

Society, Conversion, and Frustrations in the CMS and LMS Missions of Unyamwezi, Western Tanzania, 1878-1898

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Abstract

This paper examines conversion strategies and unexpected results in the missions of Church Missionary Society (CMS) and London Missionary Society (LMS) in Unyamwezi, western Tanzania, between 1878 and 1898. Western Tanzania attracted Catholic and Protestant missionaries in the second half of the nineteenth century. Of all the pioneer missionaries, Catholics and Moravians established themselves in the region. Consequently, their education and health institutions received a considerable scholarly attention. Although these missionaries established themselves in the region, the works of the CMS and LMS, notwithstanding the popularity of their medical services and education among the Nyamwezi people, ended in frustration. They subsequently closed their missions after two decades of fruitless missionary work. This paper, therefore, presents this unanticipated outcome of the CMS and LMS missionaries whose conversion strategies had marginal impact on attracting the Nyamwezi people to Christianity. The paper situates the missionaries' failures within the context of the social world of Unyamwezi, namely indigenous beliefs and practices, slavery, and portorage; these affected evangelisation in the two missions of Urambo Kilimani and Uyui.

Key words: *Conversion, Frustrations, CMS and LMS Missions, Unyamwezi, Western Tanzania*

Introduction

This paper is about conversion strategies and missionary frustrations resulting in the closure of the Church Missionary Society (CMS) and London Missionary Society (LMS) missions in the Unyamwezi region of western Tanzania. The paper covers the period between 1878, when the CMS and LMS missionaries established their missions at Uyui and Urambo Kilimani, and 1898, when the LMS handed the mission of Urambo to the Moravians, marking the end of the activities of the CMS and LMS in Unyamwezi. The key issues to be addressed in this period include the social world of Unyamwezi, the strategies of conversion, and the unexpected results of evangelisation. Western Tanzania attracted Catholic and Protestant missionaries in the second half of the nineteenth century. While the Catholic White Fathers and Moravians attracted the people living in Unyamwezi to Christianity, the CMS and LMS, notwithstanding the popularity of the medical services and education among the people, failed to convert many Nyamwezi and closed their missions after two decades of fruitless evangelisation (Bennett, 1966; Nolan, 1978:17; 1983: 603; Kisanji, 1980; Musomba, 2005: 84).

Historians and anthropologists who specialise in Christianity have focused on the role of missionaries in spreading the Christian faith in Tanzania. Even a few scholars who have concentrated on the evangelisation of slaves have maintained the centrality of missionaries in slave emancipation and the formation of Christian communities (cf. Nolan, 1977, 1978; Kollman, 2005; Shorter, 2006). Until recently, studies on Christianity in Tanzania have

continued to emphasize the role of missionary works in socio-cultural, economic, and religious transformation from both mainstream churches and Pentecostal healing ministries (Larsson, 1991; Comoro & Sivalon, 1999; Green, 2003; Smythe, 2006; Wilkens, 2011; Peterson, 2012; Hasu, 2012). Yet, a few other historians and anthropologists have concentrated on Africans as carriers of Christianity in enhancing social transformation. In so doing, they demonstrate how Africans appropriated Christianity and its social institutions while maintaining strong indigenous beliefs and culture (Maddox, 1999: 150; Giblin, 1999; 314-322).

For decades, scholarly work on Christianity in western Tanzania has been grounded in the viewpoint of evangelisation. It has often viewed evangelisation as the triumph of the Catholic and Moravian missionary enterprises. Thus, educational and medical institutions of the Catholics and Moravians have had social and religious impacts on the society; accordingly, they received considerable scholarly attention (Hamilton, 1983; Musomba, 2005; Nolan, 1977; Kisanji, 1980). In so doing, religious healthcare in western Tanzania has recently become the centre of inquiry, attracting scholarly efforts to examine the interface between healthcare, empire, and Christian-Muslim relations (Nyanto, 2018). Furthermore, religious discourse, conflicts, and the revival movement have continued to attract the attention of historians and anthropologists, indicating not only the successes of evangelisation but also the growing interest in the field of religion (Ndaluka, 2012; Nyanto, 2014 & 2017; Nyanto & Kilaini, 2014; Ndaluka, Wijsen & Nyanto, 2014).

