

# Political Christianity: Internal Structure and Church Political Activity.

Christopher Rhodes. Harvard University. crhodes@fas.harvard.edu

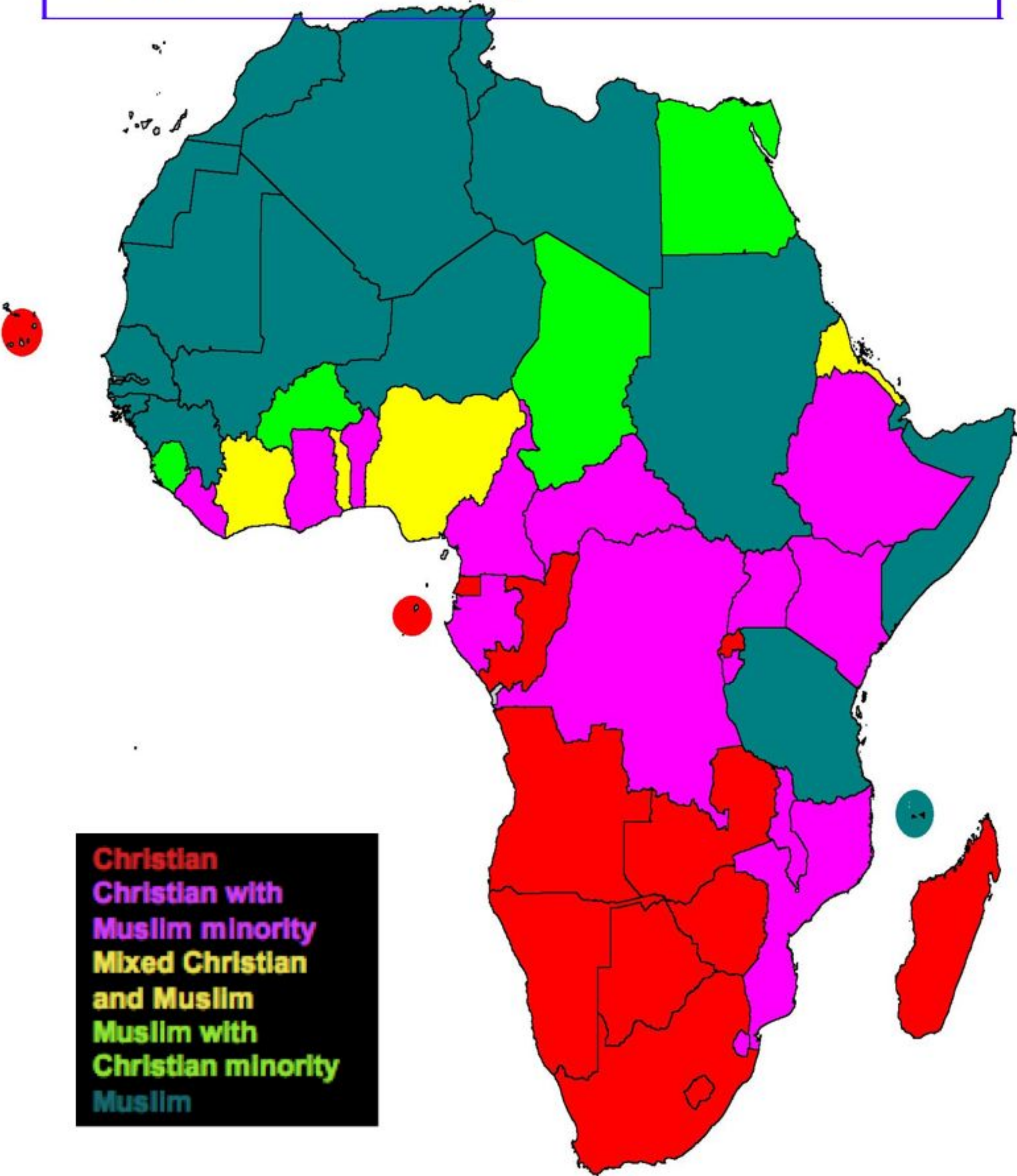
## Introduction

This project seeks to explain the political participation of Christian churches (national-level denominational organizations). In many African countries, churches constitute a significant portion of civil society. Since independence, some churches have emerged as critics of government, some have provided moral and ideological support for those in power, and still others have acted as mediators, taken mixed political positions, or abstained from politics altogether.

This portion of my project examines the organizational determinants of church political participation. It looks at over 200 church-government dyads in 14 Sub-Saharan African nations from independence until today.

## Countries Included

Angola Lesotho Seychelles  
Botswana Madagascar South Africa  
Cape Verde Namibia Zambia  
Congo Rwanda Zimbabwe  
Equatorial São Tomé and  
Guinea Príncipe



## Hypotheses

Hypothesis 1: More hierarchical churches (those that concentrate power in fewer people) are more likely to support governments.

Hypothesis 2: Church leaders with longer tenures in office are more likely to support governments.

Hypothesis 3: Churches with fewer centers of power (leaders or offices not subordinate to other officials within the country) are more likely to support government.

Hypothesis 4: Churches lead by the churches' founders or their relatives are more likely to support government.

