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Routes to Deliverance: The Development of Social Mobility Among East African Slave Porters by Way of Missionary Caravans, 1877-1906.

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ROUTES TO DELIVERANCE: THE DEVELOPMENT OF SOCIAL MOBILITY AMONG EAST AFRICAN SLAVE PORTERS BY WAY OF MISSIONARY CARAVANS, 1877–1906

A Thesis
Presented to
the Graduate School of
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In Partial Fulfillment
of the Requirements for the Degree
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History

by
Katherine Allen
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Accepted by:
Dr. James Burns, Committee Chair
Dr. Stephanie Hassell
Dr. Stephanie Barczewski
ABSTRACT

This thesis examines British missionary caravans in nineteenth-century East Africa. Through the utilization of enslaved porters from the island of Zanzibar, enslaved people were able to garner autonomy. The primary focus of this thesis is to examine the ways British missionaries inadvertently provided routes to social mobility and manumission to enslaved peoples. Its aim is to place this ironic phenomenon in conversation with historiographical claims that porters were not slave labor as well as postulating that enslaved people were agents of their own social mobility and manumission.
DEDICATION

To my grandmother, who was my mentor, confidant, and greatest fan. You inspired my love of reading and thirst for knowledge and were always a guiding light in my life. My time at Clemson was filled with countless moments thinking of and missing you.

“It is well with my soul.”

Jeneal Harris Huddleston
(1937 – 2016)
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Lastly, I must thank my friends and family. I am especially grateful to Nathaniel Thomas and “Wigs” and Ellie Allen for their constant support and encouragement. I appreciate their patience and willingness to listen. I am forever indebted to my dear friend Kayla for always being eager to read and edit even the worst drafts of this project and endure my ramblings on East Africa. Of course, I must also thank Kaitlyn and Daniel, who always made sure I was fed and had a sofa to sleep on. Graduate school is tough, and I could not have made it without you all.
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CHAPTER ONE

INTRODUCTION AND CONTEXT

In June of 1877, London Missionary Society member, Arthur W. Dodgshun, arrived on the shores of Saadani, Tanzania, accompanied by a small group of approximately 20 other missionaries and roughly 60 porters. The missionary caravan’s journey, which began on Zanzibar, would end on Lake Tanganyika, where several other missions’ camps had been and established. The group that would arrive at Lake Tanganyika in 1879 would not include Arthur W. Dodgshun or many of the other missionaries and porters who set out on the voyage. Disease and malnutrition that accompanied this sort of travel resulted in high mortality rates among British missionaries. The porters, too, often did not make the full voyage to Lake Tanganyika, though death was less of a factor regarding their failure to arrive. The stories published in the nineteenth century regarding the experiences of missionaries focused explicitly on the successes and the sacrifices of the missionary. What they disregard was the slave labor, under the guise of portership, that was utilized in these caravans. The reality of the caravan voyage was one encumbered with abandonments, diseases, and communication barriers. Yet amidst the struggles of the European missionaries, slaves were able to find paths to manumission.¹

The pioneer missionaries in East Africa were from the Church Missionary Society who arrived in East Africa around 1844. Their goal was to establish missionary stations

¹ A.W. Dodgshun, 1877, Box 1, CWM Central Africa Journals University of London School of Oriental and African Studies Archives and Special Collections, London, England.
and sites along the coast and into the interior. The Church Missionary Society, as well as the London Missionary Society, were evangelical Christian missions’ organizations. Evangelical Christian typically means Protestant, evangelistic and adhering to the fundamentals, which included the triune of God. The triune of God consisted in the belief in the deity of Jesus Christ, the inerrancy of the entire Bible, and that the gospel was life-transforming (or gave one the ability to be “born again”). Evangelical individuals often use the term to distinguish themselves from cultural Christianity, state religion, or mainline Protestantism. Although there were Catholic and non-evangelical groups present in East Africa as well, this paper focuses on the writings and experiences of British evangelical missionary groups between 1877 and the turn of the 20th century in what is known today as Tanzania. These groups were highly conscious of the nature of the evangelical project and their potential effect on the British Empire at large.

Though missionaries were travelling to East Africa based on conceptual notions of empire and the desire to evangelize, clear statements of hypocrisy emerge frequently in missionary journals. Missionaries claimed to be opponents of the slave trade, writing to the metropole regularly about the horrors of the slave trade and the need to abolish slavery. Yet, missionaries were employing slaves to work in their caravans from the 1870s through the turn of the century. Ironically, in utilizing enslaved peoples as porters provided opportunities for social mobility, and in some instances, manumission.

2 Correspondence of Foreign Office to Mr. Cave, 1906, Box 24, Document 89, University of London School of Oriental and African Studies Archives and Special Collections, London, England; Correspondence of Sir Edward Gray to Mr. Cave, 1906, Box 24, University of London School of Oriental and African Studies Archives and Special Collections, London, England.
though British missionaries did not intend it, they presented a practical opportunity that enabled slaves to attain autonomy. The irony of British missionaries providing routes to social mobility through the utilization of slaves is the major theme throughout this work. In order to postulate this stance, it is first crucial to understand the social and economic conditions of East Africa that permitted such an occurrence.

**East Africa since the 17th Century**

Leading up to the increasing European presence in East Africa during the nineteenth century, the region experienced a fluctuation in political dominance. Arriving in the 1490s, the Portuguese were the first Europeans to explore East Africa. Prior to the arrival of the Portuguese, small sovereign communities in the region, mostly governed by Arab and Swahili merchants, were engaged in long-distance trading with Arabs in the Middle East, Indians, and even Venetians via the Indian Ocean. Upon their arrival, the primary goal of the Portuguese was to take control of the spice trade from the Arabs in the region. The rivalry between Portugal and the Arab world stemmed back to the crusades. Thus, the Portuguese were determined to break trade monopolies that existed in the region and dominate the lucrative trade networks. After engaging in several confrontations with existing communities in East Africa, the “official” Portuguese presence in East Africa began in 1505 with the conquering of Kilwa in present day Tanzania. The Portuguese settlement at Kilwa was the first European settlement in the region.

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4 Ibid.
In the 1730s, Omani Arabs began to pose a serious threat to Portuguese enterprises in East Africa. The Omani acted aggressively, attacking naval ships and sieging forts and after nearly 40 years of provocation, the Omani were able to expel the Portuguese from coastal Kenya and Tanzania and gain control of the Indian Ocean trade. The withdrawal of the Portuguese in the late 17th century had left eastern Africa mostly outside of European political influence and without Christian missions until the mid-nineteenth century. By the time European interest in the region peaked in the early nineteenth century, the Omanis were the foremost political figures on the coast of eastern Africa, with the head of the polity being the sultan of Zanzibar, scion of the Busaidi dynasty from Oman.\(^5\) Throughout the nineteenth century, East Africa became more immersed in global trade, producing goods such as cloves, dates, ivory, and slaves. The sultan of Zanzibar, Said Said, who ruled from 1804 until his death in 1856, moved the capital of the Omani empire from Muscat to Zanzibar in 1840, signifying the growing significance of Zanzibar globally. As an expression of growing power under the sultanate, the sultans’ reach extended farther inland into eastern Africa. Following the death of Said Said, the sultanate split in two, leaving one son, Thuwain, ruling in Oman, and the second, Majid, ruling in Zanzibar until 1870. This fracturing of the political state made way for Europeans to better negotiate their standings on the coast.\(^6\) Still the area of land from the upper Zambezi River to the lower region of Lake Mweru on the northern

\(^5\) Ibid.
and western shores of Lake Nyassa were free from European occupation until the end of the nineteenth century.
The mid-nineteenth century, the period in which this project begins, is a period of what scholars refer to as informal colonialism. The invention of quinine, a medicine used for the treatment of malaria, in the 1850s led to a gradual growth to the presence of Europeans in East Africa. During this period, explorers and missionaries began travelling into previously un-reachable regions to Europeans to compile reports on the geographies, economies, and political structures of the interior of Africa. Beyond protectorates in Nigeria and Cameroon, the British government had little legitimate political involvement in the region. Even though European nations were not to the point of taking political control of East Africa, they were asserting their cultural and economic influences over the region.

Beginning in 1822, the British began trying to impose abolitionist policies on the Omani and African slave trade that existed along the coasts. Delays in response to abolitionist policies from coastal communities demonstrated to the relatively weak control the British had in the region. Though earlier scholarship promotes the idea of the British having superior military and weapon strength over the Africans and Arabs, in actuality, they did not have the funding nor the human resources to confront the states existing in the region. Britain’s struggle with Napoleonic France and the consequent realization of Oman’s strategic importance delayed British intervention in the slave trade on the East Coast. With the conclusion of warring in Europe, imperial officials felt it appropriate to inform the Sultan Said Said of policies prohibiting the importation of

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slaves into Bombay and Fort William, India. The Bombay government communicated with Said, asking him to entertain the idea of total abolition of the Omani Arab slave trade, which Said declined. However, in September of 1822, Said signed the Moresby Treaty, which prescribed limits to where the Omani could engage in the slave trade. Said maintained most of his power on Zanzibar and hoped to coalesce power through relations with European governments. The British prohibited trafficking from the east and south of a line drawn from Cape Delgado to a point sixty miles east of Socotra. The British loosely enforced Moresby Treaty, as they had limited authority over East Africa due to the lack of authority and resources in the region.

Having failed at limiting the East African slave trade with the Moresby Treaty, the British passed a second treaty, the Hamerton Treaty, in October of 1845. The British Foreign Office pushed for Said to end the slave trade at sea, to which the Sultan again declined, warning the British that should the slave trade collapse, “nothing of revenue of any consequence will be left to me, only a trifle.” Not wanting to disrupt positive relations between the British and Oman, the British agreed to shape the Hamerton Treaty to better cater to African and Omani demands, only further limiting the slave trade, not abolishing it. Under Article 1, the Sultan of Muscat and Zanzibar engaged to prohibit and implement severe penalties on those working to export slaves from African dominions. Under Article 2, Said contracted to prohibit the importation of slaves from any part of Africa into his possessions in Asia. Article 3 allowed for British and East India Company

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10 Ibid, 57.
ships to seize ships suspected of slave trading and Article 4 put the treaty into effect on January 1, 1847. Ultimately, the British were unable to bring an end to slavery in East Africa because of the influence of sultans in the Indian Ocean World. These treaties did, however, allow for colonial officials to report progress back to the British Crown, especially missionaries. As stated by historian Dennis Laumann, “in many ways, missionaries were the advance guard of colonization, reporting on economic and political status in places in which they worked and agitating for European intervention against what they viewed as barbaric African practices”.

Scholars often debate the role that missionaries played in developing the British Empire. Historians, such as Roland Oliver, have examined the work carried out by missionaries in East Africa, but he does not engage much with the extent to which missionaries aided in empire building. Terrance Ranger argues that the significance of missionary work “seems to belong more to European than African history”, indicating that the study of missionaries is exclusive from African studies. It also implies that missionaries were highly involved in British imperial history. Andrew Porter, on the other hand, views missionary work as paradoxical, arguing that missionaries did not intentionally and actively participate in the development of British colonization and imperial expansion, but could not avoid empire. He writes, “missionaries might not

11 Ibid, 71.
advocate empire, but were often associated with the institutions and beliefs identified by local peoples with imperialism.”

Based on the analysis of primary and secondary documents pertaining to Protestant mission groups, this project contributes missionary activity in East Africa from 1877 through 1906 to both a religious fervor in the church, pushing the settlement of religious outposts abroad, and the notoriety and sense of adventure that accompanied travelling into the African interior. I believe that Andrew Porter underestimates the influence of figures like David Livingstone on the psyche of young, male missionaries. The roles and influence of missionaries in British empire building is irrelevant to this project. What is pertinent is the roles that missionaries believed they were playing in their conception of empire. Missionary journals indicate that missionaries believed they were bringing civilization and Western ideals to East Africa for the better. They self-identified themselves as influences of the imperial project, even during the informal stages of colonization. Throughout the course of this project, this assumption by missionaries will emerge time and time again.