This paper contributes to existing knowledge by looking at the unexpected outcomes of evangelization in Unyamwezi. For almost two decades of evangelisation, both the CMS and LMS failed to attract the Nyamwezi to Christianity. Until 1887, the CMS at the Uyui mission station had only converted seven children to Christianity, while the LMS at Urambo had “nothing to show” when they closed the mission in 1898 (CMS/B/OMS/G3 A6/O/102,24/6/1885, CWM/LMS/Box 8/1/8/29/5/1890). The medical work and education of the CMS and LMS attracted Nyamwezi men, women, and children from everywhere. Patients near the mission walked long distances for treatment and advice, and, upon returning, they carried with them knowledge about healing to share with other villages. The medical services exposed the Nyamwezi to an alternative source of healing, besides indigenous sources, but the people made no concrete commitment to becoming Christians.

This paper relies on church records and archival sources about the CMS and the LMS missionaries, deposited in the School of Oriental and African Studies (SOAS) at the University of London and in the Cadbury research library at the University of Birmingham, to examine the strategies of conversion, which, unfortunately, did not yield substantial results in converting the Nyamwezi people to Christianity. Church records and primary sources concerning the missionary enterprises in western Tanzania provide glimpses into the processes of conversion and provide an understanding of the encounter between the communities and Christian missionaries. The records also shed light on the failures of evangelisation in western Tanzania, an aspect of the story that has found little room in the scholarship. I supplement our knowledge of the experiences of the missionaries at Urambo and Uyui with secondary sources and accounts of the travellers passing through Unyamwezi during the contact between the

missionaries and the Nyamwezi societies in the second half of the nineteenth century. The reports about indigenous beliefs and practices, diseases, enslavement, and portage provide a glimpse into the social world of Unyamwezi when the Nyamwezi societies encountered European missionaries (Abrahams, 1967a; Roberts, 1968; Shorter, 1972; Burton, 1860; Speke, 1864; Rockel, 2006).

The Social World of Unyamwezi during the Contact with European Missionaries

By the second half of the nineteenth century, when Nyamwezi societies encountered the European missionaries, Unyamwezi had developed many chiefdoms, which became directly linked to the activities of the missionaries. In the districts currently known as Tabora, Urambo, Sikonge and Uyui, there were eleven chiefdoms, namely Kiwere, Ngulu, Ugunda, Unyanyembe, Karunde, Uyui, Ibili, Busagari, Bukumbi, Ulyanhulu, and Uyowa. In the present Nzega and Igunga districts, there were eight chiefdoms, namely Ndala, Puge, Unyambiyu, Nyawa, Bussongo, Karitu, Mwakarunde and Mwangoye (Abrahams, 1967b:28-36). Of all these chiefdoms, Unyanyembe was the largest and the most populous chiefdom in Unyamwezi throughout the nineteenth century; it had established regular trade contacts with the coastal traders in ivory and other forest produce. The trade contacts between the coast and the interior of the country increased social mobility, leading to the emergence of a commercial elite group, the *bandeba*, consisting of indigenous merchants and resident Swahili traders. Unyanyembe's position, however, came to a standstill in the 1860s and 1870s when it was challenged by chief Mirambo (Kabeya, 1971:27-31; Unomah, 1972: 75-125).

In all these chiefdoms, "ritual chieftainship" dominated the social world of Unyamwezi since it involved control of the knowledge that the chiefs possessed. Ancestor propitiation was extended to make the ancestors of the chiefs influential over the welfare of the territory they ruled (Iliffe, 1979:28). The chiefs offered regular sacrifices at the graves of their ancestors to maintain stability of their chiefdoms in times of disease, drought, and invasion. Families, too, built shrines (*makigabilo*) for ancestral spirits (*misambwa* or *mizimu*) which provided liminal spaces for rituals in times of misfortunes, diseases, drought, and other problems facing members of the families and clans. Ritual offerings varied from simple libations of a mixture of millet flour (*lwanga*) and water to grain, indigenous brew, and blood sacrifice (Iliffe, 1979:28; Abrahams, 1967a:77).

Domestic servitude (*busese*), like ancestor propitiation, became part of social life in Unyamwezi at the time of encounter with the European missionaries. A person could be subjected to domestic servitude in several circumstances. The first was hunger and destitution. This forced men and women to depend on other families, whose heads literally became their owners (*se bugonzo*). Such heads provided food, basic needs, and protection (Giblin, 1986:53). The second circumstance was pawnship or debt bondage. This was a form of dependency involving the use of people as collateral to secure the payment of debt (Feierman, 1990:55). The development of long-distance trade between Unyamwezi and coastal cities from the second half of the nineteenth century brought changes in the practice of servitude in numerous ways. Chiefs like Mirambo acquired some of their slaves by raiding and capturing people in neighbouring chiefdoms. Mirambo's constant raids against the chiefdom of Unyanyembe made

the people desert their villages for the fear of being taken as war captives and slaves (CMS/B/OMS/G3 A6/O/18/14/11/1880).

