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EAST AFRICAN SLAVE TRADE: UNRAVELLING POST-ABOLITION SLAVE COVERTS IN THE INTERIOR OF SOUTHERN TANZANIA

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Abstract

The East African slave trade used to dominate historical writings up to the 1970s when it went low both in research and in publication, creating an impression that the topic had been exhausted. This has been a false image since the interior, from where slaves came, has received very little attention by professional researchers. Employing oral, archaeological and documentary sources, this article attempts to reveal operations that took place in southern Tanganyika after the trade was made illegal in 1873. With the focus on two slave coverts: Mang'ua and Kikole, the article shows that between 1873 and 1906 this region entered into a 'silent slave trade', conducted under the cover of ivory trade. The article further reveals the intricate socio-economic relationship the slave traders (mostly Arabs) got into with the Ngoni rulers, and how this relationship affected the indigenous people: the Ndendeule, the Matengo and the Pangwa.

Archaeological research conducted at Kikole, one of the slave coverts, shows that prior to the nineteenth century this place and perhaps the entire southern interior of Tanganyika was occupied by iron-working people. High concentrations of iron slag and tuyere fragments are found in the north-central edge of the site, bordering the Mwangaza River (Mapunda, 2003). In addition to metallurgical relics, the place reveals scatters of local pottery and daub.

Some of the pottery and tuyere fragments form part of the mud used to construct the mud houses at the site, being clear evidence that the people who made and used the said pottery and iron lived at Kikole before the people who built those houses, that is the Arab slave traders.

Test excavation was conducted inside one of the ruins, seemingly belonging to a moderately wealthy person (judging from the location of the structure in relation to the centre of the settlement). The purpose of the excavation was to examine the sequence of human occupation there. All together, the pit produced a dense (n=1210) and varied range of cultural materials as indicated in Table 1.

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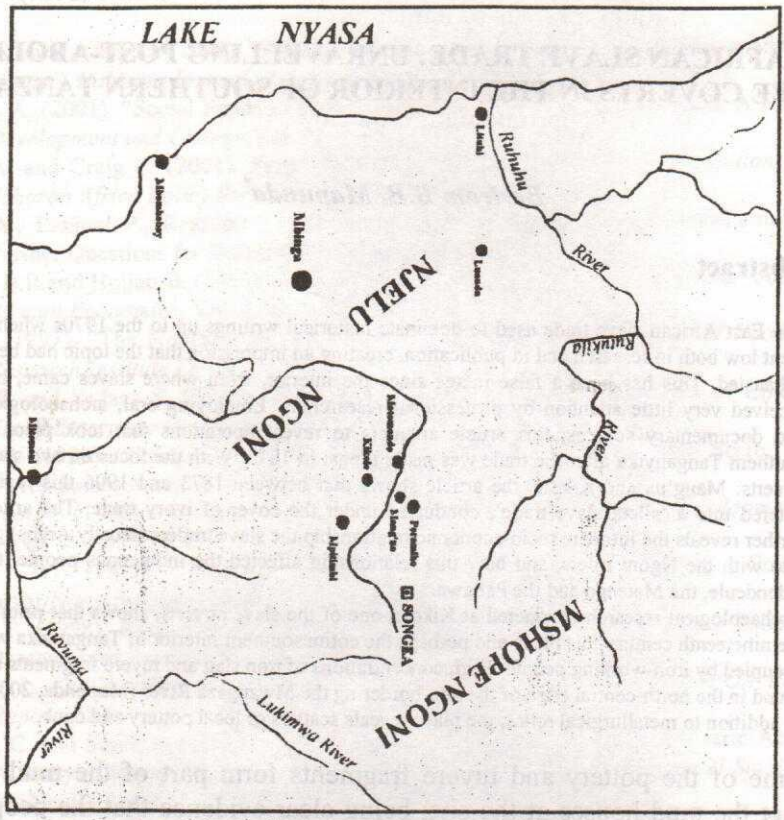

Figure 1: ***Central Eastern Lake Nyasa Region: Place Names Mentioned in the Article Southern Tanganyika Before the Ngoni and the Arabs***

Table 1: ***Materials Excavated in a 1x1m Unit at Kikole: Frequency and Stratigraphy***

Level in cm	Local pottery	Import pottery	Daub	Slag	Glass	Metal	Bone	Bead	Plastic	Other	Total
A 0-10	16	1	1	1	7				1		27
B 10-20	24		18	4			7				53
C 20-30	149		43	10	6	1	12		6		227
D 30-40	208		4	10	3	18	3	11	17	4 gourd 2 textile	280
E 40-50	110			9		1		6		4 gourd	130
F 50-60	80	1	8	15	1	1	7	3			116
G 60-70	60		32	70		9				1 tuyere	172
H 70-80	28		12	106		1	1	1		3 tuyere	152
J 80-90	9		16	28							53
K90-100	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--
Total	684	2	134	253	17	31	30	21	24	14	1210