Competition between European countries to lay claim to the land erupted at the conclusion of the century. Southwest of the region was Portuguese controlled Angola, territories in Mozambique, and the Congo Free State. The British East Africa Company occupied the Lake Victoria region and were beginning to push south. In South Africa, Cecil Rhodes was expanding the authority of the British South Africa Company and was

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seeking out new avenues of profit further into the interior. On the coast, German, Omani, and Swahili traders contested for control of the market. The presence of so many European powers resulted in a race to the interior. At the forefront of this push were explorers and missionaries. Missionaries and explorers would engage in map-making and settlement, which established legal claim that this is the space of their respective nationalities. The drawing of ships and forts provided a form of legal argument. The British also utilized missionaries to build up alliances with dominant powers in the interior, as they were less threatening than a military force.  

East Africa’s growth in global significance also led European Christian missionaries to take an increased interest in eastern Africa in the mid-nineteenth century. Attempts at conversion and establishing influence in the region by missionaries often produced few results. However, the presence of a variety of missions from across Europe underscored that eastern Africa was one of many theatres where Britain sought to influence trade while countering other European ambitions. In the mid-nineteenth century a missionary named Propoganda Fide attempted to scout out a new method of traveling into Ethiopia. Two Capuchins following Fide’s lead arrived on Zanzibar in 1857. While attempting to reach Ethiopia, they created a controversy by purchasing and baptizing a young slave girl. The two Capuchins attempted to remove the slave girl from Zanzibar via a slave ship. This action led to conflict with Sultan Majid, who feared British reprisal at the violation of treaties suppressing the slave trade. Eventually, missionaries were briefly expelled from Zanzibar due to the incident. Majid forbade other missionaries from

entering his capital several times later in the 1850s.\textsuperscript{17} This incident with the Capuchins underscores 1) that the British and the Sultanate had a solidified and respected rapport and 2) that missionaries had to respect the wishes of the Sultanate or their operation would be dissipated.

The British, besides pursuing trade, saw Zanzibar as crucial in their efforts to enforce existing treaties to curb the slave trade, as well as to counter perceived French advances.\textsuperscript{18} However, British influence in the region failed to deter Germans from their claims to the region. An 1890 treaty between the Germans and the British split control in the region between the two; the Germans gaining the rights to Tanganyika and the British assuming responsibility for what would become Kenya and Uganda, as well as Zanzibar.\textsuperscript{19} However, these delineations of sovereignty did not prevent British missionaries from traveling and settling in Tanganyika, as the missionary records reveal. Missionaries and explorers were just one method by which Europeans began to assert their imperial aspirations in East Africa.

**East Africa, Slaves, and Swahili**

To best understand East Africa, it is crucial to define a few of the terms frequently utilized when discussing the region: 1) East Africa, 2) Swahili, and 3) slave. East Africa consists of modern-day Tanzania, Kenya, northern Mozambique, Malawi, and northeast

\textsuperscript{17} Kollman, *The Evangelization of Slaves*, pp. 36.
Zambia, as well as the offshore islands, Lamu archipelago, Mombasa, Mafia Islands, Kilwa, Kisiwani, Kerimba Islands, Mozambique Island, and Angoche, which would become known as the Swahili Coast. This thesis focuses on what are now the country Tanzania, including Zanzibar, which will be referred to as Zanzibar and Tanganyika beyond the introduction. The parameters of this project consist of the island of Zanzibar to the interior of Tanzania, stopping around the Lake Tanganyika region. Though missionaries did not consider their time off the mainland a part of their caravanning expedition, Zanzibar was especially pertinent to missionary caravans since the sultan required all ships to port there before moving to the mainland. Resultingly the majority of missionary labor was contracted in Zanzibar, which consisted of slave labor. Though the region of East Africa has a set, widely accepted definition, the definition of the term “Swahili” is contested.

European missionaries frequently distinguished the Africans traveling in their caravans from the people of the coast, referred to as Swahili. Defining the Swahili has become a historiographical debate with contention surrounding to what extent the Swahili are African. Through linguistics and archeological findings, it is evident that the Swahili were a group of Africans who had long engaged in trade in the Indian Ocean World. Their origin story was misapprehended by European administrators and scholars, who believed they were of Arab descent due to the Arabic and Persian affinities of the Swahili people, such as the presence of mosques and Arab words used within the Swahili language.20 In East Africa, Arab was largely synonymous with Muslim. A combination of

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a racial and religious based hierarchy existed in East Africa. Arabs, who typically have lighter skin than Africans were typically deemed socially superior. The condition to this was based on religion. If a native African was a pious and practicing Muslim, then they would be held to a higher esteem than a non-Muslim Arab. The presence of mosques in the region exemplify the influence of Islam. Conflicting evidence of British interpretation contribute to the debate of how to define Swahili. However, it is further complicated do to the fact that self-identified Swahili people have, over time, made claims to foreign roots in the Middle East. There was biological mixing between Africans and Middle Eastern traders; however, Swahili city-states existed before foreign traders. For reasons of prestige, East African elites would claim mythical Middle Eastern ancestry. It is crucial to understand the semblance of the term Swahili as one that possesses a sense of superiority. The Swahili allegedly had ancestry connecting them to the prophet Muhammed. Because of Muslim influence in the region and the alleged connection to Muhammed amongst the Swahili people placed them higher on the social hierarchy. This understanding of the term affected relationships between the Swahili and other Africans, Arabs, and Europeans.

British records indicate the term “Swahili” became a catch-all for freed slaves, giving them a connection to mainland Africa. In developing an identity away from Pemba, these freed slaves were acknowledging a familial connection, uprooting the notion that slaves are kinless, while simultaneously stripping former masters of their

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21 In most instances, slaves, though many were converted to Islam by their masters, would still maintain their social status at the bottom of the hierarchy, as they could not be truly pious because of their slave status.
former influence. There is a discrepancy as to how much the term “Swahili” was an assigned descriptor of freed slaves or if these individuals embraced it.\textsuperscript{22} Though the status of an African termed Swahili by British records cannot be confirmed, it does indicate that British labels of individuals were not a precise form of identification. The British generally disregarded the status of an individual according to the native populace and instead identified them based on their strict binary understanding of free and enslaved. For the purpose of this paper, the term Swahili will be used to describe coastal elites. Since Arab and Swahili people distinguish themselves, the terms will not be used interchangeably.

Defining slavery has been a point of contention between scholars since the 19\textsuperscript{th} century. Claude Meillassoux argues that Africa has had a wider variety of servile relationships than anywhere globally, leaving room for many misconceptions about what constitutes slavery in eastern Africa.\textsuperscript{23} Though many of the slaves were a part of a plantation system, there were hierarchies among slaves just as there were with free people. In the 19\textsuperscript{th} century, the British established concrete definitions of slavery to further develop legality behind emancipation. For the British, slaves had to provide evidence of their purchase, show evidence of physical abuse, and confirm that they were unpaid by their master (this included gifted items such as clothing or jewelry).\textsuperscript{24}

\textsuperscript{22}Elisabeth McMahon, \textit{Slavery and Emancipation in Islamic East Africa: From Honor to Respectability} (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2015.), 160-164.
Many slaves did not meet the qualification of British slavery, oftentimes because their masters had found means to work around the system and were denied their emancipation. Enslaved people along the East Coast maintained levels of independence that differed from the traditional British understanding of chattel slavery. There are instances of slaves living in villages and being able to sell their crops and goods, such as clothing and jewelry in local markets. The autonomy these slaves had to specialize in crafting and accrue wealth did not fit the British understanding of slavery. Similarly, house slaves, who were usually female, were often labeled wives to conceal their slave status from the colonial authorities. Complicated relationships with masters, the hierarchy within slaving systems, gender, and failures on behalf of the colonial government on upholding abolition laws all attributed to the continuation of slavery on the East Coast. Despite Britain’s supposed abolition or limitations on slavery via treaties, slavers and slave masters were able to maintain slavery in East Africa through other means. As new tactics to conceal slavery on coast emerged as a result of British abolitionist efforts, the hierarchy and terminology surrounding slaves shifted as well.

On Pemba, a small island off the coast of Zanzibar, there were differences in Swahili terminology, which was the common language on the island, for individuals freed by manumission and those freed through the abolition creeds implemented by the British. Manumissions granted by a slave master typically resulted in a client-based relationship, so terms like hadim, meaning “servant of” were commonly used. Concerning slaves freed by British emancipation laws, the term hadim wa sirka (a label for slaves emancipated by an external entity, such as the British) was used,
demonstrating an intentional separation of the two types of freed people. The distinction in terms used underscores a societal shift and a reactionary effort through language to adapt to a changing Pemban landscape. This also implies there was a degree of separation between slaves freed by manumission and those freed by treaties, creating divides in society as a result of abolition efforts by the British. The variety of terms used to describe the enslaved individuals across East Africa and the fluidity of such terms highlights the varied experience of slavery in the region.

In the Kiswahili language of the nineteenth century, a variety of terms described people who fit under the rubric of slave status. These terms that classified slaves were based on descriptors ranging from who their master was, their religion, their place of birth, their assimilation into hegemonic coastal society, etc. The generic word for slaves in Kiswahili is *mtumwa*, meaning “one who is sent.” Slaves who had recently been brought from the interior were identified as *watumwa wajinga* (fools), *washenzi* (savages), *waja* (those who have recently come), or *mateka* (loot or booty). If a slave was born into slavery, they were labeled *wazalia*, while those raised as slaves after being brought to the coast as children were *wakulia*. The term *mswahili* indicated one who was assimilated but not free, at least in the same sense that Arabs were free.

Swahili proverbs further complicated the narrative of slavery in East Africa. As McMahon demonstrated in her study of Pemba, slaves maintained a certain level of autonomy in their societies, even among the clove plantations that were the primary slaving institutions on Pemba. Swahili proverbs demonstrate the defiance some slaves

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25 McMahon, *Slavery and Emancipation*. 
demonstrated. A proverb is a real truth or saying agreed upon widely and based on common sense or experience. Proverbs exemplify a widespread trend or experience across a community, which in this case, would be the Swahili. For these expressions to become fixed in society and pervade over such a geographic expanse, they had to have been a frequent and consistent experience. In 1891, missionary and scholar, William Ernest Taylor, with the aid of two Swahili poets, Mwalim Sikijua and Bwana Hemedi, assembled a book of Swahili proverbs. Though there is a range of topics covered in these proverbs, ranging from advice on cooking, weather, and gossip, proverbs about slaves exist consistently throughout the text. A proverb that reads, “Ada ya mja, hunena: muungwana ni kitendo” translates to “the custom of the slave, is to talk with the free-born”. This proverb indicates that slaves were often communicating with free people, disrupting the notion that the British had of slaves lacking identity and autonomy by defying social stratification and the imposed hierarchies. Slaves were frequently interacting with free people, and, as Swahili is often deemed as a group of higher social standings, slaves were not merely interacting with freed slaves or “Africans.” The Swahili would have referred to Africans who were not Muslim, or of lesser social standings deemed as being less conservative or an ill practicing Muslim, as Africans to distinguish themselves from an “other.” It is not to say the Swahili are not African. These were just labels utilized by the Swahili to distinguish themselves from other groups.

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living among them. The proverb also made no mention of slaves strictly interacting with masters. Therefore, slaves were interacting with the population at large.

