Mozambique

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Mozambique is one of the countries that constitute the territory of the Southern Africa-Indian Ocean Division of Seventh-day Adventists.

**Vital Seventh-day Adventist Statistics**

The territory of Mozambique constitutes the Mozambique Union Mission (MUM), within the Southern Africa-Indian Division (SID) of Seventh-day Adventists. The union mission comprises the four mission fields. Church statistics (2018) for MUM were 1044 churches; 370,568 members; 53 ordained ministers; 12 licensed ministers. The church's headquarters are situated in Maputo, the capital city of the Republic of Mozambique.

Statistics (2018) for the missions were as follows: **Central Mission**: 109 churches; 87,252 members; 16 ordained ministers; 4 licensed ministers. **North-East Mission**: 30 churches; 15,892 members; 7 ordained ministers; 3 licensed ministers. **North Mission**: 815 churches; 236,022 members; 8 ordained ministers; 1 licensed minister. **South Mission**: 90 churches; 41,042 members; 11 ordained ministers; 4 licensed ministers. The union headquarters has 9 ordained ministers and 3 licensed ministers.

**Administrative Division**

Mozambique became a Portuguese colony after the European Berlin Conference (1884-1885). By 1930 the territory and administrative division of the colony comprised four provinces:

The province to the south of Save, which covered all the territory from south of the Save River and included the current provinces of Maputo, Gaza and Inhambane. The city of Lourenço Marques (now Maputo) was the capital of this province as well as the capital of the entire colony.

The provinces of Manica and Sofala, with Beira as the capital city, included the territory located between the Save and Zambezi Rivers.

The province of Zambezia covered the districts of Quelimane and Tete, and by decree on October 31, 1934, at the time of the integration of the Manica and Sofala territories under the direct administration of the state, it went on to include only the district of Quelimane.

The province of Niassa, which included the regions of the great Nyasa, the current province of Nampula and the territory of Cabo Delgado. Nampula became the capital of the Nampula Province and of the Cabo Delgado district of Mozambique on January 1, 1935. On June 25, 1975 the country of Mozambique became independent politically from Portugal and it was divided into ten provinces.

**Ethnolinguistic Groups**

The people who inhabit the vast territory of Mozambique were of Bantu origin. These ethnolinguistic groups were initially autonomous and independent, each having its own specific culture and history of their origins. Politically, they were organised in tribes, the nucleus of which comprised patrilineal family members (south of the Zambezi River) and matrilineal family members (north of the Zambezi River). The tribe was led by a chief, who was not only a political leader, but also the judge and priest responsible for the tribe's spiritual wellbeing. By amassing such powers, the tribal chief became the only safe guardian of the tribal customs.

The mid-nineteenth century people saw mass internal and external migration in Mozambique. Searching for work, many migrated to the Transvaal mines, in South Africa, where Protestantism had already been established since 1870. This trend increased significantly in the last decade of the nineteenth century, due to internal crisis brought about by tribal conflicts and cattle deaths caused by the tsetse fly. Between the Save and Zambezi Rivers, the Mwenemutapa kingdom was also facing social, political and economic crisis, which culminated with the transfer of its capital from Machaze (Manica) to Mandlakaze (Gaza). The war by the Ngoni that devastated the northern region of the Zambezi River caused the dispersion of entire communities.

Until the early 1930s, the territory was divided among the seven largest ethnic groups, three of which, Ronga, Thonga, Ba-Shape, were settled in the south of the Save River. Categorizing based on their linguistics, the missionary, linguist, and anthropologist Henri-Alexandre Junod called this ethnic group Thonga. There were two ethnic groups settled between the Save and Zambezi Rivers, Senga and the Ngoni. The Makua and the Yao settled between the Zambezi and Rovuma Rivers. The Makua-Lomwe dominated Quelimane, Nampula, and Porto Amélia (Cabo Delgado), and the Yao populated the great Niassa. Ethnologists subdivided the Makua-Lomwe into various subgroups, the naming of which they claimed derived from their geographical peculiarities or other specific attributes: Amanyawa, Amaratha, Alikuku, Anahito, Makuwa, Atakhwani (those living in the forests), Amihavani (inhabitants of sandy regions), Nyamwelo, Mihekani, Malokotera, Amuipiti, Ameto, Axirima, Akokobola and Anguru or Akapoló, that is, Yao’s slaves. More than twenty languages are spoken in the country.

