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The Architect of Civic Space: The Catholic Archdiocese of Mwanza and Tanzania's Democratization, 1961–2019

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Democratization  
Classical Elite Theory  
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**Abstract**

This study investigates the historical contribution of the Roman Catholic Archdiocese of Mwanza to Tanzania's democratization from 1961 to 2019. Moving beyond state-centric accounts of political liberalization, it applies Classical Elite Theory, particularly the frameworks of Mosca and Pareto, to conceptualize the Archdiocese as a specialized non-state sub-elite that expanded and protected civic space. Methodologically, the study addresses the challenge of "archival silence" created by the 2022 closure of regional repositories by using digitized primary records from the Archives of the Missionaries of Africa in Rome (AMAR), specifically the GEN 689, GEN 696, and GEN 206 series, triangulated with oral history interviews and local administrative reports. The findings show that during the Ujamaa single-party era (1961–1992), the Church functioned as a democratic surrogate, preserving autonomous civic spaces against state dominance. After the introduction of multi-party politics in 1992, it became a structural architect of pluralism, with the establishment of St. Augustine University of Tanzania (SAUT) facilitating elite circulation. The study proposes the "Lake Zone Model", demonstrating how autonomous institutions and civic capacity can foster long-term democratic resilience in post-colonial African states.

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**Introduction**

The democratization of Tanzania is frequently framed through the analytical lens of secular political transitions or macro-level policy shifts initiated directly by the state. However, such

state-centric narratives often overlook the localized, institutional laboratories where democratic consciousness is systematically manufactured and sustained. This paper asserts that the Roman Catholic Archdiocese of Mwanza served as a primary institutional architect of civic space in the Lake Zone,

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functioning as a specialized non-state elite during the nation's most critical post-colonial political transitions. Spanning the *longue durée* from the consolidation of the single-party socialist state in 1961 to the contemporary multi-party era in 2019, the Archdiocese navigated a complex landscape of structural metamorphosis, evolving from a colonial-era religious outpost into a potent agent of indigenous democratic agency.

The central problem addressed in this study is the historical paradox of institutional survival versus prophetic civic witness within an authoritarian landscape. During the consolidation of the *Ujamaa* (socialist) era between 1961 and 1992, the Tanzanian state under the leadership of the Tanganyika African National Union (TANU) which subsequently merged to form the Chama Cha Mapinduzi (CCM) party established a near-monopoly on civic and political life. Utilizing Classical Elite Theory, particularly the theoretical frameworks formulated by Gaetano Mosca (1939) and Vilfredo Pareto (1935), this paper argues that the Archdiocese operated effectively as a "Democratic Surrogate". In a restrictive environment where secular political opposition was legally proscribed, the Church strategically leveraged its international institutional networks and diplomatic autonomy to protect the marginalized "ruled class" from complete state absorption. This protective cushion was achieved not through overt political confrontation, but through the deliberate creation of autonomous, protected civic enclaves in the forms of primary and secondary schools, specialized healthcare delivery systems, and community social training institutes.

Central to this historical reconstruction is the role of the Nyegezi Social Training Institute (NSTI) and its subsequent structural evolution into St. Augustine University of Tanzania (SAUT) in 1998. This study identifies this institutional transition as a strategic catalyst for what Pareto (1935) characterizes as the "Circulation of Elites." By educating a highly specialized cadre of journalists, lawyers, and civic leaders within an ethical framework grounded in Catholic Social Teaching (CST), the Archdiocese provided the critical intellectual scaffolding necessary for the realization of a pluralistic society. Furthermore, the paper interrogates the Church's active role during the National Constitutional Review process from 2011 to 2014, where it shifted from defensive civic protection to proactive structural advocacy, directly challenging the concentration of authority within the "Imperial Presidency" and advocating for a robust separation of institutional powers.