Another Swahili proverb reads, *Baa pia hutokana na vijana na watumwa*, translating to “every sort of nuisance comes from children or slaves”. 28 Like the proverb previously discussed, this proverb indicates that slaves were demonstrating a certain level of autonomy and were not merely vessels compliantly working. Slaves were challenging institutions developed by the Swahili and making life challenging for their masters. Proverbs also indicate that the slaves along the East Coast were working in relatively close proximity to their masters. Slaves living in a low-density slaving system generally would be performing similar tasks to their masters and presumably would be able to negotiate better their work and living conditions with their masters as proximity would shape their relationship. Even in the high-density slaving systems that emerged on the east coast in the mid-late nineteenth century, slaves could own plots of land and were allotted time for leisure. 29 As a result, the British once again would have a difficult time distinguishing free people from enslaved people as masters could easily manipulate colonial authorities to believe slaves were family or paid workers. By Western terms, these enslaved individuals were not free in the sense of possessing self-determination and personal autonomy. They were kinless outsiders within a dominant hegemony by which the elites were responsible for defining them.

Outline of Project

This project was born out of absence within the historiography of East Africa. As I began digging through missionary journals and correspondence coming from coastal and central Tanganyika (modern day Tanzania), I was seeking an African voice, even if it was through a European lens. However, what I received was not only a missing voice but a missing presence altogether. Not only were African actions left undocumented, but the presence of Africans in missionary caravans was missing altogether with a few exceptions. Those exceptions were moments of African disobedience or moments of Africans challenging British authority.

Thus, ensued the search for who these Africans were — the question of whom these Africans were had led me to the records of the famous explorer, David Livingstone. While his records of caravan life and missionary ideals helped paint a picture of the trek through central Africa, the most insightful information surrounding Livingstone were his two African aids, Sussi and Chuma. The two Africans venerated for aiding Livingstone in his travels, as well as for transporting Livingstone’s body to the coast. Sussi and Chuma are shrouded in such fanfare that they were awarded Bronze Medals by the Royal Geographic Society. Livingstone and his caravan travel engulfed pop culture in the Western world, inspiring many missionaries to travel to the east coast of Africa to follow in Livingstone’s footsteps to yield conversions and discover in hopes of manifesting fame as enormous as their predecessor.

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Yet, in the records culminated by missionaries, there was a key factor missing: Sussi and Chuma. While Britons were enchanted by Livingstone’s aids, other African participants in the caravanning process were left out of the record. The missionaries traveling to the east coast failed to attribute any feat to the Africans traveling alongside them as Livingstone had, at least in regard to Sussi and Chuma. Instead, the only mention of Africans was in regard to failures. This rise in self affirmation and alleged lack of dependence became more prominent after the Livingstone voyages throughout central Africa. The journals published by missionaries would “fulfill Britain’s vision of itself as an imperial nation as much as, and perhaps even more so than, did exploration’s success.”31 With the exclusion of African aid throughout these caravan expeditions, generations of British schoolchildren would learn that their empire was built by high-minded men who brought morality and civilization to the dark corners of the world.32

The issue of identity led me to the coast of East Africa, where abolition of the slave trade and slavery by the British that resulted in African, Arab, and Swahili slave traders having to conceal slavery and find alternative uses for slaves that ordinarily would have been exported. The influx of European missionaries along the east coast requiring a labor force to trek into the interior offered a natural revenue source for slave owners. The use of livestock to carry people and items into the interior was an impossibility in this region of East Africa due to the presence of tsetse flies, resulting in a demand for large amounts of human labor. Missionaries, desperate for labor sources due to competition

32 Ibid.
with slave and ivory caravans, were willing to negotiate with these slave owners to fulfill the goals of the mission, even if it meant engaging with slavery, which they allegedly deemed as morally abhorrent.

To tell the story of how slaves were able to improve their social standings through their work as porters in the slave caravan, this project proceeds as follows. Chapter two focuses on the historiography of East Africa, highlighting trends in scholarship on Africa from the eighteenth century to the present and how this work fits into that scholarship.

Chapter three looks at the changing conditions of slavery on the East Coast of Africa. With a more significant British presence in the Indian Ocean monitoring slave trafficking, slaves shifted from an export commodity to an internal commodity. The growing economy of caravanning on the coast as East Africa became even more involved in global trade provided an alternative purpose for the increased slave population on the coast. Resultingly, British missionaries in need of a labor source hired out enslaved persons to work as porters in their caravans despite British abolitionist practices.

Coupled with this, chapter three also examines the discrepancies between free labor and slaves. For my argument to be valid, it is crucial that I make a case solidifying that British missionaries were utilizing slave labor on missionary caravans, not free labor as suggested by some historians. To do this, I discuss the internalization of the slave trade as a result of British abolitionist practices and Zanzibari regulations concerning the hiring of porters. Furthermore, I evaluate a couple drawings of Livingstone’s caravan highlighting the distinctions between slave and free labor.
Chapter four focuses on three major elements: 1) missionary records as a genre and the rationale behind missionaries voyaging to the interior of Africa, 2) the setup and hierarchy of missionary caravans, and 3) the absence of African auxiliary participation and the distinctions made by Europeans when identifying Africans. Missionary records were propagandist in nature, as they needed consistent funding and new missionaries. It is essential to understand missionary records as a genre to help pick apart the sources for a more realistic understanding of what was occurring on caravan routes. The caravan itself is a fundamental element throughout the chapters of this project. This chapter deals with the structure, hierarchy, and tasks of the missionary caravan itself. This chapter examines the caravan throughout its trajectory, starting from the collecting of laborers from the coast and ending at the arrival at missionary sites. The detailing of the roles within the missionary caravan illustrates the hierarchy that existed within the caravan which expose the identities of Africans working for the caravan. These brief moments in which Africans are explicitly mentioned will be expanded upon to understand European notions about Africans and emphasize agency among African slaves working in the caravan. The hierarchy of Africans assigned by both Europeans and other Africans is explored. The ways in which slaves were identified is particularly important within this chapter, as it underscores the reliance missionaries had on an institution they purportedly opposed.

Building upon the notion that slaves utilized in missionary caravans played essential roles, this chapter also focuses on the struggles faced by missionaries traveling into the interior of Africa as a result of the choices made by their slave laborers. When
traveling from the coast into the interior, missionaries were having to face a plethora of challenges, including disease, desertion, strikes, language barriers, and lack of cooperation from native groups. Missionaries had to rely on the porters to work as caretakers, guides, translators, and diplomats in order to navigate the caravan routes. This reliance came at a cost. Porters would frequently demand better wages, rations, and more time for rest. Should missionaries not meet these demands, there was a high risk of desertion or sabotage within the caravan. Although some missionaries attempted to negate this behavior with brute force and violence, their dependency on porters obligated them to concede to porter requests. This project works to demonstrate the practical nature of the choices made by slaves working as porters on British missionary caravans in the nineteenth century.
CHAPTER TWO
HISTORIOGRAPHY, METHODOLOGY, AND PURPOSE

As a narrative centered on slavery in East Africa, the utilization of slavery within the missionary caravan must be placed within the historiographical context of African history at large. African history traditionally was ignored by Western academia until the 1950s. The only sources readily available before the 1950s about Africa were those focusing on European exploration, abolition, and imperial political history. As Africa shaped into a political project following the Second World War, more attention was given to Africa at large as historians worked to legitimize the study of Africa and reconstruct the African past. However, historians were met with the challenge of studying societies that did not have any written records or, the records were extremely limited. To deal with these challenges, Africanists began utilizing European records, linguistics, and archeological findings to try to create a narrative of Africa’s past. However, despite beginning to challenge the records and rhetoric produced by or about explorers, missionaries, and colonists in Africa, the research surrounding the East Coast tends to take a positivist approach. There has been limited discussion on the authentic experience of missionaries and how this experience shaped their actions and mindsets concerning Africans despite their original intentions and moral standings.

The stakes of these debates center around what reparations are owed to Africans after colonialism and emphasizing that Africans were innovative, capable of governing and establishing complex societies. By asserting Africans were agents of their history and participants in colonialism, scholars are stripping them of reparations. Nevertheless, by
stating that Africans were victims of colonialism, scholars are retracting agency from Africans, as this notion implies that Africans were hapless victims waiting for the enlightened world to impose their will on them. These debates exist in a range of topics, from impacts of colonialism to the slave trade and the economic validity of slavery. The debates existing within these subtopics demonstrate the methods Africanists use to defend African agency from scholars outside of the field, defend the validity of the methods used by Africanists, and establish an understanding of the African past in order to understand the history and inform their interpretations.

**African Studies 1780s-1950s**

At the end of the 19th century, publications about East Africa mainly focused on the European experience on the continent, homing in on demands, developments, and struggles undergone by colonists settling on the continent and abolition. As the prevalence of slaving increased, there was also an increase in public dissent among the citizens of participating nations such as France, Portugal, Britain, the Netherlands, Spain, and Germany.33 The catalyst of public dissent against the slave trade, primarily in the form of petitions, publications, and group formations, such as that of The Society for the Abolition of the Slave Trade, and pressuring Parliament to implement abolitionist policy, were the Quakers.

Thomas Wilkinson, a Quaker born and raised in England, underscored these beliefs in his poem “An Appeal to England on behalf of the Abused African.” The poem

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was written to produce public upheaval and further inform British citizens of the realities of the slave trade. “An Appeal to England” uses both pathos and logos to resonate with the general population as it forces a conversation on the moral implications of continuing slavery. Wilkson utilizes research cultivated by the Society to illustrate the atrocity of slaving, especially regarding the physical capturing of slaves and the dehumanizing slave ships. In writing about the experience of Africans as well as attempting to create a voice for them within the poem, Wilkinson claims that the human experience is a universal one and, that in sympathizing with the experiences of the slaves, Westerners can genuinely understand how horrific the slave trade was for the Africans in bondage. Wilkinson’s poem not only displays the Quaker’s rationale for engaging in the abolitionist movement but uses research garnered by other Quaker abolitionists to depict the realities of the slave trade. The research included gathering data from the number of slaves exported from British ports, first-hand accounts of slave merchants concerning their work, and examinations of the conditions of slaves prior to being traded and conditions on the slave ships.34

Abolitionists, especially Quaker’s, meticulous recordkeeping was a strategy used to provide empirical data to describe the atrocities of the slave trade. In a footnote, Wilkinson projects that nine million Africans will have been forced into slavery in 300 years based on the data collected by Quakers, estimating that approximately 40,000

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34 Brycchan Carey and Geoffrey Plank, Quakers and Abolition (Chicago: University of Illinois Press, 2014), 179.
Africans were exported annually by the British from Africa. Wilkinson utilized this primary and empirical data to demonstrate the detrimental effects the slave trade would have on Africa. In turn, he was able to exemplify the African experience and attempted to produce a voice for enslaved people. Wilkinson writes with empathy, incorporating stanzas of his notion of what an enslaved Africans would say about the trade, writing:

“Art thou that fun which warm’d my native plains, And cheers the spot where my lost love remains? My friends were round me, and my life was sweet.” Wilkinson portrays life for Africans as one similar to the English, valuing friends and family and enjoying the fruits of labor. Wilkinson writes,

“Canst thou unmov’d see sudden flames arise, View the poor owner bursting from his shed, Kindled by tyrants o’er his guiltless head, The father, daughter, mother and son, Confus’d with terror, wild and adverse run; But all in vain their persons made a prey, Are haul’d where yonder Christian traders stay.”

These stanzas were meant to demonstrate the African experience of slave raiding and produce compassion amongst British citizens. Wilkinson is utilizing observations made by Quakers who had extensively researched the slave trade or witnessed these events unfold. Stanzas. such as this, provided insight into the on-goings of the slave trade that were perhaps unfamiliar to the general public so early on in the abolitionist movement. Though these documents are working for what Europeans viewed as a just cause,

abolitionists were speaking for Africans, not trying better to understand African culture, society, and history. That data collected by abolitionists offered empirical data for future Africanists to spectate on African populations and the extent of the slave trade, setting up new methods of understanding the African past. This abolitionist rhetoric and writing maintained its popularity throughout the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries. They were the first convention of writing about Africa until exploration and colonization of the continent peaked in the mid-nineteenth century.

