



The Nature of Christianity in Northern Tanzania: Environmental and Social Change 1890-1916

Robert B. Munson

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The Nature of Christianity in Northern Tanzania explores the relationship between the region's environment and social change during the pivotal, often over-looked German colonial period (1890-1916). The work connects changes in the landscape order and biogeography closely with the beginning Christianization of the three groups on the mountains – the Chagga on Mt Kilimanjaro and the Meru and Arusha peoples of Mt Meru.

The work tells a story which is ordered, green and Christian. It looks at both new ideas and plants brought by the Germans to their colony in East Africa. The introduced German-like order and the exotic plants changed the landscape during the short period of German rule. However, the changes taking root in the African societies, driven primarily by the introduction of Christianity, led to an acceptance and adaptation of these imports. Religious change is one of the most profound elements of social change and it deeply impacted the world view of the Chagga, Meru and Arusha peoples. Within all three groups, their worldview was closely tied to religion – there is no difference between the natural and social spheres nor the religious and secular worlds.

In the interaction between the German and Africans, the ideas, use of plants and even Christianity became altered, Africanized, and finally propagated by the African groups, helping to create the new African/European landscape. This heritage lives on up till today, growing on the landscape, nurtured by the changes in the societies of the Chagga, Meru and Arusha peoples on Mt Kilimanjaro and Mt Meru.

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