Methodologically, this inquiry is grounded in a systematic synthesis of digitized primary records extracted from the Archives of the Missionaries of Africa in Rome (AMAR) specifically the GEN 689 and GEN 696 series and oral historiography collected from key informants in the Mwanza region. By addressing the profound archival silences apparent in local repositories, the paper reconstructs a narrative of indigenous agency that highlights what can be conceptualized as the "Mwanza Model" a localized benchmark demonstrating how religious institutions can successfully foster civic resilience against political hegemony. To resolve this

historical trajectory, the primary objective of this study is to evaluate how the Archdiocese of Mwanza expanded and protected Tanzanian civic space across four distinct dimensions. Specifically, it assesses the internal structural transition of the Church as a democratic surrogate during the single-party socialist baseline from 1961 to 1992; examines the impact of the transition from NSTI to SAUT as an educational engine facilitating an elite circulation from 1992 to 2019; evaluates the domestication of democratic principles through localized cultural inculturation and lay movements; and analyzes the direct legal and structural interventions of the ecclesiastical elite during the 2011–2014 National Constitutional Review process.

### Literature Review and Research Gap

The historical inquiry into Church-State relations in Tanzania is a well-traversed field, yet it remains characterized by a persistent analytical tension between macro-national narratives and localized institutional agency. Early post-colonial historiography frequently viewed the Roman Catholic Church through the restrictive lens of a colonial "civilizing mission" or as an ideological appendage to European administrative structures. However, scholars such as Sivalon (1992) challenged this paradigm by illustrating how the Church in the post-independence era actively navigated the socialist "political formula" of *Ujamaa*, functioning as a silent but potent structural critic of the state's monopoly over social services. This study builds directly upon Sivalon's (1992) foundational work by extending the historical lens across a 58-year *longue durée* (1961–2019) to argue that the Archdiocese of Mwanza did not merely survive state socialism, but actively functioned as a "Democratic Surrogate". By utilizing its institutional autonomy to preserve a degree of civic pluralism when secular political opposition was legally proscribed, the Mwanza ecclesiastical elite effectively influenced the broader ruling class to protect the interests of the "ruled class," an operational dynamic that aligns precisely with the classical elitist assertions of Gaetano Mosca (1939).

Furthermore, the democratization wave of the 1990s is frequently framed by political scientists as a top-down, state-directed liberalization process. A prominent example of this state-centric framing is the heavy emphasis placed on the macro-legal reforms recommended by the Nyalali Commission (1991), which identified a specific set of 40 oppressive, unconstitutional, and outdated laws targeted for immediate repeal or amendment to clear the way for multi-party politics. Yet, as Kelsall (2000) and Mesaki and Malipula (2011) suggest, the long-term sustainability of democracy in Tanzania is inherently tied to the resilience of non-state actors who provide the underlying intellectual scaffolding necessary for grassroots civic engagement.

This study identifies a significant gap in this secular macro-narrative: existing literature consistently overlooks the localized institutional laboratories, such as the Archdiocese of Mwanza, where democratic consciousness is systematically manufactured through long-term educational and media

investments. The structural transition of the Nyegezi Social Training Institute (NSTI) into St. Augustine University of Tanzania (SAUT) in 1998 represents what Vilfredo Pareto (1935) describes as a strategic "Circulation of Elites". This institutional pivot broke the state's monopoly on higher education and produced a new cadre of professional leaders equipped with an ethical framework grounded in Catholic Social Teaching (CST).

The theological impetus for this institutional agency is rooted in the global ecclesiastical shift initiated by the Second Vatican Council (1962–1965), which Hastings (1979) characterizes as the structural "Big Bang" that redefined the global Church's mission from traditional proselytization to *Promotio Humana* (Human Promotion). This paradigm shift transformed the Mwanza Church from a detached, defensive "Fortress Church" into a "Prophetic Voice" that viewed active democratic participation as an integral component of the Gospel message.

