



## The Sumbwa of Tanzania

The Sumbwa people are scattered over a wide area in northern Tanzania. According to tradition, they originated in the far western part of the country, and many, many years ago they moved into the north central area of the country, where they conquered the local people and set up their own chiefdom. This area is considered the heart of the Sumbwa lands, although many Sumbwa live quite far from there.

Originally, the Sumbwa were hunters, but now they are mainly farmers. Cotton is their main cash crop, and they grow maize and cassava for food. Bee-keeping for the purpose of gathering honey is also one of their sources of food and income.

Among the Sumbwa people there are Christians, Muslims, and followers of the traditional religion. A large percentage of the Sumbwa claim affiliation with the Roman Catholic church, which has been in the area for over one-hundred years. There are other Christian denominations in the area, but most have arrived only within the past ten years or so. Many Sumbwa still follow the traditional religion, while few of the Sumbwa are followers of Islam.

**Primary Religion:**

Christian

**Disciples (Matt 28.19):**

**Churches:**

165

**Scripture Status (Matt 28.20):**

**Population (date):**

191,000 (1996)



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Item Name	Item Note	
<b>Have They Heard The Gospel?</b>		<b>Profile Summary</b>
Call Themselves Christian (%)	85%	
Prophet/Good Man, But Not God's Son (%)	15%	
Number Of Pastors	12	
Comment (Pastors)	In the heartland, maybe 12:75,000	
Number Of Missionaries Working	0	
Number Of Churches	165	
Is The Word Of God Translated?	A very old book, which is no longer used	
Translation Medium	One book of Scripture stories and portions	
Any Hinderance To Scripture Distribution?	Shortage of available Swahili Bibles	
Forms Of Gospel Presentation Available (Summary)	The Swahili version of the "Jesus" film	
What Kind Of Missionaries Are Needed?	Bible translators, etc.	
<b>Population All Countries</b>		<b>Group Description</b>
World Population For This People	191,000	
World Population (Date)	1996	
Comment (World Population)	This number is taken from the Ethnologue report	
<b>Countries Where People Group Lives</b>		<b>Group Description</b>
Country Name	Tanzania	
<b>Geography &amp; Environment</b>		<b>Group Description</b>
Location	Scattered over a wide area. The main center of the Sumbwa people is located in the Bukombe, Runzewe, and Kahama districts of Shinyanga region in northern Tanzania.	
Country	Tanzania	
Ecosystem Type	Scrub Forest	
Geological Type	Plains	
Longitude	32 E	
Latitude	3'30	
<b>Language &amp; Linguistics</b>		<b>Group Description</b>
Attitude Towards Mother Tongue	Somewhat receptive	
Other Mother Tongues Of This Group	SWAHILI	
Linguistically Related Languages	NYAMWEZI	
Comments (Related Languages)	Swahili is the national language of Tanzania, and it is generally used in group settings, especially in areas where many different people groups are represented. While nearly everyone knows at least basic Swahili, bilingualism testing among the Sumbwa indicates that the educated have a higher level of Swahili ability than those who have not been to school.	
Neighboring Languages	HA	
Neighboring Languages	SUKUMA	
<b>Literacy</b>		<b>Group Description</b>
Literacy Attitude	Indifferent	
Active Literacy Program	No	
Comment (Literacy)	They have learned the value of books as education has become more widespread, but not being a traditionally literate society, they do not seem to have a strong felt need to have books to read. They do express a desire for books, mainly in order to preserve the language and bring them up to the status of the other groups around them who have books.	
<b>Economics</b>		<b>Group Description</b>

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### Item Name

Subsistence Type

### Item Note

Agriculturalists

Occupation

Farming, bee-keeping and gathering honey

Income Sources

Cotton, honey

### Community Development

### Group Description

Health Care (Quality)

Fair

Comment (Health Care)

Most villages have a dispensary, but the nearest hospital is in the town of Kahama.

Diet (Quality)

Fair

Comment (Diet)

Maize and cassava are their staple foods

Water (Quality)

Fair

Comment (Water)

If the rains come at the normal time, then they are not in serious need of water. People get their water from wells or bore-holes.

Shelter Description

Houses made from mud bricks

Energy/Fuel (Quality)

Fair

Comment (Energy)

No available electricity; most use wood as fuel for cooking, etc.

Clothing

Generally the people wear western-style clothing. The women also wear traditional African cloth wraps called kangas.

Transportation

Some of the people have bicycles, but many travel by foot. Because many of the villages are very close to the main tarmac road which goes all the way to Rwanda, people have access to buses and other kinds of transportation. Many of the other roads are in poor condition, and some villages are inaccessible by car. There are a few good roads in the area, but these seemed to be used mainly by the trucks that are hauling cotton.

