

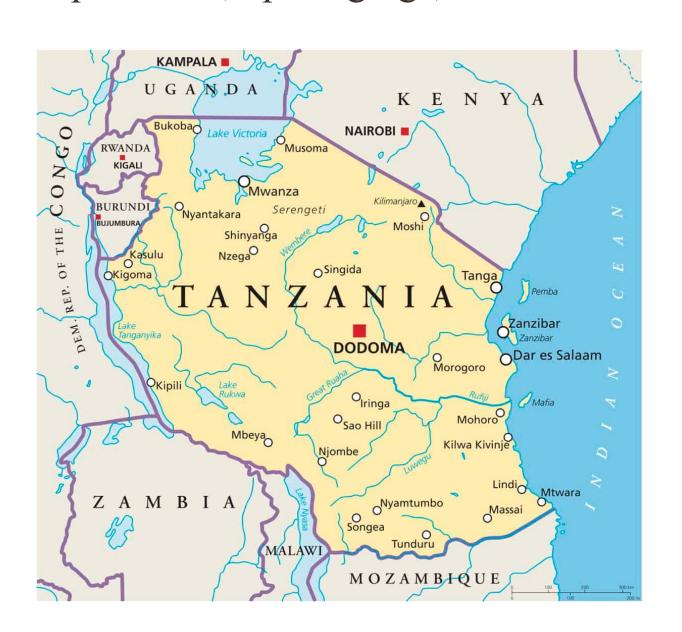
# The Changing Definition of "Womanhood" in Meru, Tanzania

# Alexis Dorman, Kayla McLoone, Sophie Winer, and Dr. Beth Ann Williams



# Introduction

For over a century now, women's rights movements have been at the forefront of activism in the global west. With this in mind, the same cannot be said about the eastern part of the world: more specifically, Tanzania. While women have been advocating for equal rights and opportunity throughout all of history, the changing definition of "womanhood," in Africa, has caught the attention of others in recent decades. That being said, compared to the global west, Tanzanian women have an entirely different mindset on what it means to be a woman. Furthermore, it is both relevant and essential to compare the history of the western, women's rights movement and Tanzanian women's movement. This comparison can be made by looking at the historical accounts of American feminists and firsthand accounts of Christian women living in Meru, Tanzania. Looking beyond the feminist perspective, I will also look at the similarity between women's experiences, upbringings, and careers.

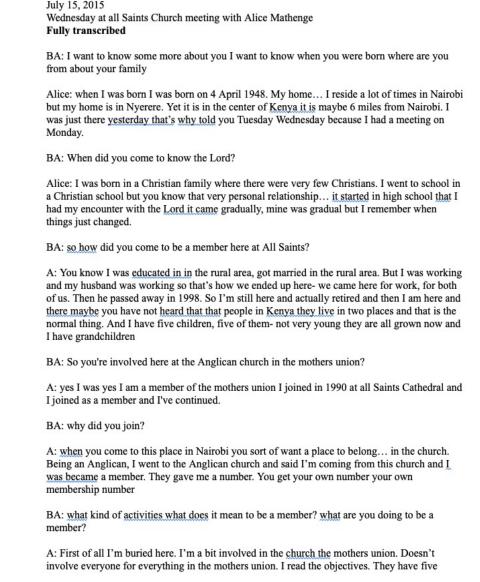


### **Abstract**

How has the history of the western feminist movement impacted the meaning of "womanhood" in Meru, Tanzania? For over a century women's rights have been at the forefront of social transformation, globally. But the definition of feminism differs from place to place. The changing definition of "womanhood," in Tanzania, is one that has recently caught the attention of experts. The Tanzanian social structure is changing, and progress is being made. Even so, there are still some norms that westerners struggle to understand. With the Lutheran church dominating, women have an entirely different idea of what it means to "be a woman." I have utilized the transcripts produced by Dr. Beth Ann Williams from her time spent in Meru, Tanzania and have found numerous themes that are consistently mentioned across interviews. These reoccurring themes are worth looking into further and act as the foundation for the research l conducted and am presenting at the symposium.