Despite these scholarly advancements, a profound methodological research gap defined here as an "Archival Silence" persists in contemporary Tanzanian historiography. This silence was severely exacerbated by the sudden 2022 closure of vital regional repositories, such as Atiman House in Dar es Salaam. Consequently, existing studies are forced to rely heavily on secondary sources or state-centric records, completely failing to capture the hidden transcripts of indigenous African religious agency.

This study directly addresses this empirical gap by executing a methodological pivot to the digitized primary records housed within the Archives of the Missionaries of Africa in Rome (AMAR), specifically the GEN 689, GEN 696, and GEN 206 series. By cross-referencing these newly recovered primary materials with recent historical frameworks (Banshchikova, Bryndina, & Ivanchenko, 2025) and contemporary political analyses (Paget & Kwayu, 2025), this research reconciles divergent historical narratives. It highlights the "Lake Zone Model" as a localized benchmark for civic resilience that directly challenged the structural excesses of the "Imperial Presidency". The Church's strategic involvement in the National Constitutional Review (2011–2014) exemplifies its historical transition from a defensive surrogate to a proactive "Structural Architect" advocating for the core principle of subsidiarity—the moral and structural belief that social and political issues should always be managed by the most localized competent authority.

### Theoretical Framework

To resolve the complex paradoxes defining Church-State relations in Tanzania, this study is anchored in Classical Elite Theory, primarily as formulated by Gaetano Mosca (1939) and Vilfredo Pareto (1935). While traditional democratization studies frequently concentrate on grassroots, bottom-up social movements, classical elitism provides a more robust analytical lens for evaluating how specialized institutional giants, such as the Roman Catholic Church, operate strategically within

highly restricted or centralized political systems. Central to this historical inquiry is Mosca's (1939) thesis that within all societies, a specialized non-governing elite—or sub-elite—exists structurally between the sovereign rulers and the broader ruled mass, a concept further expanded in contemporary political analysis by Warner (2024). Mosca (1939) argued that a well-organized minority will invariably prevail over a disorganized majority; hence, the Archdiocese of Mwanza is conceptualized here as an active member of this "organized minority". Unlike the secular political class, the ecclesiastical elite does not seek direct sovereign or state executive power, but rather influences what Meisel (1962) describes as the "three C's" of elite status: consciousness, coherence, and conspiracy, which is understood in this historical context as collaborative strategic planning. By maintaining its own rigid hierarchy, international institutional affiliations, and autonomous financial resources, the Church in Mwanza operated with a high degree of institutional autonomy that allowed it to serve as a vital "Democratic Surrogate" during the height of the socialist single-party era.

This analytical framework is further enhanced by Pareto's (1935) sociological distinction between the "Lions" and the "Foxes" within the ruling elite strata. Throughout the historical period of *Ujamaa* (socialist) consolidation, the Tanzanian state functioned primarily as the "Lion," utilizing state coercive power, bureaucratic centralization, and the absolute force of law to maintain social equilibrium. In response, the Archdiocese of Mwanza adopted the structural role of the "Fox," relying on diplomatic maneuvering, intellectual positioning, and the mobilization of moral capital to preserve autonomous civic space. This framework accounts for the "Paradox of Cordial Relations" explored in this study, whereby the Church remained pragmatically cordial with the state to ensure its institutional survival while simultaneously engaging in a critical circulation of ideas that systematically challenged state hegemony. The structural transformation of the Nyegezi Social Training Institute (NSTI) into St. Augustine University of Tanzania (SAUT) was a quintessentially "Fox-like" institutional maneuver; it did not attack the state apparatus directly but instead altered the intellectual composition of the next generation of leaders through a strategic "Circulation of Elites". As Pareto (1935) observed, the continuous circulation of individuals between the lower and upper social strata is the definitive mechanism that prevents institutional decay and violent systemic revolution.