Table 1 shows two periods of human occupation marked by two indicators: frequency and typology. Examining the 'Total' column, we note that levels A through K demonstrate three frequency patterns: two peaks and one low. Three lower levels J, H, and G portray high frequency with peak at G, followed by two low-frequency levels, F and E, and ending with four high frequency levels, D, C, B, and A with peak at D. The variation in frequency distribution is better illustrated in a histogram (Figure 2). The distribution pattern reveals two main periods of occupation: J, H and G marking the earlier occupation and D, C, B and A a later one, with F and E marking the transition period. Typologically, we note that materials that are known to be modern or foreign to this area such as plastics, textiles, beads and glass are represented in the top cluster (D through A) and the transitional period (F and E), while none of them is found in the lower occupation zone.

Fig. 2: Stratigraphic Distribution of Cultural Materials

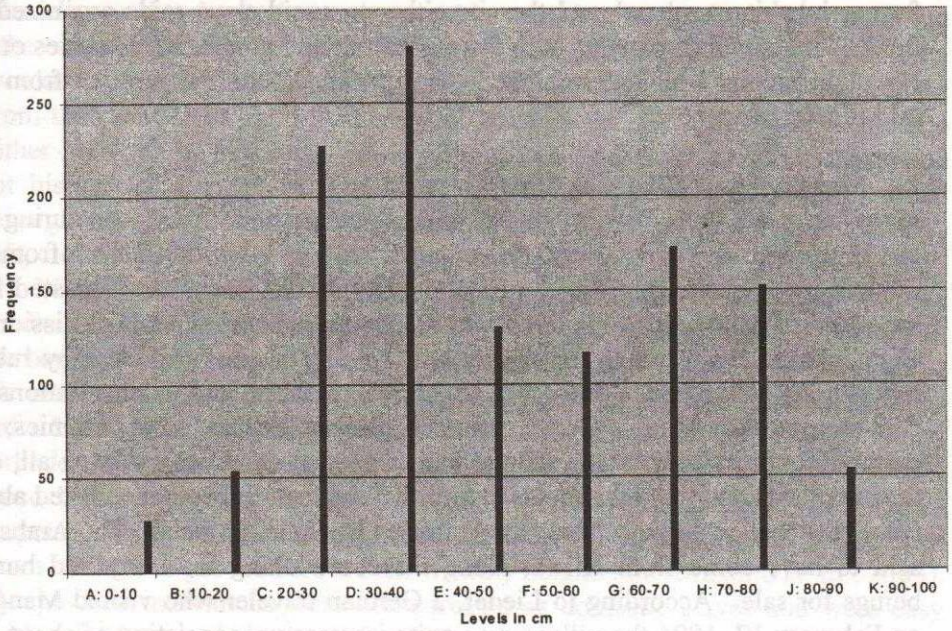

Figure 2: ***Stratigraphic Distribution of Cultural Materials***

As demonstrated elsewhere (Mapunda, 2003), this distribution pattern indicates that the earlier inhabitants of Kikole, and perhaps of much of Ungoni, were people who had no exchange contact with the coast or any foreign traders.

They were iron working hunters and/or herders—as demonstrated by metallurgical relics and animal bones (the latter are too fragmentary for species identification) and maybe farmers. They built wattle and daub, rectangular houses (as indicated by postholes found between levels G and J, 65 and 90 cm, and daub). Because we do not have chronometric dates for the excavated materials we cannot tell for sure the time range covered by the pre-Arab occupants of Kikole. However, an archaeological research conducted earlier on around Lituhi, next to the shore of Lake Nyasa (Fig. 1), has revealed iron working materials and human settlement dating to the 6th century AD (Mapunda, 1991). All in all, from the pottery found in the lower settlement horizon, we note that human occupation at Kikole started sometime in the early to mid-second millennium AD and not earlier since the typical Early Iron Age pottery, characterized by beveling, fluting and rim thickening are absent.

Given that there is no hiatus between the two settlement periods we can reasonably conclude that the pre-Arab inhabitants were there until the coming of the Arabs in the late nineteenth century. We could also be right to infer that the former inhabitants abandoned the site either to avoid slave raids organized by the Yao and Swahili merchants in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries or the Ngoni invasions which destabilized the entire southern Tanganyika from the mid-nineteenth century.