The development of long-distance trade in ivory and slaves between the coast and the interior gave rise to long-distance caravan porters. The caravan porters were free wage labourers who carried ivory from Unyamwezi to the coastal towns of Bagamoyo, Saadani, Kunduchi, Pangani, and Mbwamaji. The economic and social structures in Unyamwezi enabled the Nyamwezi to use the advantages they had such as their culture, exposure to the coast, and desire to search for guns to join portage. In due course, portage, writes Norman Bennet, “was a way of life [which] became embedded in Nyamwezi culture [and it was] expressed as a mark of Nyamwezi distinctiveness” (Rockel 1997, 2006: 47-48, 179; Bennett, 1971:10-13). It became one of the ways to obtain wealth, power, and reputation for men and women in the Nyamwezi society. Nyamwezi chiefs including Mirambo, Nyungu ya Mawe, Mnwasele, and Suwarora rose to the throne and struggled to control trade routes by demanding heavy tolls from the passing caravans. Accordingly, they accumulated capital which was used to strengthen their chiefdoms and armies (Roberts, 1968:128; Rockel, 2006: 54 & 177, Shorter, 1968: 238).

Despite these developments, Unyamwezi was vulnerable to several diseases at the time of contact with the missionaries. The diseases included sleeping sickness, fever, pneumonia, laryngitis, gonorrhoea, elephantiasis, and smallpox (CWM/LMS/Box 1/4/8/1878, CWM/LMS/Box 2/3/ 1/11/1879, CWM/LMS/Box 3/4/31/12/1880, CMS/B/OMS/G3 A6/O/4/26/10/1880). Smallpox attacked men, women, and children in villages and chiefdom headquarters. The impact of the disease on people was noticeable, leading Henry Morton Stanley to call it “the great and terrible scourge of East and central Africa” (Stanley, 1872: 533). Tabora and many other towns were vulnerable to the spread of the disease in the nineteenth century; consequently, caravan porters of the central caravan died in great numbers. Richard Burton, passing through Unyamwezi in the second half of the nineteenth century, reported on the devastating impact of smallpox on slaves and caravan porters at Tabora (Burton, 1860:318; Kjekshus, 1977:132). Elephantiasis also affected chiefs, headmen, and men in Unyamwezi. The disease was reported in the territory of Mirambo affecting the subordinate headmen, men, and women. Southon’s medical work attracted men, women, and children from Ulyankulu and many villages in the chiefdom. In only twelve months, Southon had treated about sixteen thousand people at his mission hospital in Urambo (Nolan, 1977:91; CWM/LMS/Box 3/2/21/6/1880).

The process of diagnosis and healing among the Nyamwezi societies, like that in any other African society, was the duty of the entire family, clan and the whole society. John Janzen calls that processes a “social process” because it involved all members of the household and the clan in the quest for therapy (Janzen, 1978:129). The social process in the diagnosis and healing enabled the Nyamwezi people to remain eclectic, deriving ideas and methods of healing from a broad range of sources that made healers and patients open to new medicines and therapies. These included divination and secret societies (*buswezi* and *migawo*) which dominated Nyamwezi therapeutic practices throughout the nineteenth century. The “therapy group” consisting of members of the household and the clan dominated healing practices. These

groups moved patients from one healer or secret society to the other, and, accordingly, established different categories of therapeutic choices in the quest for healing (Cory, 1955:925; Janzen, 1978:129, 2002:219-220; Feierman, 2000:330).

The CMS missionaries established the first mission station in Unyamwezi at Uyui in 1878. They opened another mission station at Msalala Ndogo in the chiefdom of Msalala. In the same year, the LMS missionaries established a mission station at Urambo Kilimani in Unyamwezi. All three mission stations were close to the headquarters of the chiefdoms at Isenegezya, Iselamagazi, and Msalala (Bennett, 1966:43; Kabeya, 1971:20; Nolan, 1977:77; CWM/LMS/Box 1/ 4/8/1878). These missions were located far away from the central trade route traversed by caravans from the coast to Tabora and Ujiji in the interior. Despite that, the home committees of both the CMS and LMS provided material support for their missionaries working for the missions of Urambo Kilimani, Uyui, and Msalala Ndogo (Nolan, 1977:75).