Throughout the 19th century, publications about East Africa primarily focused on the European experience on the continent, homing in on demands, developments, and struggles undergone by colonists settling on the continent. Publications such as *Narrative of an Expedition to Zambesi and Its Tributaries* by Charles and David Livingstone were one of the only publications detailing the region. As Livingstone wrote:

“The main object of the Zambesi Expedition, as our instructions from her majesty’s government explicitly stated, was to extend the knowledge already attained of the geography and mineral and agricultural resources of Eastern and Central Africa- to improve our acquaintances with the inhabitants, and to endeavor to engage them to supply themselves to industrial pursuits and to the cultivation of lands, with a view to the production of raw material to be exported to England in return for British manufacturers”.

Livingston’s explicit agenda to document resources for extraction and attempt to recruit labor disregard Africans’ humanity and reduce them down to a source of industry. Publications such as these narratives discussed geography, animal species, and the work of the European explorers rather than looking at East African populations. Though these

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narratives, such as Livingstone’s, offered details about African rituals and daily practices, they lack any attempt at understanding the social, economic, or political structures of the groups encountered.

Hundreds of popular biographies were published about Explorer David Livingstone, including *Livingstone and the Exploration of Central Africa* (1889), *Livingstone and Newstead* (1913), *Livingstone* (1930), and one of the most popular publications, *The Last Days of David Livingstone* (1874). Publications such as these and similar texts about European explorers like Henry Morton Stanley were attempts for the colonial state to project itself—brave young white men bringing Christ, civilization and free trade to the “dark continent”. Africa was portrayed as a dark place, murdering and twisting the morality of men. Joseph Conrad’s *Heart of Darkness* (1899) utilized the character Kurtz to emphasize the destruction the African interior could have on the white male psyche. Alas, the explorers of the late nineteenth century, were martyrs for Victorian principles and the embodiment of the British Empire. These publications focused solely on European involvement in Africa, showcasing solely on colonial history and narratives. There was little to no discussion of African history in these texts.

The initial studies of Christian missionaries in Africa appeared in the colonial period, usually with colonial postulations. They featured the heroic exploits of self-sacrificing European-Christian spiritual warriors cultivating social regeneration and

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personal salvation. These works often resembled missionary hagiographies. The response to these heroic chronicles, such as the publications on Livingstone, were new narrative conventions that arose in the period immediately before and following colonized parts of the world achieving nationhood. Missionaries were considered from the perspective of helping or hindering the task of nation-building. Refined mission history now favors critical analyses that emphasize the need to render the distinct perspective of all the agents involved, both the missionary participants and the African contributors of missionary history carefully.

**African Studies 1950s to Present**

Following the Second World War, African history became a political project in the sense that, prior to the 1950s, African history was unrecognized as an academic discipline by Western nations. Before the 1950s, imperial historians only provided accounts of colonial officials and missionaries who operated in Africa. These imperial histories ignored Africans and African agency. With the independence of African states following World War II, historians began demonstrating that Africans had a past that stretched beyond colonialism. Quakers and historians of the colonial period tended to focus on abolitionist and political narratives. Scholars of the 1950s shifted their focus to more socially driven narratives meant to portray African history as told by Africans. Africanists had to demonstrate that African history should exist as an academic field and that Africans did indeed have a history. However, as historians began trying to reconstruct the African past, they had to develop unique methods, such as utilizing oral sources, to demonstrate African agency in the precolonial past. The lack of written
records and potential erasure or manipulation of historical records by political powers forced African historians to embrace non-literate sources in their research. The methods utilized by various historians and other scholars looking to reconstruct the African past are often a point of dissension among scholars. However, they are also often discredited by historians and scholars of other fields as specific sources are deemed more credible by academia than others.

Beginning in the 1950s, anthropologists began working to uncover a usable African past using non-literate evidence. Linguistics, anthropology, and archeology were utilized to reconstruct a past mostly unknown to Western academia. Due to the lack of written records, African history is an interdisciplinary field. Anthropologists worked to understand the African past via the practices and experiences of Africans. Published in 1956, *Chisungu: A Girl’s Initiation Ceremony among the Bemba of Zambia* by Audrey Richards details her pioneer study of the rite of passage among females in the Bemba community. Richards was the first anthropologist to write on puberty rites in East Africa, but also the first to publish on specifically female ceremonies. Richards relates the symbolism of these rituals to how African societies in this region were structured, specifically concerning kinship roles, challenging previous assumptions that these ceremonies were about education, disregarding the connections to societal structures, religious norms, and customs of Bembans.41

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41 Audrey I. Richards, *Chisungu: A girl’s initiation ceremony among the Bemba of Zambia* (Faber and Faber, 1956).
In the 1950s and 1960s, headed mainly by historian Jan Vansina, oral history also began being utilized to illuminate Africa’s historical past. His book, *Oral Tradition: A Study in Historical Methodology*, published in 1961, worked as a guide book to fellow historians studying pre-literate societies. This text defines and categorizes oral evidence as historical sources, providing tests by which the source can be utilized for historical writing. Next, Vansina discusses the relationships between history and social anthropology, along with other disciplines necessary for collecting oral testimonies. Lastly, Vansina justifies the utilization of oral sources as historical evidence. For Vansina, should an oral source pass the tests provided in the early sections of this text, they are a viable source of information. The first group of these tests is external tests; for example, the relationship between an informant and his testimony. This test would determine whether the informant transferring this information was from a specific class of people or a social institution or if this information transferred freely across class and social boundaries. Vansina then implemented internal tests, which looked more specifically at the motives the informant would have for generating these oral accounts.⁴²

Both Vansina and Richards worked to understand African communities by engaging with African creations, such as ceremony and oral traditions. Unlike their predecessors, historians in the 50s and 60s worked to understand East Africans and their past through a uniquely African lens instead of focusing on how Europeans engaged with African communities.

In the 1960s, the end of colonialism in Africa piqued interest in colonial rule. This new wave of African historians focused on kingdoms. It was essential to show that Africans, who were now governing themselves in independent states, already had a history of self-governance. In other words, Africans were capable of governing themselves, as they had done it before. In this sense, Africanists were writing a usable past, one that the newly independent states could reference, asserting that Africans have once ruled over themselves and could use those moments of autonomy to rebuild African states. Alongside this, there was a focus on the logic behind the countries established under colonial rule and providing Europeans a conveniently remembered reason for letting the colonies go when they decided to, as well as enumerating the terrible effects colonialism had on Africans as a whole.

Consequently, the 1960s and 1970s also saw a resurgence in understanding pre-colonial Africa. However, instead of merely working to identify African states, social groups, and various cultural elements across the continent, the 60s and 70s focused on fitting Africa into a normative economic history. Historians began focusing on economic changes that occurred in Africa, especially during the colonization of the continent.

An emphasis on the importance of free-market in African history is demonstrated in Richard Gray and David Birmingham’s introduction in *Pre-Colonial Trade: Essays on Trade in Central and Eastern Africa Before 1900*, published in 1970. In this introduction, they assert that East African engagement in international trade with Asia and Europe resulted in the advancement of African economies. For Gray and Birmingham, “the use of a currency-system may well have been a more critical and essential step than the
availability of foreign caravans in stimulating the transition to a market economy”.

Gray and Birmingham are arguing that forces outside of Africa brought currency to the continent, and this brought Africa into a market system that was superior to the sustenance system they previously engaged. It is evident that Gray and Birmingham are advocates of free trade. In *Ivory and Slaves in East Central Africa* published five years after Gray and Birmingham’s text, Edward A. Alpers responds to prevalent notions that Indians controlled the trade of the Indian Ocean and East Africa. Alpers argues that without the dominance of the Yao trade network of the interior, Indian merchants would not have been able to capitalize in the manner that they did. Long before colonial rule in Africa, the capitalist markets of Asia and Europe were negatively affecting the economy of East Africa. According to Alpers, the root of the region’s underdevelopment lies in terms of international trade, since labor was extracted from the region with no return.

Both of these texts utilize similar sources, records of imports and exports on the East African coast and the interior, to establish very different conclusions. However, both also focus on how other nations have influenced Africa, rather than what Africa’s influence over itself.

Historians of East Africa from the 1980s to the present have primarily focused on understanding and identifying various ethnic and cultural groups in East Africa and their role on a global scale. In this sense, historians have worked to correct Eurocentric

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narratives about Africans. Instead of straitjacketing Africans into European history, historians have begun generating a narrative that is uniquely African. The 80s onward saw a shift back to using methodologies, such as linguistics and oral accounts, that were introduced in the 1950s to uncover more individualized African pasts instead of focusing broadly on kingdoms and economics. In the latter half of his career, Vansina, a proponent of oral history, shifted his focus to linguistics. He describes the practice of linguistics as such:

“Words are tags attached to things. Among the various endeavors of historical linguistics, vocabulary studies (semantic) are the most rewarding to historians because of the special property of words as joiners of form and meaning… it follows from its link to a field of meaning or semantic field that history of the form tells us something about the meaning: the institution, belief, value, or object to which the form pertains”.  

Vansina began utilizing patterns and shifts in the occurrence and meaning of words from various language groups in Africa as a means of understanding African societies. For Vansina, the study of historical linguistics proves relationships by showing how an entire subsystem has changed in a language or language group. However, ultimately these languages can be traced back to a single language group. Migratory patterns and lineages are established by tracing language back to a single language family. The study of linguistics provided new insight for historians seeking to understand the African past from an African perspective.

Published in 1995, Jonathon Glassman’s *Feasts and Riot: Revelry, Rebellion, and Popular Consciousness on the Swahili Coast, 1856-1888*, focuses on how Swahili

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societal practices and rituals explain massive resistance along the Swahili Coast. Ten years later, Elisabeth McMahon published *Slavery and Emancipation in Islamic East Africa: From Honor to Respectability*. Her text focuses on the island of Pemba, which housed clove plantations and offered ports for trading across the Indian Ocean. McMahon focuses her book on the understanding of the term *hesima* to Pembans. She argues that with European colonization and the forced emancipation of slaves, the term *hesima* transformed from meaning honor as a result of lineage, slave and land ownership, and connections to sultans, to a term that could “be acquired through one’s ability to cultivate respect from neighbors and friends”.

Jonathon Glassman also focuses on East Africans responses to colonialism. Ten years before the publication of McMahon’s work, Jonathon Glassman published *Feasts and Riot: Revelry, Rebellion, and Popular Consciousness on the Swahili Coast, 1856-1888* which focuses on how Swahili societal practices and rituals offer an explanation to heavy resistance along the Swahili Coast. Like McMahon, Glassman focuses on the changes that occurred within coastal societies, specifically in and around the town of Pangani, giving much more attention to Africans as agents of their history instead of hapless victims of colonialism. Like Glassman, McMahon focuses on the changes that occurred within smaller coastal societies giving more attention to Africans as agents of their history instead of hapless victims of colonialism.

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49 Glassman, *Feasts and Riot: Revelry, Rebellion, and Popular Consciousness on the Swahili Coast*. 
Today, historians are still utilizing methods established at the onslaught of African history entering Western Academics. Linguistics has shifted to understand societies on a micro-scale, and like anthropologists, historians have begun focusing on more isolated societies to develop deeper understandings of specific groups instead of trying to approach studying the continent as a whole. It was around this time that Africanists shifted away from trying to understand Africa through European economic theories and Enlightenment ideals, and instead focused on understanding Africans and the various regions as uniquely African. This switch in conventions pushed African historians to focus on African societies on a micro level, as trying to posit an entire continent’s history without any theoretical foundation would be an unmanageable feat. Seeking to understand how Africans in various regions reacted and acted in light of European intrusion, historians began looking at shifts in slavery throughout Africa to understand the impact of Europeans (or lack thereof), upon African societies.