### Methods

Most of my research materials were collected by Dr. Beth Ann Williams from her time spent in Meru, Tanzania. While in Tanzania, she conducted dozens of interviews with people in the community asking about day-to-day life, the role the church plays in society, and so much more. I have worked to filter through the interview transcripts compiled by Dr. Williams: analyzing the information presented, categorizing what is said, and identifying common themes. By categorizing the information, I am able to collect qualitative data to use for my research. In addition to using my mentor's research, I have also looked at a variety of peer-reviewed sources pertaining to the research I am doing. By gathering information from external sources, in addition to the interview transcripts, I have been able to gain a better understanding of the history of Tanzania, the current way society is structured, and the role women generally play in Tanzanian society.



objectives, based on the family and having been brought up in the church I had knew about them So I didn't get lost. I knew when I come to the mothers union I will have my place. When I came in it was interesting I came in 1981 and a 1983 they made me their secretary I don't know why I served until 1988 and what time I became the treasure in 1990. I was getting busier and busier. You want to know our objectives I have them here. (looking at the page- able to make a copy)

We are here for all saints cathedral but we relate to the mothers in other diocese- we communion together, we relate especially with the England because Mary Sumner was the one who formed the union, trying to help the wives of pastors who were young and raising children and she has gone through a few problems therefore she began to the union. You go anywhere in the world and you will get the mothers union and basically we are the same.

BA: Are you in communication with other diocese around the world?

A: Yes we are, but the leadership the patron will help us quite a bit... the patron is the wife of the bishop. she has more opportunities to go and visit the others. and then she comes.

We join the world wide Day of prayer for women. You know they make one booklet this time we are praying for ###... so throughout we are praying for that particular nation or learning about their charities and their strengths

sometimes we go for retreats. we go for seminars especially now with in Kenya our mothers are involved in these seminars, like this August we visited Embu in eastern Kenya for a week. we are waiting to hear what we are going to discuss there.

So we do fellowship, women from all over Kenya members will come to that retreat.

BA: What about this church here? Do you meet on a regular basis?

A: we meet once a month and if there is something that needs to be done we are informed in the church and we do it. See one of our objectives in fact this will tell you about us we need to pray for our children and whatever. Our children married. Right no

for our children and whatever. Our children married. Right now we have the challenge of that homosexuality that had come. We say no we made our stand even if Obama comes we will tell him no

objective three is how can we maintain our fellowship of Christians united by prayer an fellowship. So then we have how we do in fellowship we pray quite a bit it's part of us we pray for the nation we meet together to encourage one another especially with all these things that at coming. You find even that some of our children especially the girls sometimes they get pregna now it's to counsel the mothers that a sin has been committed yes. But we don't send them out the church we discourage abortion and you know that even in the church especially the fathers they want to do a lot of hiding not talking about it but for us we wanted to come out and that we bring her back it's one of the challenges

we have we have a strong role in counseling the young people before they get married even both boys and girls for the church

In service of the church we are mothers but then we are involved in other activities I am involved in the ministry of prayer here for many years the pastors have given me the honor to

# Image Descriptions

The images you see here are examples of what the interview transcripts and spreadsheet of interview data looks like. With dozens of interviews to get through, it was extremely important that my research group and I focus on condensing the information into the spreadsheet that is easy to understand.

