

About Malawi



Customs, Traditions, and Religion

The customs, traditions and religion of the tribes that inhabit the land called Malawi run deep and far into its colorful past.

The Chewa, members of the Bantu tribe of Central Africa, arrived from the Congo region in an attempt to get away from wars and famines. They brought many traditions, among which can still be seen in the Gule Wamkulu, a secret society recognized by their masked dress and dance. The Chewa have also been strongly influenced by European religions following closely the major Catholic and Protestant denominational themes.



The Angoni still rehearse and present vivid pictures of their past as a warrior tribe, the descendants of the once powerful Zulu Nation of Southern Africa. They migrated north into the regions of Malawi, Mozambique and Zambia and are scattered in pockets of villages throughout the region.

The Yao tribes along Lake Malawi and the southern region recall with pride their history of establishing trade and commerce along the lakeshore and the delta lands near the Shire River. Yao's are often

Muslim in their religious practice because of association with the Middle East and Arab slave traders during the time of slavery.



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In the northern part of Malawi are the Tumbuka. They also come from Bantu background as with the Chewa, and are often well educated and prosperous. In their traditional religious practices it is believed the witch doctor has the ability to heal illness through a dance called Vimbuza.

The Tonga Tribe is also centered in the north near Lake Malawi. They are traditionally a fishing culture, and live primarily from fish and cassava. During their long history the people of the Tonga Tribe practiced a religion that worshipped their dead ancestors.

With David Livingstone, the European explorer and missionary came the religions of the west, primarily the many forms of Christianity. Because Livingstone was from the Church of Scotland, today's Malawi reflects that influence with the Presbyterian or CCAP church the largest in the nation, followed by the Roman Catholic Church, as well as a number of other Protestant groups. The non-denominational Churches of Christ have established themselves a major influence especially in rural village areas, with an estimated 4,000 congregations nationwide.

In spite of such diverse backgrounds the peaceful people of Malawi live together in harmony today.



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Change

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