2. Mang'ua and Kikole as Slave Coverts

Mang'ua and Kilole, two important traders' settlements in Ungoni during the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries are located within 20 km from the modern town of Songea (Fig. 1). Established in 1890, Mang'ua is located four km south of what is today Peramiho town, the main hub of Catholic missionary work in southern Tanganyika, founded in 1898. The site is marked by rubble mounds of what had been mud structures; scatters and concentrations of Chinese porcelain, Arabic glazed ceramics, glass bottles and local ceramics; and cultural flora, including date palms, kapok and mango trees. Above all, oral testimonies from local inhabitants testify that the material evidence listed above were produced or brought there by Arabs led by Rashid Masudi. The Arabs are said to have come from Kilwa, along the coast loking for ivory and human beings for sale.[1] According to Lieder, a German traveler who visited Mang'ua on February 17, 1894 the village was quite impressive, consisting of about 150 huts (Ebner, 1987:126). An archaeological survey conducted by the author has revealed that the settlement occupied about 40 hectares (Mapunda, 2003).

By the turn of the century, Rashid Masudi and his assistants relocated themselves to Kikole, 15 km east for reasons given below. Kikole is also marked by ruins, which are far more conspicuous and impressive than those at Mang'ua. Kikole settlement took its name from an adjacent solitary knoll

standing about 100 m above the ground. Archaeological survey conducted at the site (Mapunda, 2002) has shown that during its heydays, Kikole measured about 15 hectares, and consisted of about a dozen brick or mud structures and probably fifty or more wattle and daub huts. Oral accounts hold that the core area was barricaded by means of a wooden fort.[2] As customary to Arab settlements, the place is also marked by dozens of Mango trees and date palms.

According to oral accounts[3], Rashid Masudi used the two stations, Mang'ua and Kikole, as his permanent bases from which he conducted trade in slaves and ivory. Masudi employed professional elephant shooters, most of whom were Wamatumbi from Kilwa. Each shooter was supplied with a musket, gunpowder, a copper cooking pot and flour. In return the shooter had to bring back to Masudi between two and four dozens of tusks within two months. The amount of tusks varied according to time length one worked with Masudi. Those who had worked with him for a long time, and so won reputation and trust, paid less in return than new employees. A shooter realized profit after surpassing his bid. The surplus, even if it was double the amount asked by Masudi was the shooter's property and he was free to sell it to Masudi or any other trader. Immediately after taking the assignment from Masudi, a shooter would employ field assistants (up to six) whose main task was to fetch tusks from the point of origin to a sub-station established in the field and later on to either Mang'ua or Kikole. A porter often got one or two tusks in compensation for his service during a single contract. Masudi also obtained elephant tusks through purchase from the Ngoni chiefs in exchange with muskets, gunpowder, salt, cloths, beads and ceramics.

Masudi also traded in humans. The main means of obtaining slaves was purchasing them from some political leaders and wealthy people. Although at the beginning he obtained slaves from central Ungoni, currently Songea district, his ultimate and most favourable zone is said to have been the area close to Lake Nyasa. This is partly because Chief Chaburuma of the Mshope Ngoni forbade slave trade in his territory and partly because the Lake Nyasa zone had loose leadership and was highly destabilized by Ngoni attacks, resulting in perpetual famine. Consequently, some people sold or placed their relatives in pawn in order to get food from their wealthy neighbours (Mihanjo *et. al.*, 2003). The pawned individuals were often treated as domestic slaves and were easy victims to slave trade because those who placed them in pawn in the first place could hardly ransom them, as the socio-economic condition in the area did not improve or stabilize until much later - during the post World War I period (Mihanjo, 1999).

Slaves and ivory collected from different parts of the southern interior of Tanganyika were kept in warehouses at Mang'ua or later on Kikole waiting for

the right time to be sent to the coast. A trip could not start unless Masudi found that the amounts of ivory and slaves were commercially sound and that it was safe to travel. The slavers had to be careful to minimise the risk of the possible Yao and Ngoni ambushes along the way. For example, it is recalled in oral accounts that sometime between 1903-4, Chief Chaburuma's men ambushed Masudi's slave caravan which had camped east of Matogoro Mountains, confiscating both slaves and ivory. This attack is said to have exacerbated hatred between Masudi and Chaburuma, forming the basis of a direct battle during the Majimaji War in 1905 (Ebner, 1987).

Ethnically, Mang'ua and Kikole accommodated people of mixed origins, including Arabs and Africans, with the latter group being further represented by Wangoni, Wangindo, Wamatumbi and many more.[5] Rashid Masudi and his assistants abandoned Kikole and moved to Kilwa immediately after the Majimaji War in 1906. They left behind their African concubines and children (mulattos) who continued to live at Kikole until 1974 when the government forced them to move to neighboring villages in accordance with the villagezation policy of the 1970s. The majority moved to Lyangweni village near Mpitimbi, located four kilometers to the east (See Figure 1).

Culturally, the two stations were islands of Islam in an ocean of traditional religions (and later on Christianity). At present, about twenty-five percent of the population of Lyangweni of about 500 people are Moslems; the remaining seventy-five percent are Roman Catholics.[6] The ratio favours even more Christians at Mang'ua.