### Society & Culture

### Group Description

Neighbor Relations

They live in close contact with other people groups, particularly the Sukuma and Ha. They seem to have good relationships with these people, and they live peacefully together.

Cultural Change Pace

Slow

Identification With National Culture

Similar

Self Image

Neutral

Local Language Broadcasting

None

Attitude To Outsiders

Somewhat receptive

Attitude To Change

Somewhat receptive

### Youth

### Group Description

Comment (Youth)

A specific study of the youth has not been done.

### Education

### Group Description

Primary Schools

4

Primary School Enrollment

2,341

Percent Of Eligible Students Enrolled

85%

Teacher To Pupil Ratio

54

Language Of Textbooks Early Years

Swahili (specific)

Language Of Instruction Later Years

Swahili (specific)

Comment (Education)

These figures only represent those communities visited by the survey team. Presumably there are many more schools in other Sumbwa villages. Generally there is at least one primary school in each village.

These days most children are reported to attend school; however, there are many young people and adults in the more remote villages who have had little or no education. Very, very few villagers receive secondary education.

### Church Growth

### Status of Christianity

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Item Name	Item Note	
Lay Leaders	184	
Christian Clinics/Hospitals	1	
Comment (Church Growth)	These numbers are only very rough estimates, based on interviews with pastors and church leaders in the villages where survey was conducted. The numbers include all the leaders, not only the Sumbwa ones.	
<b>Religion &amp; Response</b>		<b>Status of Christianity</b>
Attitude To Christianity	Indifferent	
Attitude To Religious Change	Indifferent	
Resistance / Receptivity	A large percentage of the Sumbwa claim to be affiliated with the Roman Catholic church. It seemed, however, that many of the people are not actively involved. They do not appear to be strong believers; neither do they seem to feel a strong need for change. Most seem like they would be happy to continue as they are now.	
Comment (Religion)	There appears to be a high degree of syncretism with the traditional religion, particularly in the more remote villages, despite the large percentage of Sumbwa affiliated with the Catholic church.	
Items For Prayer	Cooperation among the churches in the area; vision for the Sumbwa Christians to reach out to their own people	
<b>History Of Christianity In Group</b>		<b>Status of Christianity</b>
Year Began	1891	
By Whom	Roman Catholic Church	
Significant Events	The White Fathers began a mission in Ushirombo in 1891, and their work spread throughout the Sumbwa area. They have been the main church in the area for many years, and it was not until about 1987 that other denominations came in.	
Comments (History of Christianity)	SP started Church planting in 1953 with 27 workers, COG started 1987 with 31 workers, AIM started 1994 with 8 workers, and SDA also have work going on. All together they are 5 groups, no expatriate missionary, 4 national missionaries and 192 local workers (1998)	
<b>Scripture</b>		<b>Status of Christianity</b>
Translation Status	Possible	
Available Scripture	Portions	
Form Of Scripture Available	Printed	
Scripture Use	Hardly at all	
Comment (Scripture)	The Catholics compiled a book of Scripture portions and stories in the Sumbwa language in 1957. It was used in the church and by individuals at that time. Over the past twenty years or more, however, everything in the church has been conducted in Swahili. The language change most likely occurred because of the government emphasis on Swahili and the intermixing of the people groups in Tanzania. The leaders in the Catholic church do not seem to see a need to use the Sumbwa in their work.	
<b>Missions and Churches</b>		<b>Status of Christianity</b>
Organization Name	Roman Catholic Church	
Country Of Origin	France	
Main Ministry	Church Planting	
Year Started	1891	
Number Of Adherents	18000	
Number Of National Workers	105	
Language Used By Workers	Swahili (specific)	

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Item Name	Item Note
Organization Name	Church of God
Main Ministry	Church Planting
Year Started	1987
Number Of National Workers	31
Language Used By Workers	Swahili (specific)
Organization Name	Swedish Pentecostal
Country Of Origin	Sweden
Main Ministry	Church Planting
Year Started	1953
Number Of National Workers	25
Language Used By Workers	Swahili (specific)
Organization Name	African Inland Mission
Country Of Origin	Tanzania
Main Ministry	Church Planting
Year Started	1994
Number Of National Workers	8
Language Used By Workers	Swahili (specific)
Organization Name	Seventh Day Adventists

### Christian Literature And Media Status

### Status of Christianity

Literature Available	The Sumbwa have an old book of Scripture portions, a catechism, and a liturgy, but they are not in modern Sumbwa. Neither are they currently being used.
Films Available	The Swahili version of the "Jesus" film