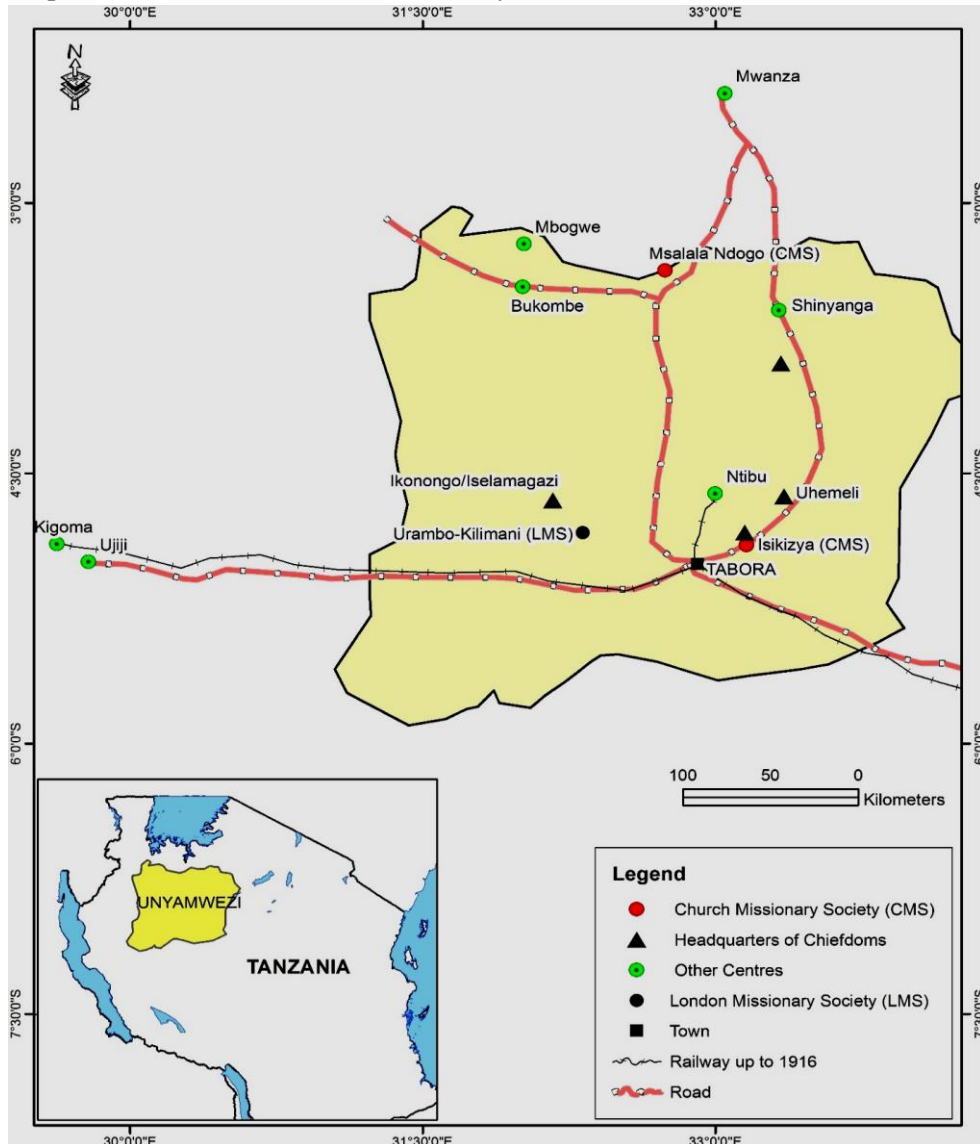
The Catholic White Fathers joined the LMS and CMS missionaries in Unyamwezi and founded their missions at Kipalapala, Ngaya, Ushirombo, and Ndala, in 1881, 1893, 1894, and 1896, respectively. Tabora and Bulungwa missions followed in 1900 and 1902 respectively. The missions were close to the headquarters of the chiefdoms of Unyanyembe, Msalala, Ushirombo, Lunzewe, Utambala, Ndala, and Bulungwa (Nolan, 1977: 157&196; WFA 01.43; Ushirombo Diary, 5/2/1891, 8-9/1/1896). The missions of Tabora, Kipalapala, Ndala, and Ushirombo were located along the trade routes crisscrossed by the caravans and slaves making their way from the interior to the coast. The White Fathers established their missions along the trade routes, which could be easily reached both by slaves seeking refuge and by orphans whose parents had been taken into slavery (Vlijmen, 1990:39; Hastings, 1996:213).

