

- Population: 500,000 in Tanzania

(There are also 1 million in Malawi and 450,000 in Mozambique.)

The Yao of Tanzania live in the south along the Mozambique border. Mainly peasants, they raise animals and have small businesses, while living in small groups of clans. Traditions are passed on during initiation ceremonies carried out with dancing and other activities. Women receive sexual instruction before marriage, and there are special initiation rites for women at the beginning of their first pregnancy.

Around 1800, Arabs started slave-trading in the Yao region. The Yao enslaved people from neighboring tribes and sold them to the Arabs. Through the slave trade, the Yao started to practice Islam. The abolition of the slave trade in Tanzania in 1873 did not please the Yao, and this resulted in negative relations with their colonial rulers. As the religion of the colonial rulers, Christianity was hated, despite the introduction of medical care and education. The Yao did not allow their children to attend schools, fearing that their children would start eating pork or become Christians.

At present about 95 % of the Yao of Tanzania are Muslims. Islam has become a central part of Yao culture, so much so that when a Yao turns his back on Islam he cuts himself off from his tribe and his clan. He is completely abandoned and will not be given any assistance. In addition, he may be threatened to make him return to his original Islamic faith.



► Pray

- The Yao do not consider schooling essential, and parents sometimes have to be forced to send their children to school. Pray for a change in worldview about education.
- Sexual instruction given during initiation rites tends to lead to poor morals, and the young develop a promiscuous lifestyle. Where television is available it is also having a negative influence. Pray for a change in Yao society that leads to a more moral lifestyle among the young people.
- New believers often find it hard to meet their basic needs, which encourages them to return to Islam. Pray that the Yao churches will develop a greater ability to help believers.
- Christian radio service is limited in time and frequency. Pray for more workers and financial support so that the ministry can touch hearers for Christ.