

The Kerewe of Tanzania



Kerewe woman

There are approximately 241,000 Kerewe people located in the northwest part of Tanzania, mainly on Ukerewe, the largest island in Lake Victoria and one of the most densely populated areas in Tanzania. The island is accessible by ferry, and the major town on Ukerewe is Nansio, which is located not far from the ferry dock.

Ukerewe is a rocky island about 50 km long covered in small hills, with quite a bit of variation in the terrain ranging from flat land with cassava fields and fruit plantations to rocky and sandy shores. Most of the Kerewe people are subsistence farmers or fishermen.

There are a high number of albinos on Ukerewe Island. As in the rest of Tanzania, they are in danger because people associate them with witchcraft.

In most parts of Ukerewe the dominant religion is Christianity, but in some areas traditional religions still have a strong hold on the minds and practices. Although a New Testament was published in 1946, it is not being used and in a recent survey only one copy was even located.

Primary Religion:

Christianity

Disciples (Matt 28:19):

Many

Churches:

Yes

Scripture Status (Matt 28:20):

New Testament

Population (date):

241,000 (2009)



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Have They Heard The Gospel?

Response to the Gospel	The church among the Kerewe people is stable but largely nominal, with some exceptions. There are several denominations present on the island.
Is the Word of God Translated?	There was a New Testament published in 1946 in the Kerewe language, but it is no longer in use or even available. A Bible translation project was planned to be started in 2015. Some pastoral training may be needed. Some churches on Ukerewe have discussed the proposed translation project and were unified; however, there may be churches who do not have much contact and are unaware of the plans. The Bible used throughout the denominations is the Swahili Bible.
Hindrances to Scripture use	The orthography of the 1946 New Testament is out of date and it is widely unavailable, only one copy having been located in a 2014 survey. There is typically low literacy in Kerewe, since primary education in Tanzania is in Swahili. Many church congregations among the Kerewe include speakers of neighboring languages such as Jita or Sukuma which makes it difficult to use just Kerewe.
Bilingualism	Most Kerewe people learn to speak Swahili as they grow up, as it is the language of wider communication and the medium for primary education in Tanzania. They may also be bilingual in some of the surrounding languages such as Kara, Jita, or Zinza, due mainly to contact with people from those groups. In villages on Ukerewe the majority are Kerewe, but they may also be somewhat mixed with other language groups.
Other Forms of Gospel Presentations	
Audio Recordings Available	There are short audio Bible stories and evangelistic messages
Literature	None
Radio	None
Church Denominations	Seventh Day Adventist, Mennonites, Anglican, Pentecostal Assemblies of God, Tanzanian Assemblies of God, Roman Catholic, Last Church, and African Inland Church