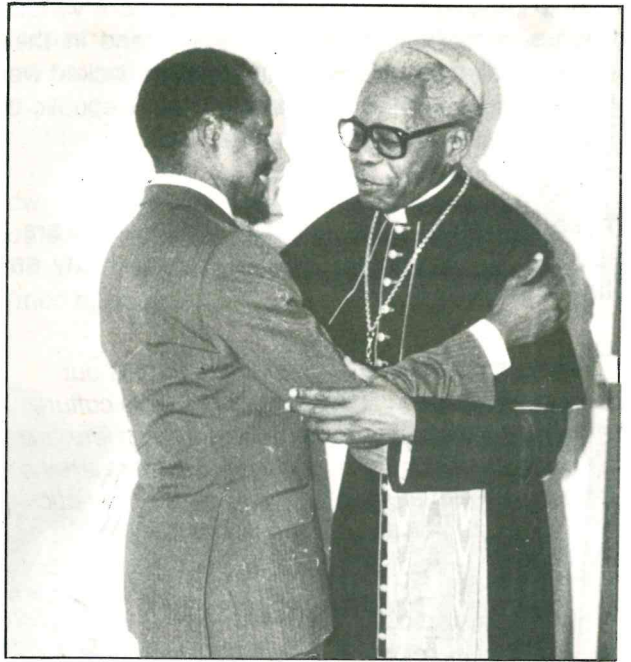
national development projects. In addition, various congregations have taken a strong stand in their international denunciation of the foreign-backed war of destabilisation of which the People's Republic of Mozambique is victim.

These activities by the religious confessions are a response to the appeal launched by the Party and State leadership in 1982:

"Mozambicans of all faiths, this nation is our common heritage ... Before history, before culture, before the nation, there are no Catholics, there are no Moslems, there are no Protestants, there are no atheists - there are only patriotic or non-patriotic Mozambicans." (Samora Machel)

At this time in particular, considerable advances have been made in relations between the Mozambican State and the Catholic Church, and the papal visit is one of the high points in these relations. Thus, when he congratulated the first Mozambican cardinal, D. Alexandre José Maria dos Santos, invested recently, President Joaquim Chissano affirmed that the foundations had been laid for the definition of the church's role in the country:

"Now we can speak of a national Catholic Church, a church which identifies with the great problems of the nation."



President Joaquim Chissano with the first Mozambican cardinal, D. Alexandre Jose Maria dos Santos, 28 July 1988

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