The White Fathers not only purchased slaves but also established orphanage centres and used the redeemed slaves to work as domestic servants who also became their first converts. At Ushirombo, the White Fathers made annual shopping expeditions to the slave market at Ujiji, buying children and taking them to Ushirombo to be incorporated into the Christian village. Others who joined the mission villages included old men and women (*wagikuru*) who were not Christians but joined Christianity to seek protection (Hastings, 1996:213). Hence, the strategic locations of the Catholic missions, which attracted run-away slaves and orphans to the missions, made the White Fathers less responsive to the chiefs for they could not be used as a source of reasserting the authority of such chiefs.

Unlike the White Fathers, the location of the CMS and LMS missions made the missionaries less concerned about slave emancipation. Instead, they established good relations with chiefs and concentrated on Christianizing, educating, and administering medical assistance without challenging the dependent status of the people and the practices of their chiefs regarding slavery (CWM/LMS/Box 3/1/4/5/1880; CMS/B/OMS/G3 A6/O/8/3/12/1883). At Uyui, Rev. Copplestone and Rev. Blackburn of the Uyui mission station established good relations with Chief Magembi Gana and his headmen, which involved the exchange of presents between them. Rev. Gordon of the Msalala Ndogo mission offered generous gifts to the chief of Msalala; Dr. Ebenezer Southon, who was working at Urambo Kilimani, established good

relations with chief Mirambo, often visiting him three times a day and offering the chief various gifts, including guns. In return, chief Mirambo pledged to protect the missionaries from robbers on the road who would confiscate their possessions and from possible invasion by other neighbouring chiefdoms. He also offered Dr. Southon a site at Urambo Kilimani to build a mission and offered him building materials and human labour to aid in building the mission (CWM/LMS/Box 1/4/8/1878, 25/8/1878, Box 2/3/1/11/1879; CMS/OMS/C/A6/O/24/17/11/1879; Nolan, 1977: 80&86).

Map 1: The CMS and LMS Missions in Unyamwezi, Western Tanzania, 1878-1898



Source: Modified from Francis P. Nolan, “Christianity in Unyamwezi,” 1977

Society, Conversion Strategies, and Frustrations in the CMS and LMS Missions, 1878-1898

The CMS and LMS employed several strategies of conversion to attract the Nyamwezi men, women, and children to Christianity. They included mission schools, medical work, meetings (*baraza*), and gifts. Missionaries working at Urambo and Uyui, besides their missionary career, had other professions, including serving as teachers and medical doctors. To attract the Nyamwezi to the mission, Mr. Williams and Dr. Southon diverted a portion of their time to teaching Nyamwezi children (CWM/LMS/Box 3/1/21/1/1880, 31/12/1880). Both the CMS and LMS established friendship with Mirambo and Majembi Gana, expecting that they would allow children of their subjects to attend their mission schools. They used Kiswahili and Kinyamwezi languages, spoken in the region, to teach lessons on medicine, mechanical work, and various things relating to agriculture and farming. The use of the two languages enabled children to understand the lessons and Christian doctrine in “their own tongue,” allowing them to spread the lessons they had heard from the missions “among the people in their own homes” (CWM/LMS/Box 4A/1/20/4/1881, 12/7/1881; CMS//B/OMS/G3 A6/O/8/312/1883).

At Uyui, however, Majembi Gana forbade children to attend the mission for instruction, asserting that children in his village were engaged in tending his cattle. Some of his headmen, too, refused to let children attend the missionary’s instruction, unless Rev. Blackburn paid them (CMS/B/OMS/G3 A6/O/8/3/12/1883). After nearly a month of struggle, the chief promised to send one or two boys to be taught reading, writing, and carpentry. The chief also promised not to interfere with the villagers or others who wished to do so outside his village. The following year, in 1884, the chief offered Rev. Blackburn two boys to be educated but ruled out the liberty of the people to send their children to the mission school. However, lack of rain, prolonged drought, famine, and the eruption of smallpox challenged people’s loyalty to the chief and rain makers; consequently, people from other parts of the Unyamwezi region frequented the mission in search of ‘medicine for rain,’ food, and smallpox vaccine (G3 A6/O/3/12/1883; G3 A6/O/14/1/1883).