This sociological framework is inextricably linked to the theological principle of subsidiarity, famously articulated in Pope Pius XI's (1931) encyclical *Quadragesimo Anno* (*In the Fortieth Year*) and later re-contextualized in Pope John Paul II's (1991) *Centesimus Annus* (*In the Hundredth Year*). Subsidiarity asserts that social and political issues should always be managed by the most localized competent authority, a structural principle that stands in direct opposition to the hyper-centralization of an "Imperial Presidency". Together, these dual conceptual pillars form a theoretical "double-helix" of analysis: Classical Elite Theory explains the precise socio-political mechanics of how the Church influenced the state

apparatus, while the principle of subsidiarity explains the underlying moral motivation behind its structural advocacy for decentralized power, local civic agency, and judicial independence during the 2011–2014 National Constitutional Review process. By synthesizing Pareto's elite circulation with Catholic Social Teaching (CST), this study provides a comprehensive theoretical basis for understanding the "Mwanza Model" not as a series of isolated religious events, but as a systematic and negotiated struggle for democratic agency within a post-colonial state.

### Methodology

This inquiry is anchored in historiographical pragmatism, an epistemological stance that views historical truth not as a static relic to be found, but as a reconstructed reality emerging from the systematic synthesis of divergent evidence. In navigating a broad and intensive 58-year historical baseline (1961–2019), this framework allows for the integration of the positivist rigor of archival records with the constructivist depth of oral testimonies, effectively bridging the gap between the official institutional history of the Archdiocese and the subaltern democratic aspirations of the Mwanza laity. The study employs a longitudinal qualitative case study design, utilizing the micro-historical method to narrow the analytical lens specifically to the Roman Catholic Archdiocese of Mwanza. This design uncovers the granular mechanisms of elite circulation (Mosca, 1939) that are often obscured in macro-national narratives, treating Mwanza as a strategic laboratory where the intersection of Catholic Social Teaching (CST) and Tanzanian political culture is most visible.

A significant methodological contribution of this study is its strategic response to the regional archival crisis of 2022, during which regional repositories, such as Atiman House in Dar es Salaam, became indefinitely inaccessible. The researcher executed a critical methodological pivot, utilizing digitized primary sources from the Archives of the Missionaries of Africa in Rome (AMAR), which were accessed via high-resolution digital reproductions collected directly from the repository. Key primary evidence was extracted from the GEN 689, GEN 696, and GEN 206 series encompassing missionary diaries, the *Daire de la Mission*, and confidential correspondence which were subjected to rigorous heuristic triangulation. By cross-referencing these clerical reports against comparative secular administrative reports collected directly from the responsible local offices, the study detected and mitigated institutional biases through systematic source criticism (Banshchikova et al., 2025).

To counteract the inherent Eurocentrism of colonial-era archival structures, the study utilized oral historiography to construct a comprehensive living archive. A purposive sample of 32 information-rich participants was curated, including high-ranking prelates, lay activists, and educators, whose testimonies were captured through semi-structured interviews focusing on narrative episodic memory. These accounts of specific democratic flashpoints, such as the 2011–2014 National Constitutional Review, were subsequently validated

through Focus Group Discussions (FGDs) with church elders to ensure individual testimonies remained anchored in the collective social memory of the Lake Zone.

Data synthesis was achieved through process tracing to identify the causal chain between the Church's educational investments, particularly St. Augustine University of Tanzania (SAUT), and the emergence of a pro-democracy civic elite. A critical component of this synthesis was the reconciliation of divergent narratives; where archival records and oral testimonies conflicted, the researcher prioritized the weight of the lived experience while carefully accounting for the institutional perspectives recorded in the AMAR files. Throughout this analysis, the technique of "reading against the grain" was applied, interrogating missionary records for hidden transcripts of African agency that the original authors may have minimized or ignored. Finally, in accordance with international academic standards, the study acknowledges the role of researcher reflexivity. By maintaining a critical analytical distance, the researcher ensured the findings remained independent of ecclesiastical censorship while operating within the contemporary Tanzanian academic context. Ethical integrity was strictly maintained through protocols established by the Open University of Tanzania (OUT), ensuring informed consent and the strict anonymization of participants discussing sensitive political transitions.

