

Christians and citizenship:

A critical study of the contribution of ecumenical Protestants to the citizenship of Africans in Kenya from 1918 to 1982

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ABSTRACT

This thesis is a historical study of the joint efforts that ecumenical Protestants made towards the citizenship of Africans in Kenya, between 1918 and 1982. It is based on archival documents including minutes, government and church reports, correspondence, biographies and interviews as primary sources. Though it analysed actual documents of the past, it is written as a narrative history.

While taking note of the origin and development of citizenship as a concept, its theories, and how it came to Kenya under the colonial state, this thesis presents findings from primary sources of how ecumenical Protestants organized themselves and made efforts towards the citizenship of Africans. 'These efforts were aimed at improving Africans' representation in decision making organs of the state concerning labour, taxation and property rights and facilitating them through better race relations and civic empowerment.

Its main argument is that though individual Protestant missions and churches had the primary task of spreading Christianity, their joint efforts in critical moments of Kenya's socio-economic and political history between 1918 and 1982, were important for Africans' citizenship. They did this either directly through advocacy and representation or indirectly through information and civic empowerment. Their efforts contributed to the gains that Africans made from exclusion, to localised representation in 1924, to limited national representation in 1944, and to full representation or full citizenship at independence beginning 1963.

Its main findings were that of the efforts that ecumenical Protestants made towards the rights of Africans, whether by direct or indirect engagement as noted above, or both, only those that got secured in suitable laws and policies, amounted to gains towards their integration to citizenship, because the state could be held accountable to enforce. The efforts that Ecumenical Protestants made revealed important dynamics that underlay how church to state influence happened.

As a result, this researcher recommends that the churches maintain their ecumenical efforts towards justice and good governance through advocating for good laws and policies and improve on their civic education by clarifying their theology of public engagement for Kenya's largely Christian citizenry.