**Defining Slavery in East Africa**

As historians of East Africa have begun to challenge the existing narrative of colonial intervention in Africa, there has been a push to reevaluate existing understandings of slavery. Economic historians specifically have iterated that slavery in East Africa was not as fundamental as previously assumed. They assert that the sensationalism of slavery was an invention of European abolitionists. Suzanne Miers and Igor Kopytoff produced an essay consisting of 16 case studies declaring that slavery in
Africa was “less dramatic and more domestic” than conventional wisdom precluded. They introduced the “slavery to kinship continuum of slavery”, which asserts that there are two poles with several variations in between. This understanding of slavery captures the varying degrees of dependence and bondage in Africa. By asserting slavery works on a continuum, there is a break in understanding all slavery regarding chattel slavery in the American South. According to Miers and Kopytoff, individual slaves possessed the possibility to exit slave status. However, the ability to remove oneself from slave status relied on the availability of new slaves entering into society, which guaranteed the continuum.

Slavery existing on a continuum presented issues concerning the definition of slavery. In order for servitude to constitute as enslavement, there needed to be strict parameters regarding the definition in order to distinguish slaves from free-labor. Elisabeth McMahon defines slavery in her book Slavery and Emancipation in Islamic East Africa: From Honor to Respectability via Kiswahili terminologies for enslaved individuals. Terms such as mtumwa would identify an enslaved person, but whether they were born at birth or enslaved later in life would assume the term mjinga (later in life) or mzalia (at birth). Her emphasis on the many terms for enslaved individuals further displays the continuum of slavery. The number of terms used to differentiate the forms of slavery imply that there are differentiations in slave status related to the condition under which someone was enslaved. She argues that forms of chattel slavery existed alongside

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51 Ibid.
forms of enslavement such as day laborers, traders, and long-distance porters on the continuum.52

For this paper, McMahon’s work is the basis by which I am defining slavery in East Africa. Slaves from the east coast regularly were utilized as porters. McMahon’s research verifies this and also illustrates how enslaved people worked to gain their manumission. This paper does not engage with the topic of slave life after manumission as McMahon’s work does, but instead, works to identify the roles slaves played in missionary caravans and how caravanning could aid in the manumission process.

In his work, Carriers of Culture: Labor on the Road in Nineteenth-Century East Africa, Stephen Rockel challenges the popular image of European exploration in Africa. He argues against notions of Europeans utilizing hapless slaves as laborers and instead argues that the porters working alongside Europeans were independent wage laborers.53 In his text, Rockel introduces what he refers to as the “slave paradigm”, which states that images and ideas of slavery are drawn to create “stereotypes of Africa as a continent of slavery and Africans as incapable of achieving any degree of modernization on their own”.54 Rockel poses there were free labor sources in Africa before the development of the colonial capitalist economy. He does this by focusing his research on an ethnic group called the Nyamwezi. Rockel argues that the Nyamwezi were migrant laborers, coming from the interior to the coast to participate in the lucrative trade of caravanning.

52 McMahon, Slavery and Emancipation, 5.
54 Ibid, 230.
Rockel chronologically traces the development of trading routes in East Africa, routes along which, Rockel argues, Nyamwezi free laborers engaged in the ivory trade. The stable and decentralized political system and the utilization of slave labor for agriculture and domestic services allowed for Nyamwezi men to travel. According to Rockel, this gave the Nyamwezi the ability to monopolize caravan work by the 1840s along the East Coast and Congo basin. The Nyamwezi then began developing codes of conduct to professionalize porters and maintain their reputation as elite porters, making them preferable to both European and Arab caravans.

Rockel’s focus on the Nyamwezi is posed more as a case study than that of a text making a broader historical argument. Many European texts do explicitly discuss Nyamwezi porters as superior to other porters on the coast. Yet, Rockel excludes just that—there were other porters on the coast. Rockel turns a blind eye to the enormity of the Arab and African slave trade working internally and externally. By disregarding the presence of an abundance of slaves on the coast, Rockel also fails to notice how advantageous for Arab and African slave owners to involve their slaves in the caravanning business for partial profit. Rockel is just in his desire to bring attention to the laborers along caravan routes and to try to refashion the familiar images that caravanning in African incites in the Western imagination. However, his disregard for slave labor as a staple to the East African economy undermines the ways in which Africans engaged and molded their economic and political systems and attempts to force Africans into a European capitalist mold.

55 Ibid, 40-41.
In response to Rockel’s work, historian Philip Gooding published the article “Slavery ‘respectability’ and being ‘freeborn’ on the shores of nineteenth-century Lake Tanganyika”. Gooding’s article works to address what he believes is the oversimplification of a complex variety of servitude. His argument is grounded in Miers and Kopytoff’s assertion that there is a continuum of slavery, arguing that the term ‘slavery’ does not do justice to the wide variety of labor and social conditions experienced in Islamic societies. He addresses Rockel’s work on the Nyamwezi as a step towards recognizing that slavery was not the singular labor force in East Africa, but that his work still limits slavery to a binary understanding- one is either free or enslaved.

Methodologically, Gooding uses a similar approach as McMahon, heavily utilizing linguistics to argue in favor of the non-binary nature of servitude. He focuses on the Swahili term, ngwana, which loosely translates to mean ‘gentleman’. The term ngwana was only allotted to individuals of freeborn status. The opposite of ngwana was the term shenzi, which translates to mean ‘barbarian’. Shenzi was a title reserves for non-Muslim individuals from the interior. Gooding focuses his research on an Arab slave caravan that created a depot along Lake Tanganyika. Separated from coastal discrimination, the slaves began adopting cosmopolitan dress and customs and labeled themselves as ngwana. The dependence on these enslaved individuals by their captors was a result of the need to form trade alliances with neighboring communities and

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develop means of protection from caravans and the surrounding communities.\textsuperscript{57}

Resultingly, these enslaved individuals prevailed as the shapers of customs and cultures, placing pre-existing customs, precedents, and practicalities over those of \textit{sharia}, which occasionally resulted in freedom rights.

For Gooding, slavery is understood in the context of the society it is operating within. To the coastal communities, the individuals taken to Lake Tanganyika would be labeled as \textit{shenzi} and respected as slaves. However, to the Arabs and Africans living at the outpost, these individuals were \textit{ngwana}. Thus, he argues that merely labeling an individual a slave is too simplistic, and one must understand the context of a given society before providing or assigning a label for their status.

Gooding’s focus on the outpost at Lake Tanganyika offers an interesting perspective on individual identity and the agency of slaves to earn their manumission. His argument is not so convincing in terms of removing the label of slave from individuals whom he regarded as enslaved. Gooding negates his argument by referring to formerly enslaved people as slaves. Though these individuals may have earned their manumission and referred to themselves as freeborn, it does not remove them from the trauma and conditions of slavery that navigated their lives. It only makes sense that enslaved individuals interacting with outside societies would refer to themselves as freeborn as a means of garnering respect from outsiders. They were attempting to reshape their identity in a time and place that allowed for them to remove themselves from the bondage of a term.

\textsuperscript{57} Ibid.
Gooding also neglects to realize that the presence and utilization of Nyamwezi porters would not affect the status of enslaved people on the East African coast. In fact, in order to compete with these free labor sources, coastal slave owners would need to increase their slave labor force in order to provide porters for caravans and maintain duties along the coast. Gooding critiques historians of slavery, forgetting that their area of interest would be the enslaved, thus diverting their attention away from other labor sources. There is no real question that free labor and indentured servitude existed alongside enslavement. However, in failing to define enslavement, Gooding negotiates that anything outside of chattel could be interpreted as something other than slave status.

It is true, the establishment of the clove plantations on Pemba and Zanzibar beginning in the 1830s yielded an increase in unfree labor that became internalized, and the slaves living within these plantation systems took the status of commodities. This system much more resembled slavery most familiar to a Western audience. Missionaries likely only saw slaves living in the plantation environs as truly enslaved and would have discredited the more “open” forms of slavery as enslavement at all. This fluidity of slave status and the complexity of defining slavery makes establishing a standard of what constitutes an enslaved person crucial to this project.

To establish a definition of slavery, I will be using the standards set by Sean Stilwell in his work *Slavery and Slaving in African History*. Stilwell’s work is broad in scale, discussing variations and trends in slavery across the entire continent of Africa.

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However, he produces a standard of slavery to help create constraints and delineations within the continuum between what Gooding would define as varying degrees of servitude and enslaved person. According to Stilwell’s definition relies on any “one of the following three traits: slaves are a kinless outsider, slaves are property, and/or slaves are violently dominated or powerless”. 59 For this paper, I am defining an enslaved person as having to possess two of those traits, namely being a kinless outsider, and being property to someone of higher economic or social standing. I exclude the last trait because of enslavement through pawnship. These incidences did not include violent abductions and separation. Rather, they were legal agreements between individuals that a chosen member of the clan or family would work as a slave to pay off debt. These scenes of violent subjection popularized by missionary records and narratives, such as that of Equiano, were formulaic in their methods and intended to be used as propaganda. Therefore, I am choosing to exclude that trait from my definition of slavery in this study. For this project, slavery is defined as one who is a kinless outsider, viewed as property, and are subjugated and dominated because of their lack of property or support system, such as a family unit.

**Context of Colonial and Missionary Perspective**

Joanna Lewis argues in her book, *Empire of Sentiment: The Death of Livingstone and the Myth of Victorian Imperialism*, that European enterprises in central and East Africa were not the structured and pragmatic ventures that the Western imagination tended to

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Lewis focuses her work on accounts by and about explorer David Livingstone. She argues that the stories constructed by Livingstone and his followers played an integral role in Victorian myth-making, writing:

“The death and memorialization of Livingstone made a powerful contribution to the ideological power of the British Empire … and the very Victorian project of an empire in Africa. It took part in the great Victorian "myth-machine" that boosted the "moral-emotional" life of the nation. Indeed, Livingstone came to embody "the heart of the nation," and those romantic notions of Livingstone's life and death helped Britons to justify imperialism and to feel much more satisfied with themselves.”

Livingstone’s death inspired a generation of younger explorers and idealists to follow his lead into the interior of central Africa. Many wanted to find his grave, push frontiers of European knowledge, have an adventure, or campaign against the slave trade. To Lewis, the rhetoric and memorialization surrounding the life and death of Livingstone yielded sentimental feelings about empire, which in turn generated a belief that empire was heroic and just. Lewis concludes her text by presenting the persistence of the sentiment of the British Empire. She does this by looking at the successful attempt by Kaunda, the former president of Zambia, to utilize a centenary celebration of Livingstone’s death to bolster Kaunda’s own moral and humanitarian platform and legacy. At this event, Kaunda declared Livingstone Africa’s first freedom fighter endowing his burial place at Chitambo’s village with an iconic meaning. Though it seems ironic that a nation that suffered under the hands of imperialism would venerate a significant influencer of African penetration, it provides insight into how powerful the Victorian myth of imperialism, especially concerning Livingstone, indeed are.

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60 Lewis, Empire of Sentiment, pp. 249.
61 Ibid, 200.
In *Empire of Sentiment*, Lewis does not move much beyond the lasting legacy of Livingston and the political agendas that manifested in the shadows of his legacy. I intend to use Lewis’s work to underscore the rationale behind missionaries traveling into the interior. This work, coupled with Christopher Leslie Brown’s *Moral Capital: Foundations of British Abolition*, will provide insight as to what compelled European missionaries to go to Africa. It is easy to pass it all off as a plot to make a profit or increase convert numbers. However, this Victorian myth of exploration in Africa has played a much more significant role than previously considered.