The national liberation struggle (1964-1974) brought new organisation as well as a new ethnolinguistic arrangement.
The implementation of the national unity policy, promoted by the Mozambique Liberation Front (FRELIMO) as an absolute value, to be shared by all the people inhabiting the vast territory of Mozambique, contributed to a new ethnic organisation in the country. Tribalism and regionalism had to be sacrificed for the benefit of unity and the establishment of Mozambicanity. The new authorities believed those values had failed as sources of national unity. There was a new priority to unite the people, from Rovuma in the north to Maputo in the south, in order to overthrow Portuguese colonialism.

**Religious Background**

In the nineteenth and the middle twentieth centuries, there were three main religions in Mozambique: indigenous religions, known as African Traditional Religions (A.T.R.), which are spread out mainly in the country’s inner central region, Christianity, and Islam. Islam is mainly found in the north, from the Zambezi to the Rovuma River, and in a small way from Ponta de Ouro to the Zambezi River. African traditional religions developed within family circles, where the priestly function of the oldest member of the family was guaranteed. Their spiritual manifestations received different names from nineteenth century anthropology, such as animism, fetishism, and naturalism. Today, these terminologies are considered by African scholars in the field of social and human sciences as “depreciative and defamatory.” Meanwhile, ancestor worship seems to be at the center of these religions, with scarce changes from one tribe to another. In this worldview, the life of the clan, the village, and the wellbeing of its members depends on the regard the living have for their ancestors.

Following Portuguese colonial explorations, Christianity arrived in Mozambique on March 11, 1498, in the form of Roman Catholicism. After the Brussels Conference of 1890, the religious landscape became quite complex. Protestant missions (commonly known as foreign missions) were established in the entire territory south of the Save River, mainly in rural and arable areas largely inhabited by traditional communities that practiced polygamy and folk religion in their various forms. These missions also spread to the north of the Zambezi River through the Universities’ Mission to Central Africa (UMCA) by the Anglican Church. The Anglican missions entered the north of Mozambique through Southern Rhodesia and were established along Lake Nyasa.

Despite the progress of Protestantism, the geographic distribution of Christian missions in Mozambique by the colonial authorities was not uniform. Roman Catholicism, the main instrument for the expansion of Portuguese imperialism, remained dominant and privileged, occupying the main villages and cities, while the Protestant missions were directed to the interior part of the country, areas that were shaped neither by western culture nor eastern Islam. From 1990 onward, interest in religion increased, and the number of neo-Pentecostal religious groups grew exponentially in the country.

**Origins of the Seventh-day Adventist Mission in the Country**

Adventist Lay Movement

The political and economic crises of the first half of the twentieth century brought an unprecedented spiritual awakening and a zealous lay missionary movement in Africa. Many indigenous people searched for the truth by any means and in all places. Various testimonies of this movement of lay people are recorded in the magazines of the worldwide Seventh-day Adventist Church.

Four years after the establishment of the Nyasaland (Malawi) Mission in 1907, C. Robinson and S. M. Konigmacher, American Adventist missionaries at the Matandani Mission, established a new mission in Ngoniland, Portuguese Central Africa. A young couple from the Portuguese East African border encountered the Adventist message at the Matandani Missionary School, on the other side of the Zobwe border.

The 1927-1928 report of the Southeast African Union Mission, presented by Neal C. Wilson to the African Division committee meeting in Johannesburg, South Africa, mentions the Tete and Mlanje Mission Stations. The Tete Mission Station, organized in 1927, was located near the Malawian district of Dedza, which included the communities of Nzewe, Lidwo, Chinvano, and Chileka, in Ngoniland of Portuguese Central Africa. Some of its early converts were Kadyakapita, Kambiya, Mahivi, Madonasi, Wilson, Henry Kabeth, Christopha Timba, Petrosse Mutunduata, and Rogers Wright Kabeth.

The Mlanje Mission Station was located in Cinyama, a five hour walk from Mangassanja, a few kilometers from the border with Malawi. The station included the communities of Corinto, Zalimba Mangassanja, and Môngwe. John Cotajú Yolamo, Abílio Thungululu, Horácio Luia, Jordão Chissuanha, Vieira Diwa, and Artur Nankhwele are some of the first indigenous members from these communities. From 1937, Abílio Thungululu, Horácio Luia, Jordão Chissuanha, Vieira Diwa, and Artur Nankhwele became the first group of native workers. Vieira Diwa and Artur Nankhwele were ordained as native pastors in 1953, and served the church and their community for many years.