### Results and Discussion

#### The Missionary Metamorphosis and the Church as a "Democratic Surrogate": 1961–1992

The post-independence era in Tanzania was defined by a profound structural metamorphosis within the Roman Catholic Archdiocese of Mwanza, a transition that served as a strategic prerequisite for its subsequent role in the nation's democratization process. This evolution saw the Church transition from a fragmented frontier missionary movement toward a highly unified, centralized metropolitan institution. Drawing on the analytical framework of Mosca (1939), this internal stability enabled the Archdiocese to function as an "organized minority" possessing the administrative density necessary to effectively influence the broader political ruling class. By the time of national independence in 1961, the Church had already mirrored the state's regional administrative organization, granting it the institutional weight required to negotiate with the nascent nationalist elite on an equal footing. Crucially, the indigenization of the ecclesiastical leadership personified by the 1952 consecration of Laurean Cardinal Rugambwa ensured that the Church was perceived as a legitimate indigenous moral authority rather than a colonial relic.

During the 1970s, as the Tanzanian state consolidated power through the aggressive nationalization of socio-economic assets under the Arusha Declaration of 1967, the Archdiocese's institutional density served as a vital buffer for the marginalized "ruled class". In this socio-political

landscape, the Tanzanian state functioned primarily as the "Lion" conceptualized by Pareto (1935), utilizing state coercive power, bureaucratic centralization, and the absolute force of law to maintain social equilibrium. In response, the Archdiocese of Mwanza adopted the structural role of the "Fox," relying on diplomatic maneuvering, intellectual positioning, and the strategic mobilization of moral capital to preserve autonomous civic space.

This "Fox-like" diplomatic strategy of "Critical Collaboration" allowed the Church to retain its social influence and emerge as a potent "Democratic Surrogate". In an environment where secular political opposition was legally proscribed by single-party mandates, the Archdiocese utilized its international institutional networks and diplomatic autonomy to shield the "ruled class" from total state absorption. This defensive posture was operationally manifested through "Religious-State Partnerships," most notably the 1971 establishment of the Bugando Medical Centre (BMC), which allowed the Church to preserve an active institutional presence in the public sphere while serving the public good.

This surrogate role was underpinned by a bold prophetic critique of the state's monopoly over the national political formula. Church leaders in Mwanza systematically challenged the *Ujamaa* (socialist) policy, arguing that the political elite had imposed the economic system without the democratic necessity of informing or educating the citizenry, thereby denying the population their fundamental right to exercise political agency. The moral authority of this historical critique is underscored by the archival records of the Reverend Father K. Giambone (1983), who asserted that socialism built via state coercion destroys personal activity, individual struggle, and genuine national development. Furthermore, confidential correspondence between President Julius Nyerere and Father Richard Walsh confirms that the ecclesiastical elite maintained this critical collaboration, intentionally providing a moral counter-narrative to state-enforced socialism.

The theological catalyst for this systemic engagement was the global ecclesiastical revolution of the Second Vatican Council (1962–1965), which redefined the operational philosophy of the Mwanza Church away from traditional proselytization toward *Promotio Humana* (Human Promotion). This paradigm shift redefined the human person from an object of charity to a subject of fundamental rights, viewing social justice and democratic participation as integral to the Gospel mission. Digitized primary records from the Archives of the Missionaries of Africa in Rome (AMAR), specifically the GEN 689, GEN 696, and GEN 206 series, confirm that this theological evolution allowed the Archdiocese to transition from a detached "Fortress Church" to an active "Prophetic Voice," fostering the civic consciousness that would eventually demand a circulation of political power. This institutional resilience formed the essential bridge to the 1990s, providing the moral foundation for the construction of a pluralistic Tanzanian society. An empirical, structural contrast between state totalization and the autonomous institutional enclaves maintained by the Archdiocese of

Mwanza during this single-party baseline period is presented in Table 1.