rahum Misomani dan 22 2027 Singhii dasa	1949 47-48 years old at the time of the Interview	nale	Married in 1999	Illia wife is Salome Salome is a teachtr	Four Children One Child in Form 4 One Child in Form 4 One Child in Form 3 One Child is in Form 3 One Child is in Form 3 One Child in Service 3 One Child in Serv	Obseptions of Mulable  Administration of Mulable  Municide In America Principles of the  Municide In America Principles of the  Municide In America Principles of  Municide In America Municide Information  Municiples  Mun	Lutheran	Tanzania	Eliberates on pensanil experience with Thoma saved.** Affector ess formans 23 when talking about the the elders' church responsibilities. References Netwess 10.25 when talking about man and woman in church. References Adam and Eve when discussing the differing persystolies between men and women.	NA.	NA.	Father was an elder of the cl He was in church as a child to Abstralm is a Lutherin become, but talks about generation no, but talks about generation and are often the breadwin
poli Yose Kitomary Sep 26 2016 Kefundi.docx	1962	female	doesn't say	10	3	sels mik	Lutheran	TZ	none			and are often the breadwing said science and tech are be
polis Sep 29 2016 Kofundi.docx	(7) 1958	female	n		n	(1)	Pertecostal	TZ				
nithe Eurazae Nov 7 2016 Moshi.docx	,	female	widaw	just acknowledged- ha died young	2 (both daughters with Master's Degrees)	Runs an MGO that holistically empowers women; on the Church executive committee	Lutheran	12	sone	she feels very pleased with the work she is doing and said that testimonies assert they are doing much positive work	she feels very strong pride for the work her organization does; she also displays tremendous insight and speaks vert factually and confidently	Yes, says that women such a because they did not have t gave opportunities to her an than her mother She talks about how her mo the is (had 11 kids, still acts.)
hi Kitomari iza 4 2017 Sing'isi.docx	1946	female	never married lone childly		1 (gri)	Retined teacher, solved inspects	Protectant	TZ (lived in Lesotho)		shows strong pride when speaking about God and her daughter's relationship with God, enterine gratitude towards God for her greegight.	he feels saferess when speaking about the conditions of women (second class, many married young, still expected to do housework despite increased employment), that also retains hope for the improving statution or werener, calls the church "just an institution," but gets a tot of hope from concepts of God	she is (had 11 kids, still active mother's generation for more have much say in the family but had no decision making women weren't priests until encouraged education for all equally when distributing fartises!
and the second second	1340		never manned quite comp		1,917	Attended Primary and Secondary School Member of the Mothers' Union	T-OCCUPANT.	LESOS OF		Out to the ejeagen	and grad a rot or risper from concept or one	
						Member of the Mothers' Union  - Was the secretary and treasurer at different points Worked in the prisons						
ce Mathenge-July 15, 2016 interview in Nairobi docx	04.04.1948				5 children, all grown	Continues to mention she was a "working woman" but does not specify an occupation						
ce Mathenge-July 15, 2016 interview in Nairobi dock ande & Elli Nasari Jan 6 2017 Singisi dock	68 years old at the time of the interview	Female	wncowed, her husband passed in 1998	Alice mentions her spouse multiple times, reiterating that he had passed	Ance also has grandchildren	ane is currently resired	Anglican	Kenya	NA .	nea.	NA .	NA
				Matried to Peter Algas. Peter was a Funtació effece.		Attended from year date contains a shoul.  Attended categor for easy says. (Morroya, Tatahan Callego) Core year teaching intermining offer antending citiga.  Tangle at generates shouls.  Beamers a school engentie. Completed, a shouldow's Organe.  Managed in finites they are oblinations as completed.					She was urbagay leding up to her internsity Secure or a norse, internsity Secure she intelligible and to be a norse.	
ande Akyoo Jan 3 2017 Kofundi docx	12.10.1957 59 years old at the time of the interview.	female	widowed	Peter was a livestock officer. Peter died in 2009.	4 Children Her last born child has completed Form 2.	Participates in her church's fellowship.	Lutheran	TZ	Continuously "thanks God."	She was very happy after experiencing what it would be like to be a teacher.	Balancing marriage an work was a challenge for Anande.	Talks about how her parent Anande's grandmother help
					doesn't mention any kids (said she doesn't like to be at home alone so she likes to get out of the house—not sure if this implies							
na Akyoo doox	1965	female	married	no no	anything about lack of children)	caregiver an orphanage run by the church	Lutheran	TZ			Had bad feelings about a woman who came from American to Tanzania because she was not a Christian	her dad had 3 wives and 3
na Mwisa Jan 20 2007 Hilala.docx eri Oct 29 2016 Simelai.docx	Jan 23 1959	female male	married married	Married to a Lutheran pastor who is very demeaning to women  N/A chas w/fe)	3 sons	Inverse, worked in church for a white, now works for a political party and aspires to work in politics.  In the politics of the politics.	Lutheran none specified	12	"Moses came from the mountain and found Aaron warring the earning the threw the stone down because he didn't leave thin like that"	Hopeful that Tanzania will eventually elect a woman, despite many people telling her they won't and large structural and idealogical barriers	Very unhappy with mass patriarchal norms (women in church, education, and business are not encouraged or respected; men treated her like an assistant even though she had a very inportant job within the drurch; unhappy that her husband would belittle her for being a woman second and unhappy with teh bahavior of wernen	yes, her father was a great r (brothers always had to help