The missionary medical work also attracted people at Urambo and its vicinity, drawing patients from long distances for treatment and advice. Other patients were drawn to the mission station due to Dr. Southon’s itinerant and visitation of neighbourhoods, which corresponded with invitations to bring sick persons for treatment. Indeed, elephantiasis affected chiefs, headmen, and men and women in great proportions. With the increasing number of patients in need of surgical intervention, Dr. Southon could not attend the patients alone. He thus urged the Secretary General of the Society, Rev. Whitehouse, to consider sending a colleague to assist him (CWM/LMS/Box 3/4/31/12/1880, 21/6/1880). His first patient was chief Mirambo’s headman who had several large chronic swellings. He had been ill for a long time and everyone who knew him thought he would die soon. However, chief Mirambo, having been told about the medical work, pleaded with Southon to visit the patient and give his advice about possible treatment. The second in-patient was chief Maganga whose critical elephantiasis, increasing the size and weight of his external genitals, needed surgical intervention. The patient was hospitalized on 18 May 1880 and discharged on 12 June 1880 with much improved health after

having undergone surgery on his external genitals (CWM/LMS/Box 3/1/28/3/1880, 21/6/1880, 14/9/1880).

Besides teaching and providing medical services, the CMS and LMS relied on meetings (commonly known as *baraza*) as a strategy of conversion, since the meetings were open to everyone. Arthur Brooks and Southon visited the villages in Urambo after work in the evening, attracting men, women, and children to listen to their talks. In all the discussions, the participants would ask questions and Southon would answer them. Brooks and Southon's talks often merged scientific and spiritual healing which they wanted to justify before patients and those who came to listen at the patients' houses. These meetings also attracted the Nyamwezi to listen to the new religion of Christianity. In villages where Brooks and Southon attended patients, men, women, and children would sit in the veranda, outside the houses, to hear about their teachings (CWM/LMS/Box 3/1/ 28/4/1880, 31/12/1880).

At the Uyui mission station, most of the Nyamwezi who visited the mission were curious about the many things they saw surrounding the mission. Their curiosity provided Rev. Blackburn an opportunity to teach them about the new religion. To make the subject matter clear to the people, Rev. Blackburn supported his teachings with pictures and illustrations from Bishop Edward Steere's short book on the Old Testament stories. The use of pictures stimulated the listeners' inquisitiveness and increased the number of people visiting the mission station; those who attended would often bring other people on the following day. Commenting on the effectiveness of the pictures and illustrations, Blackburn said, "I have noticed on many occasions that where one man has seen these pictures, he will return in a few days, bringing several others with him and ask one to show them the pictures" (CMS/B/OMS/G3 A6/O/64/23/2/1883). Rev. Blackburn's use of pictures shows the extent to which the mission's surroundings, missionaries' imported items, and the use of illustrations and pictures of scenes from the Bible attracted the people to visit the mission station. People would attend to admire the new items and new surroundings, giving the CMS an opportunity to teach them the new religion.

Regardless of the popularity of the medical service, teaching, and the *baraza* meetings, the Nyamwezi never became Christians throughout the ten-year presence of the CMS and LMS at Uyui and Urambo; consequently, the missionary work in the two mission stations ended in frustration. For medical services, chiefs and individuals respected the two missionaries, Dr. Southon and W. Draper, because their western medicine provided the people in Unyamwezi an opportunity to experiment with alternative therapy besides indigenous healing. Nevertheless, the people made no commitment towards conversion. Even after the death of Dr. Southon in July 26, 1882, Mirambo requested a missionary and a medical doctor to be sent from the Society to Urambo, indicating the extent to which the chief and his people appreciated the missionary medicine (CWM/LMS/Box 5/2/11/5/1883, Box 9/4/11/4/1896, 5/12/1896). At the Uyui mission station, too, despite the recurrence of famine and diseases, men, women, and children did not convert to Christianity throughout the years of evangelisation. Unexpectedly, the first seven children who converted to Christianity were young dependents of chiefs whom were acquired during war, famine, and epidemic and servants of missionaries. They included

Saburi from the Yao country in northern Mozambique who, initially, worked as Rev. Coplestone's servant and, later, worked as Rev. Blackburn's cook. Of all the early Christians in the Uyui mission, he was the only adult. The rest were young boys who had been under instruction. These included Kerayi/Yerai, a Mganda given to Rev. Charlie Stokes by a chief of Buganda, as his dependent. Sungura from Unyamwezi was offered to Rev. Charlie Stokes by the chief of Uyui, Majembi-gana, and Chasama from Usukuma was offered to the mission by the chief of the district of Msalala in northern Unyamwezi. Others included Mshata, given to Rev. Blackburn by the late chief of Uyui; Milimo, a Mnyamwezi, given to Rev. Blackburn by the chief, and Safari given to Blackburn by the chief of Uyui (CMS/B/OMS/G3 A6/O/102/24/6/1885; CMS/B/OMS/G3 A6/O/122/31/7/1885).