The First Formal Contacts (1921)
Initial contacts between Mozambique’s native people and Adventist missions were of an informal nature. Through the joint efforts of Adventist missions set up in English colonies in East Africa, the first official contacts between Seventh-day Adventist missions and the Portuguese authorities in East Africa became a reality in 1921. William Henry Branson, founder and president of the Seventh-day Adventist African Division (1920-1930), visited the authorities in Lourenço Marques, represented by the High Commissioner Dr. Manuel de Brito Camacho, a medical-colonel.

This courtesy visit took place in response to reports of the Transvaal-Delagoa Mission in South Africa and the Southeast African Mission (Malawi), and at the request of Luis and Celestina Lamarques, Adventist believers in Lourenço Marques. Their plans were to establish the mission in 1923, but they failed due to a lack of human and financial resources and the overcrowding of foreign missions. In the districts of Lourenço Marques and Inhambane, the number of foreign missions had surpassed the geographic limits permitted by the law, and there was little expansion opportunity for new missions.19


The territory was administratively shared by two union missions of the African Division. The South East African Union Mission was responsible for the territories north of the 22° parallel, while the South African Union Conference watched over the areas south of the 22° parallel.14 The ethnic connections and geographic proximity were the fundamental criteria used to determine this arrangement of the Adventist missionary work. In 1931 the African Division’s name was changed to Southern Africa Division, and the entire territory of Mozambique became part of the South East Union Mission, with headquarters in Blantyre.

In 1931 an official request was submitted to the authorities in Lourenço Marques to acquire a site to establish the first Adventist mission station in Portuguese East Africa. O. U. Giddings, superintendent of the South East Union Mission, and Dr. A. N. Tonge from the Southern African Division, met with Colonel Cavaleiro José Ricardo Pereira Cabral, the Governor General in Lourenço Marques. They were accompanied by Samuel Ebling, United States Consul in Lourenço Marques. The diplomat’s presence in the negotiations was beneficial, and the church was granted a license for missions in its threefold dimensions: evangelism, medical work, and education.

The letter from the American Consul addressed to O. U. Giddings5 indicated that the first Adventist mission station would be established somewhere between Nampula and Nyasaland, that is, somewhere between Mecanhelas (Nyasa) and north Milange (Zambézia), an area with a low concentration of Christian missions. According to a 1943 report by Dr. E. G. Marcus, quoted by A. Morgado,16 a team of three missionaries led by Maxwell Mapham Webster, left the Malamulo Mission (Nyasaland) to Munhamade (Lugela), on June 20, 1933, to check the fauna, flora and the population where the first Adventist mission in Mozambique would be located. The site was named “Munguluni,” meaning “main highway,” according to Webster, i.e., a busy road crossed the area. As such, according to oral tradition, there was a large tree along this road, where travelers rested from their wearisome journeys. Webster rested under the shade of that “sacred Christian tree” to regain his strength.

We can trace another two meanings from the word Munguluni: 1) joining the radical Mungulu (log) and the emphatic exclamation suffix ni (place), Mungulini would mean “place of logs” and 2) when mu is associated to the radical Ngulu , added to the emphatic exclamation suffix ni, the word Munguluni would then mean “there where the ngulu live, that is, the country of the a-ngulu/a-nguru.” As such, according to Mozambican ethnography, Ngulu/Nguru was a variant of the Lomwe from the Zambézia interior, a belittling name given to them by the Yao, to indicate the bordering people that had formerly been their slaves.18 It was in the territory of the Amanyawa, a variant of the Lomwe, that the first official mission of the Seventh-day Adventist Church was established.

The formal acknowledgement of the Seventh-day Adventist community of Africa was made public by an order by the Governor General of the Overseas Province of Mozambique on the April 30, 1939. Adventist educational work was officially recognised by a governmental decree dated November 6, 1940, whose main focus were: 1) to teach literacy in Portuguese; 2) to teach principles of hygiene and public health; and 3) to teach them to till the land for their intellectual, moral, and material development. In 1957, the first training course for teachers and Bible instructors was organised in Munguluni, under the leadership of Joaquim A. Morgado and Amadeu da Cruz Caldeira. On September 7, 1963, Munguluni Adventist College was granted a charter.