Trained anthropologist Johannes Fabian continues to debunk the myths Westerners have of European and African encounters during colonial exploration. Utilizing travelogues and other ethnographic monographs, Fabian tries to emphasize the contradictions of the travelogues and Western memory of explorers in comparison to the reality of anthropologic and historical findings. He writes:

“I would like to pursue another strategy, showing that the actual encounters that paved the way for imperial rule or established it in embryonic form were often inherently contradictory—indeed, anarchic—so much so that their true nature had to be concealed or, better, negated by projecting to the world images of a purposeful *oeuvre civilisatrice*: intrepid explorers mapping the unknown; saintly missionaries offering their lives for the salvation of pagans; heroic military men vanquishing an enemy that always out-numbered them; unselfish administrators toiling for the public good; and so forth.”

Fabian documents the trials and tribulations faced by European explorers and missionaries traveling into the interior, which largely contradicts the perception of explorers and missionaries as clear-minded and self-controlled. In the actions of European

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explorers and missionaries, there is evidence of new methods of gathering information and the paradigms that would come to be canonized in cultural anthropology. Fabian instead focuses his work on what he labels as “ecstasies”, or the moments when “explorers overcame intellectual and existential problems by stepping outside the rationalized frames of exploration, be they faith, knowledge, profit, or domination”. In revisiting the scientifically oriented and detached rhetoric of many travelogues with ecstasies in mind, Fabian argues that European missionaries and explorers became detached from imperial projects. He notes how Europeans were, in fact, out of their minds, as they were extremely fatigued, fearful, full of delusions of grandeur, and often literally drugged on morphine and other addictive substances in order to deal with the dreaded “African fever”.

Fabian’s discussion of the ways in which European mental health crises and fickle immune systems made caravanning nearly impossible for missionaries iterates both the reality of the imperial project in Africa and the deep reliance on Africans to aid Europeans during these moments of disassociation. In order to understand the European experience of caravanning, one must cast aside the notion that “exploratory travel was movement controlled by the traveler”, and instead must understand how Europeans in caravans were controlled and compelled by the world and people around them. Fabian’s work brings attention to the flaws of sweeping imperial narratives and the myths Lewis’s work emphasized. For this work, his study iterates the many factors that would drive missionaries to become reliant on the Africans participating in caravan work. Moreover, Fabian

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63 Ibid, 8.
65 Ibid, 58.
underscores the childlike dependence of European missionaries and explores their reliance on their African companions. This information lends itself to the bigger picture of how Africans were able to gain agency and autonomy through missionary caravans. Fabian’s work also underscores the hypocrisy of the missionary work being done in East Africa, underscoring the hierarchy of caravan work and implications between the published façade and the actual truth of life in East Africa for British missionaries.

**Methods and Sources**

The most considerable difficulty in studying missionary caravans in East Africa has been the lack of African voices in this project. This challenge is partially a result of the lack of written records by Africans at the time, and in part as a result of my inadequacies: not being able to speak Swahili, Arabic, or other indigenous African languages. Resultingly, I have to rely on the translations of other English speakers, which are often abbreviated or shaped to fit that particular translator’s argument best. There is also the difficulty of accessing sources, as only select groups of missionaries have digitized their records, and archives with these missionary sources exist outside of the United States. However, there are many missionary journals digitized by the Universities’ Missions to Central Africa group, journals from the School of Oriental and African Studies, as well as correspondences from missionaries to the metropole. Swahili proverbs collected and translated by missionaries allow for an African voice to be woven into this project. They provide a uniquely African understanding of the fluidity of slavery in East Africa.
The conversion records collected and recorded by the Universities’ Missions to Central Africa group offer an English translation of African tales of abduction and transport to the coast of East Africa. They list locations of both the converts’ origins and the depots and locations they traversed to, offering some insight into the scale and nature of slave trading on the East African coast. As discussed previously, there was a pattern to the conversion stories that were utilized by abolitionist literature to appeal to the emotions of Westerners. A genre developed depicting enslaved children in the nineteenth century, focusing on the life story of individual children. Modeled by the work of Equiano, slave narratives began mimicking this structure: the violent capture of the enslaved child, the devastating separation from their family, and, less so in Equiano’s narrative, the life-altering moment of conversion. Though it is crucial to recognize this pattern in conversion records and be aware that these pieces were scrutinized before publication by missionaries, they do offer an African voice.

The journals and correspondence written by missionaries come with their own set of problems. The most glaring is the absence of female voices. Mission societies refused to employ single women until the mid-nineteenth century. The Victorian belief in the delicacy of women created a great hesitancy in sending them into the harshness and danger of the African colonies. What writings there are of and by women on missionary caravans are vague. Usually these sources only detail that women were often had to be carried or they are referenced concerning their husband. There is virtually no mention of

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native women working on mission caravans. The only insight into their presence is the
discussion of the trouble it causes African men when native women perish.\textsuperscript{67} Most of the
body of literature focusing on white European women follows the establishment or
arrival at mission sites. European audiences enjoyed the emotive appeal of the missionary
wife’s accounts of civilized life on the uncivilized frontier.\textsuperscript{68}

Missionary records also intentionally lack any discussion of feat or failures in
their discourse. The 19\textsuperscript{th} century saw a shift in understanding Eastern civilizations,
moving away from viewing them as “exotic,” “wise,” or “venerable,” but instead coming
to understand them as strictly backward and heathen.\textsuperscript{69} This paradigm switch reoriented
the evangelical philosophy to one of imperial morality- actively going out to convert
heathens and uphold the standards of the British Empire. David Livingstone operated as a
missionary celebrity, providing missionaries with a figurehead of the religious and
national structure.\textsuperscript{70} Highly conscious of the nature of their mission’s projects and their
effect on both colonial culture and the imperial project, missionaries worked to present
their image in a specific way to spectators in the metropole. Unlike the British
government, which created treaties, British missionaries did not have the power to
prohibit the existing practices of slavery in the communities where they worked. They

\textsuperscript{67} Or how much trouble the women cause men who have been drinking.
\textsuperscript{68} Anna Johnston \textit{Missionary Writing and Empire, 1800-1860} (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press,
2003), 2.
\textsuperscript{69} Journal Entries of Arthur W. Dodgshun, 1877, Box 1, CWM Central Africa Journals University of
\textsuperscript{70} Johnston, \textit{Missionary Writing and Empire}, 2.
were guests who could exhort and persuade, but they had little power over their hosts. Instead, they utilized the pen to condemn these practices and influence a European audience. Missionary figures sculpted themselves to be exclusively heroic, long-suffering, and not experiencing religious doubts. They wrote to the metropole vilifying the slave trade and conveying the utmost desire to end the suffering of Africans. Of course, this yields tropes and gaps between the writings and the reality of the experience. In reality, British missionaries were not only utilizing slaves in their caravans but also implementing strict hierarchies within the caravan, negating any sense of equality.

Though there are many shortcomings to utilizing missionary records that must be addressed, they are useful in hearing otherwise unwritten voices of enslaved people. They provide testimonies offered by the formally enslaved about their experiences in bondage. Missionaries also kept a record of information about the political and social contexts of the communities they encountered. The lack of discussion related to enslaved people is quite insightful. British missionaries in the mid to late nineteenth century were likely utilizing slave labor for their caravan expeditions. Whether they were inadvertently using slaves or were aware of the slave status of their porters cannot be determined by the records I have utilized. However, the day to day experience of these enslaved individuals is detailed, as well as some of their behaviors. The most important detail of these descriptions being the different roles of slaves and the pay given to these enslaved

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72 Ibid.
people. Both slaves’ roles in and caravan and the payments they received would ultimately allow for them to negotiate for social mobility in some fashion.

In order to find the African influence and experience within these white European and predominantly male sources, I will be employing Johan Fabian’s method of excavating real experiences thinking beyond what was written on the page. In the final chapter of this project, I will be engaging in speculative history, attempting to restore the sights, sounds, and emotions that likely existed within the lines of journals that simply documented the weather and miles walked. I will also be relying heavily on secondary sources that extensively discuss African members of the caravans’ ability to negotiate their circumstances and the roles they played throughout the caravan route.

**Conclusion**

In slave studies, there has been a push by academics, such as Rockel and Gooding, to re-define and relabel Africans who were once defined as slaves. Though Rockel looks at a particular group, his work has encouraged other historians of Africa and slavery to begin challenging the reliance of slavery across Africa. It appears as though Africanists and historians of slavery are attempting to divert the consciousness of slavery away from Africa and redirect it to the Americas. Though there is little dispute that the severity and institution of slavery looked very different between Africa and the Americas, it seems ill-suited to reject the term “slavery” for the institutions at work in Africa.

Furthermore, there is an assumption that because an individual is not labeled as a slave, they are not one. However, when dealing with colonial records from the mid to late
19th, there are clear explanations as to why individuals would not be labeled as slaves. First, the British missionary understanding of slavery was largely shaped by images and descriptions of slavery in the American South. Many abolitionists, such as Thomas Wilkinson, a Quaker living outside of London, had never actually been to Africa; Rather, he had visited and witnessed slavery in the American context and blanketed the understanding of slavery with that experience in mind.\textsuperscript{73} When the British began establishing themselves along the coast of East Africa, outside of the clove plantation systems, slavery looked different from descriptions of the American South. Therefore, it is easy to conclude that the British who were living along the coast and moving into the interior did not believe individuals who did not meet their imagined notions of slavery were indeed slaves.

Likewise, the British were also legally pushing to end slavery. By 1803, the slave trade had been abolished, and by 1837, slavery itself became illegal. British ships cruised the coastline, stopping Arab dhows carrying slaves, and courts were being established across East Africa to develop concrete methods of emancipating enslaved peoples. In practice, the British lacked numbers. Records along the coast revealed only six British cruisers patrolling the 4,600 km east African coastline, and the population of colonists, as opposed to Arab and African inhabitants, was largely disproportionate.\textsuperscript{74} In order to maintain their public image globally and at home, British colonists in East Africa did not


\textsuperscript{74} Papers Relating to the Trade in Slaves from East Africa presented by the House of Parliament, 1890, Department Fo, Series, 146, Piece 3281, National Archives, Kew, England.
admit to their failures concerning slavery. Thus, it seems likely that when the British were able to label slaves as something else, they would.

The matter of re-defining slavery is problematic at best. It is widely accepted that slavery works on a continuum and that slavery looks different across cultures and continents. However, when one tries to assert that slavery may not be the best label for an individual, they are stripping away the agency of enslaved individuals by labeling them as clients. Historians, like Rockel, are indirectly adopting what Sean Hanretta coined as “triumphalist” narratives of colonial emancipation and slavery. In denying that slavery was at play in caravanning, they are claiming that abolition and manumission were alien to Africans. There is no denying that there were free labor sources throughout East Africa, but there were also slave labor forces. It is essential to label slavery as such to avoid underpinning the violence and displacement that shrouded the lives of even slaves of the most benevolent masters. Terms such as clientage, patronage, and apprenticeship do not do justice to the conditions faced by enslaved individuals.