Furthermore, the number of the Nyamwezi in both Urambo and Uyui at the Sunday Services was diminishing; in addition, fewer boys were attending classes, despite the medical services they received from the missionaries. The missionaries thought that offering clothes and other gifts would help them get many boys to attend the mission school, but it did not materialise. Children were mostly attracted by the tokens they received from the mission station and were not interested in becoming Christians. Rev. Brooks attempted to refuse offering tokens to the boys. Consequently, there was a sharp decline in school attendance. In the next morning, after his refusal, only a few boys attended the mission school. Draper also refused offering clothes to the boys. Accordingly, on the following Sunday, the boys did not attend the service (CWM/LMS/Box 6/2/3/3/1885, Box 7/1/25/4/1887, 11/9/1888, Box 8/1/18/2/1891). The missionaries complained against the indigenous beliefs and practices in Unyamwezi that seem to have contributed to the declining interest of men, women, and children in joining Christianity. Therefore, when such missionaries approached the people for conversion, the result was unyielding "yes what you say is good and true, but our customs and ways are good enough for us," reported Draper (CWM/LMS/Box 9/3/24/4/1895).

Likewise, portage affected evangelisation. The missionaries complained that it contributed to the declining number of their prospective converts. In Urambo, W. Draper reported that the fluctuating number on the Sunday service stemmed from thousands of men leaving for the coast as caravan porters. Consequently, not a single male could be found, in many villages. The movement between the coastal towns (of Bagamoyo, Pangani, and Mbwamaji) and Unyamwezi affected attendance in the Sunday services because no less than 54 men who attended regularly and 13 boys who belonged to the school left for the coast. Rev. Draper also noted that his Boys' School had lost a few of its members. These had gone to the coast. In the following year, in 1897, Draper reported that many people had returned from the coast; accordingly, the services were better attended (CWM/LMS/Box 9/4/6/6/1896, 12/9/1897, 18/4/1897). The loss of pupils going to the coast became common at Uyui mission and quite substantially affected the progress of the mission. In 1884, following the return of the few boys from the coast, Rev. Blackburn reported the loss of his two pupils who had left for the coast but promised him that they would join him after the harvest. The two examples from the Urambo and Uyui mission stations show how portage and other factors such as cultivation and harvest diminished the number of prospective converts at the mission school, affecting the course of missionary activities in Unyamwezi (CMS/B/OMS/G3 A6/O/67/2/4/1884, G3 A6/O/2/4/1884).

Akin to other strategies of conversion, meetings (*baraza*) did not yield substantial results in winning converts in both the Urambo and Uyui mission stations. Although Rev. Brooks' meetings went hand in hand with talking and drinking with the Nyamwezi men, he was still sceptical about their conversion to Christianity. His disappointment was followed by unpromising school attendance, which slowed down the progress of the school. Thus, despite the eight years of his stay in Urambo, Rev. Brooks had nothing to show as far as educational progress was concerned. He complained that the boys did not see the benefit of learning to read and write, regardless of their daily attendance at the talks in the veranda. Even the promising boy that he had in the workshop left the mission leaving no boy attending classes (CWM/LMS/Box 7/2/15/8/1887, 21/10/1889, Box 8/1/29/5/1890). At Uyui, it remains unclear from the documents whether Rev. Blackburn's meetings, with the promising attendance and good report about children sitting near the door of the mission house, gave him converts. What we learn from the mission reports is that the relations of Rev. Blackburn and Charlie Stokes with Majembi Gana and Buganda chiefs gave them a few boys who became the first converts in the mission. Thus, the *baraza* meetings succeeded in attracting children, men, and women to admire what the missionaries had but were not sufficient to attract the people to become Christians (G3A6/O/9/2/1884, CMS/B/OMS/G3 A6/O/102/24/6/1885).