The lingua franca in these stations was Kiswahili, whereas the local people conversed in a 'creole', called Kisutu, "literally the language of the serfs", consisting of "elements from the languages of the original inhabitants of the area such as Kindendeule, Kimatengo and Kipangwa. It was spoken by the vast majority of the people of Ungoni, who had been conquered and incorporated into Wangoni society " (Doerr, 1998: 16). The aristocrats used a different language referred to as 'Kingoni', "basically akin to Zulu, although it had changed to a considerable extent during the long years of the migrations of the Wangoni through Central and Eastern Africa. This was the language of the proper Wangoni, who had descended from the immigrants into south-western Tanzania during the middle of the 19th century. Kingoni was the language of the ruling class in the area (Doerr, 1998: 16). It should be noted that the original 'Kingoni' referred to here is no longer spoken except for a few vocabularies which some elders recite on request during traditional rituals[7]. Kisutu, the creole, on the other hand, has survived and that is what is being referred to as 'Kingoni' today.

By the late 1890s the interior of southern Tanganyika received yet another group of 'immigrants', who along with the Arabs and the Ngoni, became

important factors in the socio-economic and cultural history of that region. These were Roman Catholic missionaries from St. Ottilien Convent, Germany. They established their station at Peramiho, only four kilometers away from Rashid Masudi's station at Man'gua. Although the missionary records do not cite the presence of a slave covert at Mang'ua as one of the reasons why they chose Peramiho as their stations in the first place, there are reasons to believe that this was one of their main factors. The missionaries knew very well how easy it would be to begin their work with ransomed slaves, whose first and foremost desire was to get out of the hands of the slavers so that they could find ways of reuniting with their beloved ones. The missionaries offered that opportunity. Evidence from different missionary stations established during the nineteenth century in East Africa and beyond shows that their juxtaposition and slave centres was a common practice. The main reason was that the freed and especially ransomed slaves became easy and, in many ways, obligatory converts. In Zanzibar, for example, where the Holy Ghost Missionaries started their work in 1863, we are informed, "Nearly all the early converts of the Mission were freed slaves" and the reason being " ... only these poor wretches offered a reasonable chance of success" (Versteijnen, 1968:4). Fr. Frits Versteijnen further notes:

> Begging-letters were dispatched for all corners of the Christian world and for many slaves the first glimpse of freedom came from the Mission. The missionaries frequented the slave-market, and took part in the bidding as often as the slave-traders themselves, but for a very different purpose indeed! (Versteijnen, 1968:4).

Bagamoyo, the founding mission station in Mainland Tanzania, is another typical example. Fr. Lucas Malishi notes:

> As other missionaries before them, the Holy Ghost Fathers and Brothers went in for ransoming as many slaves as they could afford. Once ransomed, the ex-slaves were resettled in a Christian village away from the social mainstream. It is from the ex-slaves that the nucleus of a Christian community came into being. (Malishi, 1990:15).

When he got to Peramiho, into the interior of southwestern Tanganyika in 1898, about 25 years after slave trade had been 'abolished' in East Africa, the founder of the Catholic mission there, Fr. Cassian Spiß, did exactly what his colleagues had done in Zanzibar and Bagamoyo more than 20 years before. He started by detecting a slave station, in this case, Mang'ua, and then strategically placing his station next to it (4 km to the north, see Fig. 1). Revealing the situation during the formative days, Fr. Lambert Doerr, the current Abbot of the Benedictine Convent at Peramiho, writes:

> Who attended these devotions? Who were the first borders in the new school? The records are silent on these questions. However, it can be inferred that the very first people to come and live at the young mission and to receive instructions were former slaves, mainly children, whom Fr. Cassian had ransomed at considerable expense—up to 40 Rupees per head—from Rashid bin Masudi, an Arab trader then living at Mang'ua. Andrea Haule, one of the earliest Christians of Peramiho, recalled in an interview during the 1960's that Fr. Cassian had liberated a total of about 30 youths in this way (Doerr, 1998: 15).

Needless to say, there was a lucrative slave trade going on in southwestern interior of Tanganyika during the post-abolition period. Oral accounts in Ungoni place Rashid Masudi at the top of the list of slave and ivory traders during the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. This has been recovered not only by this study but by previous investigations as well (Ebner, 1987).

Masudi's background information is still blurred. We are just told that he was an Arab from Kilwa. During his stay in Ungoni and at different times, Masudi had several assistants, including fellow Arabs from Kilwa such as Mohammed bin Said, Mohammed bin Ali, Helejid bin Hamed, Nasor bin Amur, and Djelid bin Ali, Salum bin Hamis[9], Rashid bin Said and Nassor bin Suleiman. He was also assisted by black Africans, mostly Wamatumbi from the Kilwa hinterland, specialized in elephant shooting. Among them were Musa Mbambili[10] and his nephew Abdalhamani Mbambili.