**Table 1**

*Comparative Institutional Reach and Strategic Objectives: 1970–1985*

<b>Institutional Sector</b>	<b>Function During Ujamaa Era</b>	<b>Strategic "Parallel State" Objective.</b>
Education (Primary & Secondary)	Provision of Mission schools despite aggressive nationalization drives	Preservation of an intellectual alternative to state-controlled curriculum.
Higher Education (NSTI)	Operation of the Nyegezi Social Training Institute (NSTI)	Breaking the state's monopoly on "Intellectual Formation" and media training
Healthcare (BMC)	Formation of Bugando Medical Centre (1971) as a "Religious-State Partnership".	Maintaining institutional presence in the public sphere through specialized social aid.
Media & Press	Continued circulation of the <i>Kiongozi</i> newspaper and Tanganyika Mission Press.	Providing "hidden transcripts" and a platform for independent public dialogue.
Social Training	Civic education programs led by the Justice and Peace Commission.	Protecting the "ruled class" from total state absorption by fostering civic consciousness.

**Source:** Synthesized from GEN 689 and Catholic Secretariat Reports.

The Church argued that the 1977 Constitution of the United Republic of Tanzania possessed severe structural weaknesses that fostered an "Imperial Presidency," where excessive executive power was concentrated in a single office. Specifically, the ecclesiastical elite criticized the President's unchecked authority to appoint all key administrative and judicial officers including Ministers, Regional Commissioners, and the Chief Justice noting that these appointments were often exercised in favor of the ruling party's survival rather than the public interest (M. Mabula, personal communication, April 29, 2023).

By interrogating the archival silences of the Lake Zone through the digitized primary records of the Rome archives, this study reconstructs a narrative of indigenous institutional agency that was previously obscured by regional repository closures. Theologically, the findings affirm the Church's role in *Promotio Humana*, where the validation of national values evidenced by strategic support for the Nyerere canonization process allowed the Church to function as a "Critical Friend" to the state. This dual identity enabled the Archdiocese to honor national unity while simultaneously critiquing the structural excesses of the executive branch and advocating for a robust separation of powers.

In finality, the democratization of Tanzania remains a contingent and negotiated struggle (Paget & Kwayu, 2025). While the Archdiocese of Mwanza successfully planted the seeds of civic consciousness during this baseline period, the consolidation of these gains remains an ongoing historical project. The Mwanza experience demonstrates that religious institutions can effectively foster civic resilience by providing the tools of structural agency ethics, higher education, and independent media platforms to the marginalized populace, serving as an enduring guardian of the "ruled class" against the potential excesses of political power

### **The Structural Architect of a Pluralistic Society and the Circulation of Elites: 1992–2019**

The formal re-introduction of multi-party politics in 1992 shifted the socio-political terrain of Tanzania, prompting the Roman Catholic Archdiocese of Mwanza to transition from its reactive role as a "Democratic Surrogate" into a proactive "Structural Architect" of civil society. This transition represents a classic manifestation of Pareto's (1935) "Circulation of Elites". As the state-backed "Lion" was forced by internal and external pressures to loosen its single-party monopoly over public discourse, the ecclesiastical "Fox" shifted its strategy from defensive institutional survival to the systematic production of a new, democratically conscious sub-elite.

The institutional laboratory for this elite circulation was the strategic transformation of the Nyegezi Social Training Institute (NSTI) into St. Augustine University of Tanzania (SAUT) in 1998. This milestone was not merely an administrative upgrade; it was the direct structural expression of *Promotio Humana* (Human Promotion) translated into

higher education. By breaking the state's long-standing monopoly on higher education, the Archdiocese did not seek to seize state executive power directly; rather, in alignment with Mosca's (1939) theory, it formed an autonomous educational enclave that infused the national media, judiciary, and civil service with a new cadre of leaders grounded in the moral imperatives of Catholic Social Teaching (CST).