In this thesis, slavery is defined by two major components: 1) a slave is a kinless outsider who has been displaced from their native land, and 2) a slave is legally owned by or bound to an individual of higher social or economic standings. An individual who does not meet these two standards would not be considered an enslaved individual and could be labeled by other terms such as client or patron. I will be emphasizing the ways in which Europeans were dependent on enslaved Africans in order to navigate the East African coast and into the interior. Scholarship concerning the journeys taken by missionary caravans is lacking. This project works to help fill the gaps of the on goings
and structures of the missionary caravans. Furthermore, this piece works to emphasize that missionaries were utilizing slave labor on their voyages to missionary settlements. This iterates three things: 1) the missionaries utilizing slave labor in their expeditions were working in direct contradiction to their abolitionist ideology rhetoric, 2) the slaves that worked within the caravans of missionaries who gained manumission did so on their own, not via the workings of the missionaries, and 3) some of the porters and translators hired by missionaries were slaves. The goal of this project is to fill an absence in the historical record concerning the African participants in the building of missionary sites in what is today coastal and central Tanzania. This project focuses on the mid 19th century through the early 20th century concluding before the first World War when colonialism reached its height in Africa, as this was the moment when abolitionist beliefs were widespread and both slavery, and the slave trade were illegal. The lack of conversation about Africans within documents produced by missionaries has yielded an absence of African roles and perspectives in the historical record. Furthermore, European ignorance of African cultural customs resulted in European missionaries mislabeling African slaves as “porters” or “workers,” or perhaps this mislabeling was intentional as engaging with the slave trade was in complete opposition to their moral practices and preaching. In turn, I intend to use these absences and brief mentions of Africans to argue that African slaves were agents in the formation of mission sites. Accordingly, this thesis will utilize three layers of analysis: 1) I will argue that the Africans who participated in the missionary caravans maintained their slave status according to the definition of slavery utilized in this paper, which has been shaped by the works of scholars Suzanne Miers, Igor
Kopytoff, Elisabeth McMahon, and Phillip Gooding. For these historians, slavery is a continuum. The term slavery does not do justice to the wide variety of labor and social conditions that existed in East Africa. However, there are certain conditions that was shared between all individuals who were labeled by Africans, Arabs, Europeans, and themselves as slaves, 1) they are a kinless outsider, 2) they are legally bound or owned by an individual with a greater social and economic influence than themselves, even though an African was labeled a porter, client, or laborer and may have been paid. However, when looking at slavery as a continuum, these individuals were still kinless outsiders working in accordance to a socially superior power or master (the missionaries). 2) I will also be addressing the ways in which Africans are identified by European missionaries—when they are named, when they are explicitly discussed, and when they are implicitly discussed to compare them. 3) Lastly, I will be looking at the roles Africans played in these caravans and what tasks they were assigned as opposed to their European counterparts. In looking at how slavery is defined, how Africans were written about by European missionaries, and the tasks assigned to Africans, I will better be able to identify the role Africans played in the missionary project and how missionaries benefitted from slaves, as well as how Africans, who primed the development of mission sites, were able to gain autonomy.

As this study aims to clarify the misunderstandings regarding the Africans who aided in the development of mission societies and their roles in the project, it is necessary to examine how their contemporaries described them. In order to examine this aspect, the following primary sources are utilized: missionary journals, memoirs, and
correspondence between missionaries and the crown. The missionary journals being utilized are from the London Mission Society, the Church Mission Society, and records from the Universities’ Mission to Central Africa. All three of these missions operated in the same region, which is now coastal and central Tanzania. However, they all possessed differing ideologies and methodological approaches in regard to conversion, evangelism practices, and the structure and operation of their mission societies. Yet, each of the groups consistently discusses and similarly interacts with their African laborers. Lastly, the correspondences from the mission groups to the Crown offer another set of documents with which to analyze how missionaries were discussing Africans, especially those who were not converts. The vast majority of these sources are white male missionaries with origins in the United Kingdom. Thus, there are apparent biases and paternalistic undertones throughout the records. However, the biases and omissions regarding Africans are the basis for this thesis, as it has generated an absence in the historical record concerning the ways in which missionaries benefited from Africans, and particularly, from slaves and how the Africans involved in caravanning asserted agency? Do something to connect it to Africans, creating their opportunities for social mobility.
CHAPTER THREE
TRANSITIONS AND DISTINCTIONS OF SLAVERY IN NINETEENTH-CENTURY EAST AFRICA

To pose the argument that missionary caravans were ironically providing means of manumission to enslaved porters, it is crucial first to define slavery and make a case that these porters were, in fact, slaves. Scholars of slavery in East Africa recently have begun to question the magnitude of slavery in the region, and if the institution was as vital to East African communities. The assertion that slavery in East Africa is exaggerated comes from the belief that missionaries were intentionally exaggerating the number of slaves present in the region. Instead, scholars state that laborers in East Africa were free-labor sources, not slave labor sources. In an attempt to underscore modern capitalist enterprises existed in Africa independently of Europeans, these scholars are taking denying evidence of the prominence of the slave trade, and in doing so, deny the ways in which slaves worked as agents despite their condition. Therefore, the goal of this chapter is to emphasize the significance of the slave trade in East Africa, and then demonstrate that porters used in missionary caravans were enslaved, not just free-laborers.

Contrary to abolitionist and British missionary rhetoric, the slave trade in East Africa reached a peak in the mid-nineteenth century. Two forces, in particular, shaped slavery in eastern Africa during this period: first, the consolidation of Omani power at

Zanzibar, beginning in the early nineteenth century, and second, the increasing European presence in which Christian missionaries played a prominent role.

By the late seventeenth century, the Omanis were the leading political power in East Africa. In the early nineteenth century, Sultan Said Said moved the capital of the Omani empire from Oman to Zanzibar, which further emphasized the significance and prominence of East Africa on a global scale. As an expression of growing power under the sultanate, the sultan’s reach extended farther inland into eastern Africa, where caravans went for the trade that grew dramatically through the first half of the nineteenth century. Large quantities of ivory, slaves, and spices were traded in Zanzibar. A significant consequence of the sultan’s push for deeper penetration of transregional trade into eastern Africa was the substantial expansion of the slave trade.

Different access to trade goods, especially firearms, led to power imbalances in the region. As powerful chieftains sought to consolidate and establish power via the use of firearms, violence ensued. Thus, there were increases in the taking of captives from subjugated regions. These captives would become slaves for export before the British patrolling of the coastline. However, with the British intervening in slave trading, slaves were increasingly held internally, resulting in a shift in how slaves were utilized. Slaves who would ordinarily have been exported to India or the Middle East were now being used as plantation labor or as porters on caravanning expeditions.

The growth of the slave market fostered slave raiding in the interior. As Deutsch wrote, "the 1860s, 1870s, and 1880s were times of incredible danger and insecurity in central Tanganyika, where people could easily fall prey to warlords, kidnappers, or slave traders". Before the expansion of the Omani in East Africa, slavery was relatively low density. By the middle of the nineteenth century, slaves composed two-thirds to three-quarters of the population, or some 40,000 in Zanzibar town, and an even higher number, perhaps 250,000, on the islands of Pemba and Zanzibar as a whole. Local demand for slaves continued even after the Europeans had renounced slavery and forbade the slave trade.

**Shifting Conditions of Slavery**

The constraints of what makes an individual a slave has proved difficult for both colonial officials and historians to define. Typically, when thinking of enslavement, chattel slavery is the first image to come to mind. Images of people in chains, covered in scars from whippings, and dressed in tattered rags. However, in Africa, the practice of slavery was not limited to chattel. In communities of low-density slavery, meaning slaves were a vast minority of the population, slaves often were free to engage in market activities, roam freely, and worked closely alongside the family of their master. Often the intermingling occurring between these slaves and their masters resulted in slaves being able to advocate for themselves and garner autonomy.

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Slaves held a variety of roles in the region, such as domestic servants, dockhands, concubines, agricultural workers, soldiers, and fishermen. With these scenarios in mind, how does one define a slave? This project will define a slave as an individual who possesses the following traits: slaves as kinless outsiders, slaves as property, and slaves as violently dominated or powerless. As kinless outsiders, these individuals were removed from their family unit. In most African societies, the family could be called upon for defense and financial support. Extracted from their family, these enslaved individuals can rely only on their means for defense and are often rendered vulnerable. The notion of slaves as property is an idea most closely related that of chattel slavery. Chattel slavery reduced one's identity to one of property. Chattel slavery is unique in the fact that it was lawfully recognized, and the ownership of humans legally backed. The violent nature in which slaves were attained is another characteristic separating them from free labor. Enslaved people, even in more open slaving societies, were typically taken through raids on their communities. Wars also tended to generate slaves, as prisoners would usually be taken from their communities and utilized as slaves. Even in cases of families selling a member into slavery to pay off a debt incorporated a sort of violent separating, especially in circumstances where the debt was not repaid, and the family member remained in bondage.

Chattel slavery became a dominant form of slavery in Zanzibar, Pemba, and Mombasa as a result of the emergence of clove plantations at the turn of the nineteenth century.

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80 Stilwell, *Slavery and Slaving in African History*, pp. 5-6.
81 Stilwell, *Slavery and Slaving in African History*, pp.21, 58.
However, unlike American chattel slavery, slave owners in East Africa lacked the coercive abilities of their American counterparts. Traditionally, slavery in Africa offered more autonomy than American slavery. Because of this, slave owners in East Africa had to combine punishments and rewards in different ways. Should demands or punishments be too harsh, slaves could resist, or revolt, and this possibility shaped the development of chattel slavery.

Academic studies of slavery in East Africa have been overshadowed by the Atlantic Slave Trade and slaving systems on the West Coast of the continent. Though there is significantly less scholarship on the region, slavery was a dominating force in a large portion of the East Coastal region as it was on the West Coast. After Europeans began engaging in trade and establishing settlements along the east African coast, plantation systems developed to extract resources for export. Developing infrastructure and ivory hunting were arduous tasks that utilized slave labor. However, this implies that slavery did not exist in the region before European settlement and that the slaving system developed in the region was high-density chattel slavery was challenged by oral sources and legal documents retrieved in the region.

Africans had already established trade routes, trading codes of conduct, and slaving practices before the arrival of the Portuguese in 1498. Slavery in East Africa was also not merely a reflection of the chattel slavery system established in the Americas.

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and parts of West Africa. Instead, the plantation slave systems had existed before European intervention, having been utilized by merchants in the Middle East. Merchants from the Omani Empire brought Islam to Africa, generating a connection between East Africa and Muslims in Africa and abroad.\textsuperscript{85}

   The influence of Islam played a significant role in connecting the Indian Ocean World, establishing similar legal codes, writing systems, and cultural norms. As a result, the East Coast of Africa had been involved in international trade since the eighth century, engaging with India and the Middle East through the Indian Ocean. Many of the slaveholders on the East Coast in the late 19th and 20th centuries came from Arabia, especially the southern region of Oman. The second dominant group of slavers was Swahili, a group of individuals culturally and biologically mixed with Africans, Arabs, Persians, and others engaged in the Indian Ocean trade. Despite the heavy influence from Arabs, coastal towns predated the conquest of port cities by the Sultan of Oman in the eighteenth century, indicating that Africans had developed states independently, and maintained de facto independence even under Arab control. Both the Swahili and Arabs utilized slave labor for growing cloves (mainly on Zanzibar and Pemba) while growing grains and coconut on the mainland of East Africa. As international trade expanded with the entrance of Europeans in the 19th century, the systems of slavery initially used in East Africa experienced a shift as well.

   Slavery in East Africa was initially low-density and based mainly on pawnships.Pawnning was utilizing human labor to pay off a debt. For example, if a father was unable

\textsuperscript{85} Ibid, 98-115.
to purchase a herd of cattle, he could offer a son to work for the owner of the cattle as a trade for the ownership of the livestock. In this instance, the son was a form of collateral. Until repayment, the son would assume the status of a slave. This form of slavery much more closely resembled pawnship and offered clear routes to manumission. The distinction between pawn and slave occurred if a family was unable to pay back debts. Then there would be a forced seizure of the son to absolve the debt. Though slavery did exist in these communal societies, it was typically low density, meaning slaves were low in numbers and typically worked alongside free individuals. When differences in culture and dialect were minimal, stratification and separation between slaves and masters were typically minimal.  