It is not clear as to when exactly Rashid Masudi arrived in Ungoni. We are however informed that he established his settlement at Mang'ua in 1890 (Ebner, 1987). In any case, Masudi was not the first Arab to arrive in this region. We are informed that the people of the central eastern Lake Nyasa region were trading in ivory, whether directly or indirectly, with the coast as early as the eighteenth century. Kalinga (1985) reports that between 1720 and 1800 a number of families crossed Lake Nyasa from Manda, eastern lake shore region, and settled in the north-central region of what is today the Nyika plateau of Malawi. These immigrants, who later came to be known as 'Balowoka', literary meaning 'those who crossed (the lake)', were ivory traders who got there in search for ivory (Mapunda, 2001). This implies that either Arabs or Swahili traders were already known in the eastern Lake Nyasa region some decades before Rashid Masudi got there.

Furthermore, Fr. Elzear Ebner who lived at Peramiho for decades and who conducted an extensive investigation of the history, language, customs and traditions of the Ngoni people (Ebner, 1987) reports of the presence of Arab traders in Ungoni at the time of Nkosi (Chief) Mharule of the Njelu Ngoni (southern wing of Ngoni) who ruled from 1874 to 1889. We are, however, informed that the Arabs did not establish permanent settlements in Ungoni until after the death of Nkosi Mharule in 1889. This seems to be coincidental, rather than causative, since Mharule was a good friend of the Arabs. For example, he

allowed them to conduct trade free of charge, without paying tribute ('hongo') in his domain (Ebner, 1987) when we know that 'hongo' was a popular source of income and prestige amongst state communities all over East Africa and beyond. Actually, some of Mharule's sub-chiefs ('Manduna') executed 'hongo' to Arab traders. A good example is Putire Gama, of the southmost sub-chiefdom. Furthermore, his twin chief, Nkosi Chaburuma of the Ngoni-Mshope (northern wing of Ngoni) who ruled between 1882 and 1906, is reported to have been tough not only upon Arabs but also Germans and other foreigners (CCM-Ruvuma 1980). In 1891 for example he is reported to have attacked an Arab trading-caravan and thoroughly plundered it (Ebner, 1987). He is also said to have been an archenemy of Rashid Masudi, disgusted with his refusal to pay 'hongo' and conducting underground enslavement on Chaburuma's subjects. Moreover, due to his hatred against foreigners, Chaburuma was the first chief in the interior of southern Tanzania to accept the ritualistic (medicinal) water distributed and taken as the main component of initiation to the Majimaji War against the German rule in September 1905.

Mharule's successors, Zamchaya (1889-1899) and Mputa (1899-1906), seem to have been even more receptive to foreigners than their predecessor. That is why immediately after Mharule's death we see Arabs establishing permanent settlements, one at Mang'ua and another farther west near the present day village of Luanda, along Mngaka River, a tributary of Ruhuhu River (Ebner, 1987).

The incongruity between the two Ngoni sub-states, Njelu and Mshope, on their attitude towards foreigners deserves explanation. Beginning with the Njelu sub-state, there are several factors which led the rulers to befriend foreigners. The Njelu rulers' openness to Arabs was an ingratiation meant to lure the latter to give them firearms. The need for firearms became more obvious from the 1880s when the influx of Europeans was on the increase.

Besides internal factors, the Arabs' consolidation in Ungoni in the 1880s was also propagated by external factors, especially slave and ivory trade. This was the time when secretive slave trade paid off. It would be remembered that in 1873 Seyyid Barghash signed a treaty to end slave trade in East Africa. But it would be wrong to assume that this lucrative business stopped then and there especially bearing in mind that when the export trade in slaves from East Africa became illegal in 1873, it was actually at its height (Alpers, 1967:12). This was mainly due to the creation of a plantation economy on Zanzibar and Pemba Islands and the establishments of an Omani Arab commercial empire in the north-western Indian Ocean (Alpers, 1967:10). So both plantation owners and slave traders were highly affected by the treaty, leading them to employ alternative, underground means such as smuggling and silent operations to

ensure a continued supply of slaves. For example, slaves collected from southern Tanzania were no longer taken to Kilwa Kivinje; they were rather driven overland from Kilwa to the coast opposite Zanzibar and smuggled across in canoes and small boats to the islands (Alpers, 1967:12). This explains why quite a number of slave descendants found today in both Bagamoyo and Zanzibar trace their origin to the south, around Lake Nyasa (see e.g., Department of Antiquities, 2001:13-7).