Until 1946, when Webster left Munguluni, the mission did not have any branches besides Bible instructors, with small rudimentary and extremely rural teaching stations located in Nangoma, Corio, Mirriua, Marrucia, Mulumbu, Muremua, Mutumula, Pucia, Limbué, and Zalimba. Except for Zalimba, all these teaching stations were part of the Lugela administrative division. The objectives of the mission were redefined by the Mansells (1947-1953). The work was extended to other regions, with a greater focus on urban centers. Their evangelical dynamism culminated with the organisation of mission work in the city of Beira, the capital of Manica and Sofala Provinces, and in the city of Lourenço Marques.
The Adventist missions in Angola and Mozambique were integrated into the Portuguese African Union Mission, with headquarters in Bongo (Angola), from October 1, 1950, being joined to the Southern Europe Division, with headquarters in Bern, Switzerland. These administrative transitions facilitated the flow of Portuguese missionaries to Mozambican soil and ended the English missionaries’ period.

In 1957 the Portuguese East Africa Mission (Mozambique Union Mission) comprised of Munguluni (1935) and Milange (1954) Missions was organized. When the main offices of the Mozambique Mission were transferred from Munguluni to Lourenço Marques (Maputo) in 1963, there were in all nine mission stations: Munguluni (1935), Milange (1954), Beira (1958), Mocuba (1958), Tacuane (1958), Marrucia (1959), Mirriua (1960), Lourenço Marques (1963), and Mecanhelas (1963). The mission stations in Munguluni, Beira, and Lourenço Marques were under the supervision of Portuguese missionaries, and the remaining six were run by indigenous workers. The native leaders were Aarão Nampuessa (Milange Mission); Manuel da Costa Mucelo (Mocuba Mission); Victorino Coroa (Tacuane and Marrucia Mission); Frederico Magalhães (Mirriua Mission).

After Munguluni, the district of Beira was the second most important center of Adventist missions. Beira was characterised by a significant white community and a few Catholic missions. There were also a few foreign religious communities. Among these were the Greek Orthodox Church Community, the American Board Mission, the United Methodist Free Church, and the Zion Christian Church. These foreign congregations, with the exception of the Greek Orthodox Church, were mainly tribal and of a nationalist nature.

Daniel Harawa is considered the founder of Adventist missions in Beira district. In 1951 Daniel Harawa and his wife Ernestina were both baptised in Manga by Ernest P. Mansell, and they became zealous pioneers of the Adventist work in Beira. Daniel Harawa witnessed to his colleagues and neighbours about his faith, distributing literature received from the Voice of Prophecy. Among his first disciples were Bernardino Pene Mabote, Lucas Fazenda Waya, baptised in 1956 by Manuel Lourinho, and Muare Bande baptized in 1959 by Abilio Thungululu. The zeal for the gospel and the passion for the soon return of Jesus made these first fruits the foremost heralds of the Adventist message among the speakers of xitswa (Mabote), xisena (Chemba), and xindau languages.


### Church Administrative Units

The special committee held in Lourenço Marques, on August 8, 1972, under the leadership of de C. L. Powers, in the presence of officials from the Mozambique Mission and 17 workers and lay members, approved the recommendation from the mid-year committee meeting of the Trans-Mediterranean Division to change the Mozambique Mission to the Mozambique Union-Mission, effective January 1, 1973.

The national territory was then geographically divided into three sections, the Southern Mission, Central Mission, and Northern Mission. The Southern Mission of Mozambique, headquartered in Lourenço Marques (Maputo), was responsible for the administration of Adventist communities from south of the 22nd parallel, that is, the provinces of Inhambane, Gaza, and Maputo, a region inhabited by the Tswa, Thonga, Ronga, Nhai, Changana and Chopi. The Central Mission offices in Beira was charged to coordinate the work in the provinces of Sofala, Manica, and Tete. This region was traditionally inhabited by the people of the lower Zambezi and the Shona-Karanga.

The Northern Mozambique Mission, established in Mocuba, was responsible for overseeing a vast area that included the provinces of Zambezia, Nampula, Cabo Delgado, and Niassa. This ecclesiastical administrative model remained until November 2003, when the Northeastern Mission was officially opened in Nampula, in January 2004, which enabled the split of the Nampula and Cabo Delgado Provinces from the Northern Mission, with Zambezia and Niassa part of the current Northern Mozambique Mission.

The Mozambique Union Mission was attached to the Euro-African Division from 1972-2002, and part of the Southern Africa-Indian Ocean Division from 2003-present.