nati Vaaya Oct 6 2016 Manyata docx	1962	female	married (husband Muslim)	NACTOR BOOK	4 (3 living)	farmer & market seiler	AMEC	TZ	down because he don't feave him like that		attended and distagly with the ballwist of worter	10
guttina Richard Swal Sep 28 2016 Eng Medium Schael.docx	1969	female	married	yes (farmer and businessman)	2	teacher	none specified	TZ			resentment (feels worren are left with entire workload of raining/taking care of family, and wormen don't have as much freedom to werk or study, than half all thankful than the situation for women in society, education, and the workplace is impreving/feels that the church helps women) hopeful (hopes that situation for women will continue to improve)	yes (parents were farmers, from her father)
tseba Pallangyo Sep 29 2016 Kofundi.docx	1958	female	married	yes (he lives in town)	3	herder and a farmer (owns 1 cow)	Christian-Lutheran	TZ				по
i Makas & Imani Mfinanga Dec 30 2016 Kilala.docx	1930, and 1964	female	married	yes, she said she had to move because of her husband's job	3, and 6	farmer and teacher	Christian	TZ	NA .		feels distressed that children now don't have the same workload and are getting lazy	said women in the past ha
						Attended primary school Worked in her parents' shop				Christina feels blessed that she is with her children and that her children are able to receive an education.	Christina's financial situation can be challenging.	Christina mentions her par Christina's parents believe
ristian Mwanga Jan 17 2017 Kifala.docx	1962 54-55 years old at the time of the interview	Female	Married at age 24	She mentions her husband multiple times: talking about marriage and his occupation	Has 5 children — not all of them are completely grown	Raised animals (i.e. cows) Meets with a "vikundi" ??	Lutheran	Tanzania	NA	She enjoys her work — caring for animals	It is apparent that Christina is proud of what the "vikundi" is able to achieve.	Speaks generally about "m mothers were entirely reli
ristina Mitera Dec 6 2016 Kilala docx ris-ACKadministrativess/sitantforMothersUnionApril10.docx												
th Gitau-July 15, 2015- in Nairobl.docx	1917	female	married (widowed in 2011)	yes, she met him in America while she was at school (bit contentious	four children. 7 arandchildren	Traveled a lot for extensive education but was released from government assistance because she changed her course of study, worked at the Ford Foundation and became regional direct	e Anglican	Nairobi, Kenya	2000		was devastatated as a child when she couldn't go to school because she was	father was a huge advocat said they used to have mo
tn ostau- July 15, 2015- in Nairobl.docx	1947	temale	married (widowed in 2011)	because she was sent to America to study, not to wed)	tour children, / grandchildren		Angican	Kenya	none	Happy and fulfilled talking about her	"too little," was a very curious child and was very close with her father	said they used to have mo
th Ngatia May 18 2017 Nairobi.docx	1958	female	27	no	some (#7)	dentist (researches too and is studying nutrition	Presbyterian	TZ	says her friend "speaks in tongues"	friendship with Esther and their prayer and the lives they have touched		
nihi Muneure Ian 13 2017 Isa Kali dorx siradhi Mswla March 9 2017.docx	1965	female	(7) married-she never mentioned		27	Postor & IWF Africa Secretary	Lutheran	172				
abeth Urai Oct 5 2016 Nikoranga.docx	1953	female	22		yes (unclear #)	nuse/matron of hospital	Lutheran	**	lots of mentions of the Word of God	living at boarding secondary school (Lutheron all girls school), working as a nurse and seeing people be treated/healed, being part of women's groups/ministries	hopeful, concerned (primarily concerned with alcoholism and laciness of men/Tathers)	yes (mention of mother a
her Mombo April 26 2017 Nairobi docx		No file	"	in .	yes torones at		Lorentill	14	ALL OF THE BOTS OF the World OF GOD	\$ continued to	- many record	yes (mencion or mother as
nico Kuzwa Jan 7 2017 Uraki.doc nce Usa Pallango Jan 21 2027 Kiala.docx	07-21.1953 62-63 years old at the time of the interview	Female	Married in Christianity	No.	Mentions children when discussing marning prayer at home	Altended both primary and secondary suboul Writed as a clin in States Anthoritists Stayed norse to care for her children Stayed norse to care for her children Stayed norse Writed as a clin in States and states and show children's right Writed and States and States and States and States Writed States and Sta	Lutheron	Tanzania	References 4:13 when talking about education	NA	Believes that men have become lary in regards to religion  Feels strongly about women having a stronger devotion to Christiantly—  "Matri, to some exters, are weak."	Mentions her mother and about being brought up in
Nov 9 Angaza.docx											seems optimistic (says there is lots of help for women and women are able	
line Kingaji Sep 26 2016 Kofundi.docu	1983	female	77	no no	27	business woman (sells agriculture things)	Lutheran	TZ	references praying to God and having trust in God	none mentioned	to do busienss)	10
ida Sep 23 2016- Kofundi docx	1978	female	husband left her		2	food stall seller	Muslim	τz		none	seems very deafeated (says life is very hard)	not directly, but says parer their day (says much in so
istine Nov 24 2016 Moshi.docx	doesnt sav	female	doesn't say		22	head of Women's Department in Lutheran Church Headquarters				enjoys seeing women and children succeed in her work		
some Nov 24 2016 Moshi dock	coesne say	remate	opesn't say	no .	doesn't say	neae or women's Department in Lutheran Church Headquarters	Lumeran	1Z	no	enjoys seeing women and children succeed in her work		