Slave trade in the interior including the remote eastern Lake Nyasa region continued unabatedly during the 1870s and 1880s and so drawing more and more Arab traders who were wiling to take the risk, but reap high profits. The common tactic employed during this time of getting slaves to the coast was through the pretext of ivory trade. The search for ivory in central eastern Lake Nyasa area seems to have become quite intensive between the 1870s and the 1890s. Oral accounts provide an incident where Matumbi elephant hunters in the company of Musa Mbambili and his nephew Abdalhamani Mbambili, who had been operating in Mbeya decided to move to Songea after the ivory dealer in Mbeya, an Arab by the name of Funika, quit operation following the increased risks there. Funika instructed Musa and nine other Matumbi elephant shooters to go to Ungoni where Rashid Masudi was in demand of hunters. When they went to Songea they found Rashid Masudi residing at Mang'ua.[11]

Rashid Masudi lived at Mang'ua until the late 1890s when he shifted to Kikole, about 15 km to the south (Fig. 1). The specific time for his shifting is not known, but trends of events would put it at 1899. This was the year when Nkosi Mputa Gama got to the throne following the death of Zamchaya. As elaborated below, Masudi and Mputa did not get along very well. Mputa is said to have been in favour of Litunu, an African trader from Usagara, northeastern Tanganyika. Staying only 10 km apart and under the same host the two leading traders (Masudi and Litunu) are reported to have lived in continuous quarrels emanating from competition, envy and jealousy. Thus, Mputa's seizure of power triggered Masudi's displacement. Another factor is that Masudi wanted to get away from the reach of the Catholic missionaries. In 1898 the Catholic missionaries established their station at Peramiho, only four km north of Masudi's residence at Mang'ua. As noted above, the missionaries were not in favour of slave trade and they deliberately and strategically encouraged slaves to seek freedom. Whenever possible, the missionaries ransomed them. This of course had a negative repercussion upon Masudi, as it decreased the number of slaves and/or barred him from getting more.

The negative attitude which the missionaries had towards Masudi did not emanate from slave trade alone. It was built upon the fact that he was their rival in missionary work. Being a Muslim, Rashid Masudi was an impediment and a challenging force against smooth and quick Christian conversion in Ungoni.

This is clearly revealed in the words of Fr. Maurus Hartmann who, in 1897 on his survey trip to find a suitable place for establishing a mission station in southern Tanganyika, had this to say:

> The Kilwa-Arabs began to settle among the Wangoni in 1890 and have attracted others to follow them so that by now there are already three fully-fledged Muslim villages [Mang'ua, Ruanda and Kitanda]. It is said that the Arabs are exercising very great influence upon the Wangoni which is not all advantageous for the German rule. For the present the Wangoni are not yet Islamic. However, it is high time that the Christian religion becomes active as soon as possible in order to save this promising people from the danger of Islam which would make it perhaps for ever inaccessible for Christianity (quoted by Doer, 1998: 6).

Accordingly, the missionaries at Peramiho viewed with considerable suspicion the semi-official influence exercised by the Arab trader and elephant hunter Rashid bin Masudi of Kikole. The mission was convinced that it was mainly his influence which was responsible for the conversion to Islam of Surinyongo, the Sultan of Kitanda, who had previously been on good terms with the Peramiho missionaries to the extent of welcoming them to establish a missionary school at Kitanda (See Doerr, 1998: 69).

Oral sources reveal that Masudi was invited by his friend, Nkosi Mlamira, who at that time settled at the present Mpitimbi Baraza. He placed his station at the base of Kikole knoll, about 8 km east of Mpitimbi. It is very likely that he chose this specific location for two reasons: defense and availability of water. Standing 1060 meters above sea level, Kikole knoll is the highest point within the radius of 5 km. There is a great chance that Masudi used it as a watchtower—although when the author visited the hilltop did not see any obvious evidence apart from the fact that it is flat with a commanding visibility. Running east-west between the camp and the knoll is Mwangaza River, a tributary of the Ruvuma river which could have supplied both water and fish to the camp all year round.

Masudi's displacement had created enmity with his former host, Nkosi Mputa. At the same time, Nkosi Chaburuma of the Mshope Ngoni seems to have hailed Mputa for getting rid of Masudi from his territory. As noted earlier, Chief Chaburuma was disgusted by Masudi's refusal to pay 'hongo' and for enslaving his subjects. The enmity boiling inside the three individuals surfaced during the Majimaji War, which broke up in 1905. As soon as the war started Nkosi Chaburuma used it as a blessed excuse of attacking Masudi at his fortress at Kikole. With his superior musket power, Masudi won the battle and then turned himself into a German mercenary and informer[12]. He fought alongside the Germans against the Ngoni. Using his mercenaries known as 'rugaruga', Rashid on January 13, 1906 managed to trace and capture Chief Mputa Gama who was hiding on the lower Luhira River close to where it joins the Lumecha

River. He then handed him over to the Germans. After the war the Germans asked Masudi to help them identify Ngoni leaders who had been fighting in the Majimaji War. This was done in a parade held at Songea. Nkosi Mputa Gama was hanged to death along with more than two hundred Ngoni leaders. Nkosi Chaburuma managed to escape. He crossed the Ruvuma River to Mozambique,where he died in 1907 (CCM-Ruvuma, 1980).