This "Fox-like" approach of intellectual cultivation and strategic maneuvering allowed the Church to establish a permanent counter-weight to the structural excesses of the state's "Imperial Presidency". Rather than engaging in overt political confrontation, the Archdiocese utilized SAUT and its expanding media networks to champion the theological and structural principle of subsidiarity, arguing that genuine democratization requires the devolution of decision-making power to localized, competent authorities.

This structural advocacy became highly visible during the National Constitutional Review process (2011–2014). The Archdiocese of Mwanza mobilized its local networks to actively educate the populace on constitutionalism, human rights, and the necessity of judicial independence. By transforming its parishes into civic schoolrooms, the Church directly challenged the top-down totalizing tendencies of the ruling political elite, amplifying the "hidden transcripts" of the marginalized "ruled class" who demanded a more equitable distribution of national power.

This historical trajectory underscores the fact that the democratization of Tanzania remains a highly contingent, negotiated, and ongoing struggle (Paget & Kwayu, 2025). The "Lake Zone Model" pioneered by the Archdiocese through its calculated balance of critical collaboration and prophetic resistance demonstrates that religious institutions can effectively foster long-term civic resilience. By cross-referencing newly recovered primary materials from the Archives of the Missionaries of Africa in Rome (AMAR) specifically the GEN 689, GEN 696, and GEN 206 series with recent historical frameworks (Banshchikova et al., 2025), this study demonstrates how the Mwanza Church successfully utilized its institutional density, financial autonomy, and moral capital to protect civil liberties during periods of political contraction.

Ultimately, the Mwanza experience reveals that the structural survival of pluralism in a post-colonial state depends heavily on the capacity of organized sub-elites to consistently challenge the state "Lion," ensuring that the democratic rights of the citizenry are permanently defended against the structural temptations of authoritarian consolidation.

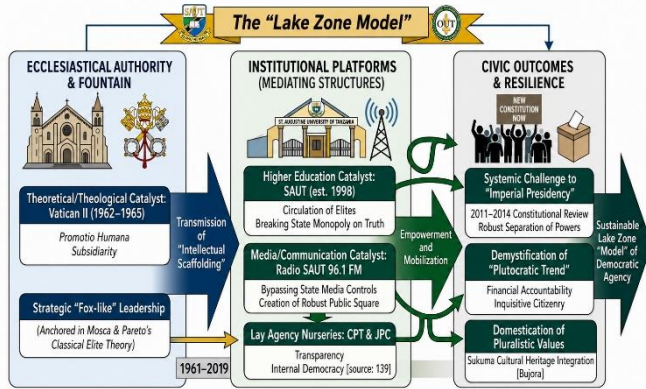
### **Conclusion and Recommendations**

#### **Conclusion**

This study has systematically evaluated the historical contribution of the Roman Catholic Archdiocese of Mwanza

to the democratization process in Tanzania, with an intensive analytical focus on the post-colonial era (1961–2019). By moving away from traditional, state-centric narratives that view liberalization as a top-down concession by the political class, this research has demonstrated that Tanzania’s democratic resilience is fundamentally anchored in the

Furthermore, during the 2011–2014 National Constitutional Review process, the Church served as a key institutional defender of the principle of subsidiarity, turning its parishes into local civic classrooms to advocate for decentralization, the separation of powers, and judicial independence against the structural excesses of an "Imperial Presidency".



**Figure 1.** The “Lake Zone Model” of Institutional Influence. A conceptual framework illustrating how ecclesiastical authority was translated into institutional platforms that promoted civic engagement, pluralism, and democratic resilience in Tanzania (1961–2019).

institutional density and moral agency of non-state actors. Guided by Classical Elite Theory, the study reveals that the Archdiocese of Mwanza functioned effectively as an "organized minority" or sub-elite capable of checking the totalizing ambitions of the ruling political class on behalf of the marginalized "ruled class".