# Results

While I do not have any sort of affirmative results yet, my preliminary results are very telling. To start, I have found a wide variety of common themes that exist across multiple interviews that I have analyzed. For example, women with greater amounts of education tend to have more progressive views on the role women play in society. Additionally, women who have the opportunity to travel to places outside of Tanzania (like the United States) have a more progressive outlook on a woman's place in society, as well. At this point I have not seen any type of correlation between the age of the interviewee and their perspective of a woman's role in society, but this could change as I continue to analyze the interview documents.



I have only looked at and thoroughly analyzed the interview transcripts compiled by Dr. William thus far.

That being said, I do not have any definitive information on the changing definition of womanhood in Tanzania and how it compares to the changes that occurred in the United States during the rise of the woman's rights movement in the early 20th century.

Nonetheless, the preliminary results that I have gathered from analyzing the interviews leave me optimistic that there are, in fact, similarities between the two movements I am comparing. I will have more complete results once I have the opportunity to analyze American interviews as well.

# **Next Steps**

I plan to illustrate my research in a way that is informative, creative, and easy to understand. Using a digital media platform, like Adobe Illustrator, I will take the information I gathered from Dr. Williams' interviews and the information collected from additional sources and use it to illustrate the overlaps between the American women's rights movement and Tanzanian women's movement. I plan to create a portfolio of approximately fifteen works consisting of digital illustrations (4 works), hand lettered pieces (6 works), and brainstorming pages (5 works). This final phase of my research project will creatively depict the conclusions I have drawn and present my research in a way that is engaging for a more general audience.

# Acknowledgements

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