3. The Ngoni Factor

When discussing the history of southern Tanzania very often the Ngoni are treated as a factor of positive changes with little if any discussion on the negative repercussions of their invasion. In other words, we mostly hear of their military and political might, but little information on the social, cultural and economic impact they exerted upon the indigenous people of southern Tanganyika: the Ndendeule, the Matengo and the Pangwa. This section attempts to bring that balance by demonstrating the role played by the Ngoni invasion in the socio-economic life in southern Tanzania.

The Ngoni who were considered by the Arab traders, Christian missionaries and German administrators as the masters of the land south of the Rufiji River came to this land in the 1840s seeking refuge from the fierce rule of Chaka in South Africa at the beginning of the nineteenth century. We know very little of the social, economic and political way of life of the indigenous people of this area prior to the arrival of the Ngoni. The earliest eye-witness report about this region is that of Caspar Bocarro, a Portuguese traveler, who in 1616 traversed the southern border of this area, from Sena on the Zambezi in what is today Mozambique, across the Ruvuma River to Kilwa. In his report Bocarro does not mention any hindrance or molestation by the inhabitants of southern Tanganyika, and he never records any devastation caused by wars or raids (Ebner, 1980). Bocarro creates an impression that by the seventeenth century southern Tanganyika was a land of tranquility and peace.

The eighteenth century is equally scantly known. According to the limited archaeological reconnaissance conducted in the area (Mapunda, 1991, 2002, 2003) we can say that the area was probably more populated than the early twentieth century since the density of settlement sites revealed through archaeological work is higher than that of the recent past. We also note that iron technology and animal keeping were widespread in the area (Mapunda 1991, 2003).

When the Ngoni arrived in southern Tanganyika, the area seems to have been peaceful as one Faraji Makuti was quoted by John Iliffe to have admitted: "Before the Ngoni wars the Ndendeuli did not know how to fight" (Iliffe, 1979: 54). The local people were organized in small, less militant units. Economically, they seem to have been faring well, subsisting on millet, eleusine, beans and

peas, as well as rearing cattle, goats and fowls. At the lakeshore and along big rivers, fishing was the main supplementary source of food. There was also farming and animal husbandry; whereas hunting was the main supplement in the hinterland.[13] Abundance of livestock in the region seems to have been the main reason that made the Ngoni anchor in southern Tanganyika after the long trek.

The Ngoni not only stirred and erased the tranquility that had been there for centuries but also took advantage of it. They asserted control over the stateless indigenous people and subjected them to perpetual raids. The indigenous people had to choose between surrendering and submitting to the powers of the Ngoni or running away, with the risk of repeated attack. None of the two options was better than the other. Those who were taken hostage were no better than any domestic slave of the time. Men could be recruited in the army or used as free labourers, especially in farming or animal herding. They were denied the right to marry and reproduce without the will of their masters. When the master conceded he paid dowry for his slave who surrendered his ethnic identity in return. That is to say the slave abandoned his original surname (e.g., Mapunda, Komba, Mbawala, or Nguruwe) and adopted the name of his master (e.g., Gama, Tawete, Mbano or Soko) and that would be passed over to his offspring.[14] By incorporating hostages into their kinship systems the Ngoni expanded their number and this had been their tactic from the moment they left South Africa in 1818 (Ebner, 1987). As a result, only few clans can claim genetic origin to South Africa. The majority of those referred to as Ngoni today are people who got incorporated along the way or from among the indigenous people of southern Tanganyika.

The indigenous people who managed to escape one attack could not rest because the next would come any time as the Ngoni wished. The attacks were brutal, accompanied by looting, hut- and crop-burning and killing (Doerr, 1998). This would therefore be followed by famine, starvation, separation, psychological trauma and general instability, which made the indigenous people highly vulnerable to attack by slave traders. Consequently, some people decided to surrender and submit themselves at will to the Ngoni chiefs and live around the designated *Ngoniland*.[16] This explains why the area close to the Chief's headquarters, for example Mbinga Mharule, was densely populated whereas the area farther west, along Lake Nyasa was sparsely populated by the 1880s and the 1890s. By living close to the headquarters one was assured of peace and became exempted from raid, but was required to render services like joining the army when the need arose.[17]

There are also others who could not bear with the Ngoni's brutality, harassment and humiliation. They exiled themselves for safety and peace. The Ndendeule for example found refuge to the northeast along the Kilombero River

valley, whereas the Pangwa crossed the Ruhuhu River and sought refuge in the Upangwa Mountains (Ebner, 1987; Iliffe, 1979).