With the increased frustration of spending years with no Nyamwezi converts, the CMS and LMS relinquished their mission stations in Urambo and Uyui. The CMS closed the mission of Uyui in 1887 without leaving it to another mission society. The missionaries lost interest in Unyamwezi when they opened a short route to Uganda through the Maasailand. No reports can be found about the closure of the Msalala Ndogo mission. Apparently, the mission station might have been closed at the time the missionaries opened the new route to Uganda (Nolan, 1977: 87). The LMS missionaries also gave up the Urambo mission station. In 1898, they invited the Moravian missionaries from the Nyasa province and southern highlands to take it over. It was argued that the success of the Moravians in the southern highlands prompted the LMS missionaries to ask the Mission Board of the Moravians in Herrnhut, Germany, to work at Urambo Kilimani. With an imperial mindset, the Moravians took over the mission but rushed into southern Unyamwezi, before the White Fathers could venture into the area, to open a chain of mission stations. The aim was to link them with those of the southern highlands into the strongest Moravian mission field, stretching from Lake Nyasa to Lake Victoria (CWM/LMS/Box 9/18/4/1897, 12/6/1897, Box 10/1/24/1/1898; Kisanji, 1980; Hamilton, 1983:611).

Like the LMS, the Moravians ran medical work and schools (bush schools, *shule za vichakani*), Sunday schools, and teachers' schools) in the missions of Urambo Kilimani, Ipole, Usoke, Sikonge, and Kitunda. In due course, the teachers' schools were elevated into district schools in the mission stations. These schools were primarily meant to train indigenous teachers who could teach children to read and write (Kisanji, 1980:172-175). Nonetheless, both medical work and schooling did not immediately produce converts, no were the first converts a result of the two strategies. The Moravians succeeded in the evangelisation of Unyamwezi because they interacted with Nyamwezi porters; some of the porters lived in and worked for the mission. The interaction with the Nyamwezi porters led some to convert to Christianity. At Urambo, mission

porter Kipamila and his wife Kitambi became the first Nyamwezi individuals to convert to Christianity in 1903 (Kisanji, 1980: 45-47; CWM/LMS/Box 1/4/8/1878).

In addition to the mission porters and domestic servants for the missionaries, the Moravians relied on the pre-existing Nyamwezi cultures of *changilo* and *lusangi* to attract the Nyamwezi people to Christianity. In Unyamwezi, chiefs developed a living compound called *changilo* to accommodate young men aged between 17 and 25 years to train them to become strong soldiers to fight in defence of the chiefdom and its people. The Moravian missionaries adopted the practice and attracted boys to live in one dormitory called *changilo*. The boys in the mission's *changilo* converted to Christianity; they attended mission schools and later became teachers (*vahembeki*) who worked for the missions and village outstations (Kisanji, 1980:76). Holding *Lusangi* festivals was another strategy that attracted several converts in the later years. Rooted in the Nyamwezi culture of neighbourhood and food sharing, the meetings and social engagements of *Lusangi* combined many parishes in which religious teachings, dance, and charismatic evangelists, to mention just a few attractions, drew people from far and wide and converted many to the new religion (KFC, *Lusangi* Na.38, Oktoba, 1938).

Image 1: LMS Mission at Urambo Kilimani in 1883



Courtesy of the Archdiocese of Tabora Archives

Image 2: The old LMS Mission at Urambo Kilimani in Ruins



Photo taken by the author, 26 November 2016

Conclusion

The activities of the missionaries in the missions of Urambo Kilimani and Uyui offer a snippet of the conversion strategies and the unexpected results at the time the Nyamwezi communities encountered European missionaries. As the pioneer missionaries in western Tanzania, the LMS and CMS was brought to a grinding halt after almost ten years of fruitless evangelisation. The peripheral location of the two missions limited the missionaries' access to run-away slaves and orphans who could become potential converts to form Christian communities. Therefore, isolated from the centres of trade routes, the LMS and CMS targeted indigenous communities but their efforts to convert the Nyamwezi people yielded no substantial results since the people had no interest in becoming Christians. No wonder even the first converts were mainly African workers and domestic servants who came from different parts of the East African interior.

The failures of the LMS and CMS missionaries provide glimpses into the processes of conversion and help us to understand the encounter between the Nyamwezi communities and Christian missionaries. It also throws light on the reciprocal relationship between the missionaries and communities, on one hand, and between the missionaries and chiefs, on the other. Furthermore, the frustrations of not getting indigenous converts in Unyamwezi by the two missionary societies indicate the challenges of evangelisation at the time of contact between the missionaries and communities in the region. Evidence from the two missions indicates that the Nyamwezi were not simply receivers of information from the missionaries but active interpreters of the Christian message. They made sure that the new belief system of Christianity that the missionaries introduced in the two mission stations did not change the indigenous beliefs and practices.

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