Throughout the challenges of the *Ujamaa* single-party era, the Church brilliantly navigated the socio-political terrain by alternating between the structural roles of the defensive "Democratic Surrogate" and the strategically maneuvering "Fox". While the state operated as the centralized, coercive "Lion" under the 1977 Constitution, the Archdiocese utilized its financial autonomy, international institutional network, and independent media platforms to preserve autonomous civic spaces. This "Fox-like" strategy of critical collaboration allowed the Church to survive state-enforced socialist totalization while systematically laying the groundwork for a future pluralistic society. The theological engine driving this structural agency was the paradigm shift of the Second Vatican Council (1962–1965), which repositioned the Church from a detached frontier mission to an active prophetic voice dedicated to *Promotio Humana* (Human Promotion).

With the formal re-introduction of multi-party politics in 1992, the Archdiocese transitioned into a proactive "Structural Architect" of democracy. The landmark establishment of St. Augustine University of Tanzania (SAUT) in 1998 beautifully operationalized Pareto’s (1935) "Circulation of Elites," successfully breaking the state’s monopoly on higher education and generating a new generation of media professionals, jurists, and civic leaders equipped with the ethical imperatives of Catholic Social Teaching (CST).

Methodologically, this study successfully resolved the severe "Archival Silence" brought about by the 2022 closure of regional repositories like Atiman House in Dar es Salaam. By executing a crucial pivot to the digitized primary folders of the Archives of the Missionaries of Africa in Rome (AMAR) specifically the GEN 689, GEN 696, and GEN 206 series and cross-referencing them with local administrative reports and oral histories, this paper has recovered the hidden transcripts of indigenous African religious agency. Ultimately, the "Lake Zone Model" demonstrates that true democratization is not a singular historical event, but an ongoing, negotiated, and hard-fought struggle (Paget & Kwayu, 2025). The structural survival of civic pluralism in Tanzania depends entirely on the continued capacity of such independent institutional enclaves to foster civic consciousness and confidently hold political power accountable.

**Recommendations**

Based on the empirical findings and theoretical insights of this study, the following targeted recommendations are proposed to guide policymakers, ecclesiastical authorities, and future researchers:

**Accelerate Digital Archival Interventions:** In light of the ongoing vulnerability of local physical repositories in East Africa as evidenced by the abrupt closure of Atiman House in Dar es Salaam the Ministry of Culture, Arts and Sports, in collaboration with the Tanzania Episcopal Conference (TEC), should establish a formalized National Digital Heritage Framework. This initiative must prioritize the systematic digitization and open-access indexing of regional ecclesiastical diaries, correspondence, and colonial-era microfilms. Securing these records is essential to prevent permanent archival losses and to allow future historians to continue uncovering localized historical narratives.

**Institutionalize Non-State Civic Education:** The Tanzania Civil Society Consortium (TACCEO), alongside religious educational directorates, should move away from ad-hoc, election-year voter education and instead implement sustained, curriculum-based civic training programs. Drawing on the success of the "Mwanza Model," these programs should integrate the principles of subsidiarity and fundamental human rights into secondary and tertiary curriculums, ensuring the continuous circulation of a democratically conscious youth elite capable of constructively engaging with the state.

**Strengthen Constitutional Safeguards for Subsidiarity:** To permanently mitigate the structural excesses of the "Imperial Presidency" identified during the 2011–2014 constitutional debates, legal reform advocates and policymakers must

actively champion the institutionalization of subsidiarity within the local government framework. Future constitutional review agendas should focus on reducing centralized executive appointment powers, ensuring absolute judicial autonomy, and embedding legally protected avenues for local community input in national policy design.

### **Expand Micro-Historical Regional Comparative Studies:**

Future historiographical research should move beyond the Lake Zone to conduct comparative micro-histories of other marginalized regional spaces in Tanzania, such as the Kigoma or Tabora hinterlands. Researchers should leverage recent historical frameworks (Banshchikova et al., 2025) to investigate whether different religious denominations or local socio-economic structures produced variations in civic resilience when confronting state power.

### **Conflict of Interest Statement**

The author declares that there is no conflict of interest regarding the publication of this paper.

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