

THE AFRICAN UNIVERSITIES

Proportion of students to religious belief

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(KIPA, Catholic News Agency, Fribourg. Translated from the German).

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In Africa, Catholics and Protestants are well represented in the Universities, the latter more than the former. Christians of the different confessions form the majority of the academic youth, because this first generation of students is mostly the product of either Protestant or Catholic schools. In Africa, south of the Sahara, relatively few Muslims enjoy university education. In Nigeria, for instance, the Muslims form 40 - 50% of the population. Yet at the University College of Ibadan, there are only 20 - 30 Muslims out of a total of 700 students. In the British territories of East and West Africa, the % of Protestants receiving higher education is greater than the overall population %. This is due to the fact that the Protestants settled in these parts before the English speaking Catholic missionaries, and opened Middle Schools earlier on. This also holds for Ghana where the education policy (if we may use such a term) of Catholic and Protestant missionaries differed. The Catholic missionaries tended to concentrate on primary education in the villages while the Protestants paid more attention to secondary schools.

In Sub-Sahara Africa, there are 8 Universities and University Colleges. Six Institutes are neutral, while two (Lovanium University in the Belgian Congo and the Pius XII University College of Basutoland) are Catholic. Ghana (450 students), Nigeria (700) and Uganda (750) have University Colleges attached to the University of London. Makerere College (Uganda) also serves Kenya and Tanganyika. Fourah Bay College (270 students) in Sierra Leone is part of the University of Durham, Great Britain.

Percentage of Catholics

The % of Catholics in these Colleges varies between 15 and 30%, Catholics being most numerous in Makerere College. All these Colleges have a Catholic chaplain. In Ghana Fr. John Koster is chaplain and a lecturer in the physics department. (Fr. Koster is a physicist of international repute. He represented Ghana at the Astronomical Congress in Moscow a few months ago). In Ibadan, Fr. Anthony Foley, the chaplain, lectures in chemistry. In Fourah Bay, the chaplain, Fr. John O'Reilly, lectures in Education. Fr. Paul Foster, an English Dominican, is chaplain at Makerere College. In Ibadan, Fourah Bay and Makerere, there are Catholic University chapels. In Ghana, the chapel is provisional. In all the Colleges, the % of Catholics on the teaching staff is lower than among the students. The lecturers are mostly foreigners. Apart from the few Catholic lecturers, some are active members of the different Protestant faiths (Anglican, Methodist, Presbyterian), while others are agnostics or materialists.



There are few women students of whom a mere handful are Catholics. Of the 450 students in the University College of Ghana last year, 25 were women, and only one or two Catholics. In Ibadan, 53 women students (four Catholics) out of a total of 700 students. In Makerere College, Uganda, 40 women students (three Catholics) out of a total of 570.

The different sections of the student community naturally try to influence student affairs. Among the Catholics, the members of the Legion of Mary are specially active.

The University of Lovanium, Belgian Congo, is five years old and takes 250 students, number which increases every year. It is State-aided. Shortly after Lovanium was founded, the State University of Elizabethville was opened. The Pius XII University College of Basutoland is run by the Oblate Fathers and is intended for English speaking Africans.

The Emperor of Ethiopia offers scholarships to students from other African Universities to study at the University of Addis Abeba. There are two Jesuit Fathers on the teaching staff.

There are 800 students in the University of Khartoum, of whom 30% are Christian, and about 2% Catholic. The remainder are devout Muslims. 25% of the students are pro-Communists, and about 40% in all are Communist sympathisers.

Egypt has one of the leading Muslim Universities in the world. Last year, a new university was opened in Morocco, and a University College founded in Salisbury for the Rhodesias and Nyassaland.

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