As he was passing through the abandoned land towards the land of Nkosi Chaburuma in his mission to establish a station in Ungoni in 1898 Fr. Casian Spiß could not resist expressing his lamentations:

> *Nchi tulizopita ni pori kabisa zinazoonyesha kifo tu. Wangoni wenyewe walijichimbia kaburi hili la pori ambamo watu wao wengi wanapotea. Kabla ya miaka nchi hii haikuwa pori, maelfu ya watu walikaa hapa na walilima, ila hofu ya Wangoni waliopita nchi hizi mwaka kwa mwaka wakiziteketeza iliwashurutisha wenyeji wasiotaka kuchukuliwa utumwani watorokee nchi nyingine (Rupper, 1988: 90).* [The land through which we passed was just empty bush, signifying death. The Ngoni are the ones who dug this grave of bush, in which many of their people die. In past years this was not an empty land, thousands of people lived and cultivated here, but for the fear of the Ngoni who roamed the land year after year destroying them, forced those who did not want to be taken into slavery to seek refuge in other places (author's translation.)]

Ethnic displacement caused by the Ngoni is yet to be empirically quantified. As Alpers noted, "Much of the chaos from northern Zambia right up to the Kilwa coast was caused by these Ngoni raids. The depopulation of the Kilwa hinterland, for instance, was more directly linked to Ngoni raiding than to the slave trade" (Alpers, 1967:22). Thus one may add that the prolonged silent slave trade that went on in southern Tanganyika was facilitated by the Ngoni invasion.

4. Conclusion

Edward A. Alpers, in his paper entitled *The East African Slave Trade* published as Paper No. 3 of the Historical Association of Tanzania in 1967 lamented, "Even more regrettable is the fact that the major work which has been done to date on the East African slave trade is not at all satisfactory" (Alpers, 1967:3). This statement was true then as it is today. Our knowledge about this important historic episode, which shadows the contemporary socio-cultural and economic milieux sail, is quite scratchy. The research which has culminated into this paper was conceived as an attempt to address this problem.

This article has attempted to reveal evidence for slave operations in the interior of Tanganyika during the late nineteenth and the early twentieth centuries. Although this was the post-abolition period, slave trade in southern Tanganyika and elsewhere in the interior of East Africa continued at an alarming rate. Ironically, one of the main factors for the intensification of this evil trade was the decision to abolish it. Evidently, the decision was externally determined. While the European economic, political and humanitarian forces found justification for eradicating slavery as a mode of production, the local (East African) merchant and plantation economies still depended on slave labor.

This contradiction resulted in underground forms of slave trade specially devised to handle the transition from slave-based economy of the Arab rule to a cash-crop economy of the German and British colonialists. The underground operations included the portage camouflage (using slaves as ivory porters) and smuggling slaves in small unsuspected vessels such as canoes.

A combination of factors including demand in plantations, the tedious techniques of transporting slaves to the coast, and the risk of punishment and loss of slaves in case one was caught raised the cost of slaves and encouraged only the most daring traders to take the chance.

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Notes

1. According to Zuberi Abdalahaman bin Musa Mbambili, interviewed on September 13, 2002.
2. According to Jabir bin Salum bin Hamis, interviewed at different times between August 2002 and September 2003.
3. The following information is based on interview with Mzee Zuberi Abdalahaman bin Musa Mbambili, the grandson of Musa Mbambili, Masudi's elephant shooter. Born in 1927at the outskirts of Kikole village, Mzee Zuberi moved to and lived at Mang'ua since his youth until September 2003 when he moved to Songea town for health reasons. He still keeps his grandfather's copper cooking pot. He has been a key informant for Mang'ua; interviewed at different times between September 2002–September 2003.
4. According to Jabir bin Salum bin Hamis, interviewed at different times between August 2002 and September 2003.
5. Ibd.
6. According to report obtained from the Village Office, during the research, August 2003.
7. According to Mzee Xavery Zulu, the last Chief of the Njelu subchiefdom, interviewed at Ndirima, Peramiho, August 13, 2000.
8. The book was written to commemorate a centenary of Benedictine missionary (Catholic) work in southern Tanzania.
9. He is the father of Jabir bin Salum bin Hamis, who still lives at Lyangweni. Jabir has been a key informant for Kikole; interviewed at different times between August 2002 and September 2003.
10. His grandson, Zuberi Abdalahaman bin Musa Mbambili, continued to live at Mang'ua until September 2003 when he moved to Songea town for health reasons. He has been a key informant for Mang'ua; interviewed at different times between September 2002–September 2003.
11. According to Zuberi Halfan Mbambili, interviewed on September 13, 2002.
12. According to Jabir bin Salum bin Hamis, interviewed at different times between August 2002 and September 2003.
13. According to Mzee Xavery Zulu, the last Chief of the Njelu subchiefdom, interviewed at Ndirima, Peramiho, August 13, 2000.
14. Ibd.
15. Ibd.
16. Ibd.
17. Ibd.
18. According to Jabir bin Salum bin Hamis, interviewed at different times between August 2002 and September 2003.