## Results Summary

|                | Tables 1 and 2        |                       | Table 3                 | Table 4                 |
|----------------|-----------------------|-----------------------|-------------------------|-------------------------|
|                | Non-Opposition        |                       | Support                 | Partisanship            |
| Episcopal      | -                     | -                     | -                       | +                       |
| Presbyterian   | +                     | +                     | -                       | -                       |
| Congregational | +                     | +                     | -                       | -                       |
| Ctrs of Power  | -                     | -                     | +                       | +                       |
| Tenure         | +                     | +                     | +                       | +                       |
| Founder        | +                     | +                     | -                       | -                       |
| Dynasty        | +                     | +                     | -                       | -                       |
| Color Code     | Positive, Significant | Negative, Significant | Positive, Insignificant | Negative, Insignificant |

## Results

| Table 1: Bivariate Results                                                                                                                                                        |             |            |                        |
|-----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|-------------|------------|------------------------|
| Church Governance Structure                                                                                                                                                       |             |            |                        |
|                                                                                                                                                                                   | Coefficient | Std. Error | Degrees of Freedom     |
| Episcopal                                                                                                                                                                         | -1.665      | (0.723)*   | 122                    |
| Presbyterian                                                                                                                                                                      | +1.518      | (0.740)*   | 122                    |
| Congregational                                                                                                                                                                    | +14.401     | (0.744)*** | 122                    |
| Additional Organizational Variables                                                                                                                                               |             |            |                        |
| Centers of Power                                                                                                                                                                  | -0.469      | (0.189)*   | 131                    |
| Average Tenure of Church Leaders                                                                                                                                                  | +0.041      | (0.022).   | 99                     |
| Founder                                                                                                                                                                           | +15.405     | (0.616)*** | 131                    |
| Dynasty                                                                                                                                                                           | +16.489     | (0.367)*** | 131                    |
| Signif. codes: 0 '***' 0.001 '**' 0.01 '*' 0.05 '.' 0.1 ' ' 1<br>Model=Logit. DV=1 for support of government, 0 for opposition or neutrality/mixed/unclear political orientation. |             |            |                        |
| Table 2: Multivariate Results.                                                                                                                                                    |             |            |                        |
| Regression 1: Church Governance Structure                                                                                                                                         |             |            |                        |
|                                                                                                                                                                                   | Coefficient | Std. Error | Degrees of Freedom     |
| Episcopal                                                                                                                                                                         | -1.483      | (1.074)    | 120                    |
| Presbyterian                                                                                                                                                                      | +0.182      | (1.030)    | 120                    |
| Congregational                                                                                                                                                                    | +13.263     | (1.239)    | 120                    |
| Regression 2: Additional Organizational Variables                                                                                                                                 |             |            |                        |
| Centers of Power                                                                                                                                                                  | -0.330      | (0.177).   | 94                     |
| Average Tenure of Church Leaders                                                                                                                                                  | +0.012      | (0.041)    | 94                     |
| Founder                                                                                                                                                                           | +16.810     | (0.938)*** | 94                     |
| Dynasty                                                                                                                                                                           | +17.252     | (0.654)*** | 94                     |
| Signif. codes: 0 '***' 0.001 '**' 0.01 '*' 0.05 '.' 0.1 ' ' 1<br>Model=Logit. DV=1 for support of government, 0 for opposition or neutrality/mixed/unclear political orientation. |             |            |                        |
| Table 3: Multivariate Results.                                                                                                                                                    |             |            |                        |
| Regression 1: Church Governance Structure                                                                                                                                         |             |            |                        |
|                                                                                                                                                                                   | Coefficient | Std. Error | Degrees of Freedom=120 |
| Episcopal                                                                                                                                                                         | -0.825      | (0.786)    |                        |
| Presbyterian                                                                                                                                                                      | -0.724      | (0.892)    |                        |
| Congregational                                                                                                                                                                    | -15.585     | (0.916)*** |                        |
| Regression 2: Additional Organizational Variables<br>Degrees of Freedom=94                                                                                                        |             |            |                        |
| Centers of Power                                                                                                                                                                  | +0.107      | (0.214)    |                        |
| Average Tenure of Church Leaders                                                                                                                                                  | +0.081      | (0.035)*   |                        |
| Founder                                                                                                                                                                           | -0.109      | (1.031)    |                        |
| Dynasty                                                                                                                                                                           | -0.471      | (0.911)    |                        |
| Signif. codes: 0 '***' 0.001 '**' 0.01 '*' 0.05 '.' 0.1 ' ' 1<br>Model=Logit. DV=1 for support of government or neutrality/mixed/unclear political orientation, 0 for opposition. |             |            |                        |
| Table 4: Multivariate Results.                                                                                                                                                    |             |            |                        |
| Regression 1: Church Governance Structure                                                                                                                                         |             |            |                        |
|                                                                                                                                                                                   | Coefficient | Std. Error | Degrees of Freedom=121 |
| Episcopal                                                                                                                                                                         | +0.347      | (0.688)    |                        |
| Presbyterian                                                                                                                                                                      | -0.693      | (0.731)    |                        |
| Congregational                                                                                                                                                                    | -15.006     | (0.870)*** |                        |
| Regression 2: Additional Organizational Variables<br>Degrees of Freedom=94                                                                                                        |             |            |                        |
| Centers of Power                                                                                                                                                                  | +0.371      | (0.213).   |                        |
| Average Tenure of Church Leaders                                                                                                                                                  | +0.049      | (0.027).   |                        |
| Founder                                                                                                                                                                           | -0.749      | (0.957)    |                        |
| Dynasty                                                                                                                                                                           | -1.343      | (0.724).   |                        |
| Signif. codes: 0 '***' 0.001 '**' 0.01 '*' 0.05 '.' 0.1 ' ' 1<br>Model=Logit. DV=1 for support of government or opposition, 0 for neutrality/mixed/unclear political orientation  |             |            |                        |

## Conclusions

- Episcopal churches seem more likely to oppose governments
- Presbyterian and congregational churches more likely to be mixed or neutral, though latter may result from data scarcity.
- Longer tenure does not have a consistent effect on church leaders' politics.
- Churches with fewer centers of power trend toward neutrality.
- Dynastic churches are less likely to oppose government.

Next Steps:  
Adding Political,  
Ethnic and  
International  
Variables.  
*Thank you for  
reading!*