### Important Points of Membership

The statistical data of the Munguluni Mission for 1957 records only 987 baptized members, who congregated in eight organized churches. In more than 23 years of formal activities (1933-1956), those 987 baptized members correspond to a growth rate of 45 baptisms per year. Three years later, there were 16 churches with a baptized membership of 2,615, and eight years later, in 1968, the territory reached 9,745 baptized members, of whom only 368 lived outside Munguluni Mission. For the first time in its history, the Adventist Church in Mozambique exceeded, in 1967, 1,000 new baptisms per year. Almost 30 years passed until, in 1995, the Adventist Church in Mozambique reached 10,000 annual baptisms.
The biggest concern of the local church leadership was to spread the gospel to unreached ethnic groups, giving a greater focus on the Islamic coastal regions. Primeiro Manuel Mofate, Santos Lenco, and Pedro Donça Tatamelane were the first young missionaries to explore the predominantly Islamic regions in the provinces of Cabo Delgado and Zambezia. In order to support this work, the church hymnal was translated into the *Emacua* and *Emanyawa* languages.

A similar approach was used in the Southern Mission, where Bernardino Mabote and Bernardo F. Muabsa translated into *xitswa* the 43 lessons of the Church Baptismal Manual and the 20 lessons of Home Course, as well as the Adventist hymnal. Despite the poetic and literary limitations, these publications are still used today among Adventists as important praise and spiritually uplifting tools.

2018 statistics show that there are 370,568 Adventists in Mozambique among the almost 31,000,000 habitants, more than 1.2 percent of the total population.

**Effects of Political Development on the Church**

The colonial period was marked by three fundamental factors: 1) The political-religious climate, 2) diplomatic tensions between Portugal and England, and 3) the war for independence (1964-1974). Rui Pereira reports that the Bishop of Beira, O. Sebastião Soares de Resende, with about 45 priests and missionaries from all the missions of the Catholic Diocese, after a meeting held between in October 1953, wrote a document in which they recommended to the government of the colony of Mozambique, among many points: “[...] c) to expel the followers of the Protestant sects of Zionism, Seventh Day Adventists and the Watch Tower that nurture subversive ideas; d) not to admit to the service of the State, in public, Protestant and Mohammedan indigenous organizations; [...] (p) and absolutely prevent mosques from being built in all regions of the Province”. As a result of this demand, all the activities of foreign missions in Mozambique were restricted and placed under constant watch. José Júlio Gonçalves added, “If it is not possible to stop Protestantism in Mozambique, then at least some of their mentors must be Portuguese.”

The struggle for the liberation of Mozambique ended with the Lusaka Agreement signed on September 7, 1974, between FRELIMO and the Portuguese colonial government of Marcelo Caetano. This agreement fast-tracked the attainment of Mozambique’s national independence. A transition government was set up in Mozambique that was initially tolerant of religious freedom. This was enshrined in the first constitution, which ensured citizens the right to believe or not believe. However, activities carried out by religious institutions had to conform to state laws. Many faithful believers from various religious congregations were mercilessly persecuted, imprisoned, tortured and killed. Others were sent to re-education camps throughout the country, and foreign missionaries were expelled.

In 1977, FRELIMO accentuated and radicalized its anti-religious policy. Religion was conceived as the enemy of human progress, which was to be replaced by materialism and the cult of the masses. Religious activities were restricted to take place only inside church buildings. In communal villages, religious activities were banned outright. According to Guilherme Mendes da Pena, Mozambique Union Mission president (1980-1984), the number of churches and members increased significantly in this period. The years 1976-1989 were marked by the dissolving of regional and tribal rivalries among Adventist leaders.

In the 1990s, a new constitution introduced the Democratic Constitutional State, founded on the separation and interdependence of powers and on pluralism, establishing a democratic environment that led to the first multiparty elections. With this new constitution, minority tribe groups began to openly claim their integration into the leadership of the missions. In consequence, two events marred the history of the Seventh-day Adventist Church in Mozambique: the revolt of the pastors in 1993 and 2007, and the convening, in 1994, of the first administrative general meetings for “free and democratic elections” of the Mozambique Union Mission’s leaders by the Euro-Africa Division, to establish representative democracy in the church.

**Mozambique Union Mission Presidents**


**SOURCES**


Wilson, Neal C. “Extracts From President’s Report.” *African Division Outlook*, July 11, 1929.


NOTES

1. Dr. José Gonçalves, in his book titled *Estatuto do Direito Privado dos Indígenas da Colónia de Moçambique* (Private Law Statutes of the Indigenous People in the Mozambique Colony), identifies twelve main ethnic groups and 35 other smaller groups or tribes in Mozambique. The naming and distribution of these tribes is quite different from the one carried out by António Augusto Pereira Cabral.


3. The following tribes were part of the Senga: Tauaras, also known as Macarangos or Atongas, Makangas, Manikos, Massingires, Borores, and Maganjas.