As economic conditions shifted, primarily as a result of innovation in agriculture, such as tools and new cultivation techniques, populations began to grow as food production increased, and individuals began to specialize. With specialization came a sense of hierarchy. Initially, most African societies operated in a gerontocracy. Elder councils were the head of the communities, and individuals worked in social rings based on their age. With surplus and specialization, Africans began engaging in trade, first internally, and then externally as states became more centralized and were able to fund expeditions. Increases in wealth, as a result of long-distance trading, created greater economic stratification among people. Status became based on both human and material wealth. Thus, expeditions turned into war and raiding, which accumulated enslaved

people to maintain surplus production (as well as a visual representation of wealth), without losing revenue from having to pay laborers. Thus, slavery transformed as slavery shifted from a marginal feature to a central institution within society.\(^{87}\)

States growing in wealth and territory generated competitions for land and labor, often resulting in the migrations of specific populations to avoid being absorbed into a state or enslaved. Unfortunately, on the East Coast, these migrations sometimes resulted in indigenous populations enslaving migrants. For example, in the Mingyoyo, Tanzania region, there were five different African ethnicities: the Swahili, Ngindo, Mwera, Yao, and Makua. The Makua were agriculturalists and hunters who moved north into lands occupied by the Swahili, Ngindo, and Mwera. Aware of the lucrative trade along the coast, the occupants of the region, including the Yao, began raiding and enslaving Makua people.\(^{88}\) Having already established slaving ports and centralized societies, Swahili patricians and Omani immigrants took advantage of the booming slave supply to establish plantations. These were the ports and plantations that Europeans were initially engaging with upon their arrival, plantations, and states in which Europeans had no hand in developing. To the Swahili, Ngindo, Mwera, and the Yao, the Mikua were outsiders, speaking different dialects and having come from a foreign location. Conceived differences made the communities of central Africa more vulnerable, as they were less familiar with their geographic location, the people living there, and were a minority population. As a result, they became a target for slave raiders.

With growing interest in colonizing East Africa, the British became increasingly alarmed by the flagrancy of the slave trade in the region. In 1873, the abolition-minded British Parliament sponsored a visit to the region for the former governor-general of India, Sir Bartle Frere, commissioning him to investigate the slave trade and enforce the existing Moresby and Hamerton treaties in order to end it. Frere's tour resulted in the closing of the slave market in Zanzibar in April of 1873.\(^8\) Despite the closing of the slave market on Zanzibar, slaving and slave trading did not decline. Slavery simply became a more discrete transaction or was ignored by the British when it proved to be lucrative.

With the growth of clove plantations on Zanzibar and Pemba in the early nineteenth century, slavery began shifting away from a more open, low-density system to one that more closely mirrored chattel slavery in the American South. Though there were still differences between the two systems, this type of slavery would have been more familiar to the British in East Africa and would likely have been the slavery most missionaries were lamenting. Other forms of slavery, such as slaves working within the military or in the household, likely would not have been identifiable as slavery to the British. In order to maintain their economic system, they would not have been disclosed as slavery by coastal peoples. The growth of the plantation system and extractive slave exports created a market at the coast that, coupled with political upheavals, led to huge profits in the trade of human beings.

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\(^8\) McCaskie, “Cultural Encounters: Britain and Africa in the Nineteenth Century.”, pp. 166-193.
**Caravan Porters: Slave or Free?**

As the British struggled to identify slavery systems existing in East Africa, coastal communities began finding ways to conceal and utilize slaves in a more discrete manner. Many Zanzibari porters were slaves hired out by their masters. Three-quarters of the notorious Henry Morton Stanley's porters were slaves. As the British worked to contain the flow of slaves into the Indian Ocean, there was an increase in the number of slaves that remained on Zanzibar. It is also noted that though missionaries were stating that the slave trade was being squashed, the number of slave and ivory caravans did not waiver. In fact, with the increasing demand for both porters and exotic goods from the interior with the arrival of more Europeans, the number of slave caravans likely increased to meet these demands. John Roscoe, an Anglican missionary for the CMS stationed in Uganda, elaborates on the difficulties of hiring porters:

“...In those early days when the success and comfort of a traveler going into the interior of Africa depended mainly upon the health, strength and uprightness of the porter, such time had to be devoted to securing the necessary human burden who was the sole means of transport; further time had to be spent in looking over the goods from England, and arranging them, so that the packages did not exceed sixty-five pounds weight a piece. The presence of kind friends in Zanzibar was indeed a boon, and from them I obtained much valuable advice concerning the treatment of natives and many hints as to travel. Furthermore, barter goods such as unbleached calico, prints, brass, copper, and iron wire, beads of various kinds, with other articles for currency to be used to obtain food on the journey had to be purchased in Zanzibar. When the tedious process of selecting and engaging porters was completed, they had to undergo medical examination, which often reduced their numbers considerably, because many of them were unfit for the hardships of the journey. When the men were finally engaged, and their agreement had been signed, there came the trying task of satisfying them in regard to advanced pay, because though their wages were fixed at a given rate per month, yet each man tried to secure as much as possible before he commenced his work and would not consent to move without at least

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one month's pay in advance. Crowds of people usually awaited these men when they were being paid to carry out their avaricious schemes, they would leave the porters with only a few coppers. The latter had therefore to be guarded and kept in a locked yard after they were paid, until they could be marched to the beach and shipped to the mainland, the point from which the journey was to begin. If these precautions were neglected, the unfortunate men were left without money to purchase the numerous small comforts which they wished to take with them on the journey.”

Roscoe's discussion of the hiring process emphasizes the dependence Europeans had on coastal communities to supply labor for the caravan and missionary project. The mention of porters held in pens under the supervision of a "recruiter," so hired porters would not flee reflective of chattel slavery, where individuals were not free to act on their own will. Should hire out porters on the coast be a free labor source, it seems unlikely that they were held in bondage.

In Islamic slave systems, as in the West, slaves were chattels. The majority of slaves were initially acquired by force, some were purchased, and others were victims of trickery. Slaves were freely traded and transferred to the master's will. What was notably different from the slavery of the American South, however, was the degree to which they were protected by Muslim law. When the law was observed, their treatment was fair. They might expect to marry and have families of their own, and they had a good chance of being free. There were also avenues of escape. For instance, a female slave who married her master had to be free first. Concubines - slaves by definition - were freed or, at least, were not saleable, once they had borne their masters' children; and in most

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91 John Roscoe, *Twenty-Five Years in East Africa* (Cambridge, 1921), pp.4-5.
branches of Islam, their children were free. Missionaries, understanding slavery based on the chattel slavery that existed in the American south, may not have recognized outright that the holding of porters before their journeys with the caravans was a display of Muslim chattel practices. They may have viewed this as an abnormal practice of coastal people. Alternatively, perhaps they were aware that the porters detained were slaves, but to save face and profit, failed to refer to them as such.

Stephen Rockel argues that the development of a labor market for caravan porters was an early and significant stage in the transition to capitalism. His argument rests on the notion that porters had to be wage laborers because their labor was bought and sold according to fluctuating labor market conditions. Market conditions in the second half of the nineteenth century "show a broadly increasing demand for porters, a demand that could only be met if caravan operators offered adequate wages and observed the customs established within porter work culture". Rockel is correct that the market conditions on the coast of East Africa shifted to focus on caravanning. However, capitalist practices existed within Muslim culture on the coast prior to the arrival of Europeans. The ivory and slave trade had existed within the Indian Ocean world for centuries. Items such as beads and shells, were used as forms of currency, as well as slaves, who were utilized as a labor force as well as a display of wealth. By Roscoe's time in Africa, the later 1890s, the Zanzibari government was seeking to regulate and control patronage. All porters were

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registered, wages were standardized, and an inspector of caravans was appointed.94 The government was attempting to move out of a secondary role with commerce and shift into an economy in which production, investment, prices, and incomes, were determined by a central government.

Rockel also attributes caravan labor solely to free laborers, believing that the role and scale of slavery in East Africa were exaggerated. He believes the Nyamwezi were cultivators of trade routes and monopolized the caravan industry (thus his belief that commerce was becoming more capitalist in nature). Though there is some discussion in missionary records of the Nyamwezi, they are infrequently mentioned in discussions of the hiring of porters. Most missionary records simply discuss the superiority of the Nyamwezi and their professionalism, but also note that the cost of their labor was costly. However, as the economy shifted in favor of the caravan trades, slave owners would be more encouraged to utilize slaves as porters as opposed to field hands or soldiers.

Ultimately, Rockel's argument rests on notions that the only true form of slavery is chattel, and no continuum exists because other forms of slavery are forms of free labor due to the autonomy offered to porters. Therefore, porters working on caravans had to be free labor because they were not chattel. He supports this logic by referencing the Nyamwezi porters, who were a group of free laborers who professionalized portership. Rockel's argument ignores a few significant components of slavery and caravan work in East Africa in an attempt to iterate that missionaries exaggerated the significance of

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slavery. It is undeniable that, as Rockel suggested, free laborers were participating in the missionary caravans. However, there was also a large number of slaves employed by missionaries under the guise of Zanzibari porters.

In 1840, Sultan Said Said moved the capital of the Omani Empire from Muscat in Oman to Zanzibar. Said began to localize his authority in Zanzibar by requiring all ships coming into the region first stop in Zanzibar to report to the sultan himself.\textsuperscript{95} The establishment of the clove plantations on Pemba and Zanzibar beginning in the 1830s yielded an increase in unfree labor that was internalized, and the slaves living within these plantation systems took the status of commodities.\textsuperscript{96} With the British patrolling the coast for slavers, exports of slaves from Zanzibar decreased, and there was an increase of slaves being internalized. Thus, slaves were not only being utilized on clove plantations and households but as Zanzibari porters. From the 1870s through the 1890s, the Zanzibari government sought to regulate and control porterage. All porters were registered, wages were standardized, and an inspector of caravans was appointed in accordance with Zanzibari regulations. British missionaries would have been required to first stop in Zanzibar to acquire porters and other goods before traveling to the East African coast. Missionary John Roscoe lamented that "barter goods such as unbleached calico, prints, brass, copper, and iron wire, beads of various kinds, with other articles for currency to be used to obtain food on the journey had to be purchased in Zanzibar".\textsuperscript{97} After porters were approved for use on the missionary caravans, the group would then take a dhow from

\textsuperscript{95} Kollman, \textit{The Evangelization of Slaves}, pp. 34-35.
\textsuperscript{96} Cooper, \textit{Plantation Slavery on the East Coast of Africa}, pp. 190.
\textsuperscript{97} John Roscoe, \textit{Twenty-Five Years in East Africa} (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1921, pp. 4-5.)
Nungwi, Zanzibar to the coast of Tanganyika, most beginning their caravan voyages in the town of Bagamoyo.98

The Nyamwezi held quarters at Bagamoyo on the coast of Tanganyika. They offered a greater labor source to missionaries, which may have been denied to them in Zanzibar. Desertion or increased labor demands were common in caravanning, so the Nyamwezi were frequently utilized to supplement porters hired out on Zanzibar. Missionaries also deemed the Nyamwezi as superior porters, as they were viewed as more robust and disciplined than Zanzibari porters.99 The initial wave of caravan porters was brought to Tanganyika by way of Zanzibar, and upon arriving on the coast, missionaries could hire out additional labor through the Nyamwezi or other coastal communities. Drawings can further distinguish the status of the porters utilized by European caravans from the mid to late nineteenth century.

**The Caravan and African Hierarchy in Art**

Images and drawings from the 19th century offer insight into the status of porters. There is no doubt that Nyamwezi porters were hired out on the East African coast. They are mentioned in many missionaries and other European accounts. However, they are distinguished from other porters, whom the missionaries do not discuss. They simply state that the Nyamwezi are a superior group of porters, while the "others" tend to be less

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professionalized. T.O. Beidelman offers another means of distinction between the Nyamwezi and other porters from the coast. Nyamwezi porters carry loads on their shoulders, while enslaved porters from Zanzibar carried loads on their heads. Drawings of David Livingstone depict porters carrying his body. In the background of these images, there are photos of other porters carrying loads on their heads. The central focus of these images is Livingstone. However, the porters depicted in the back could reveal the status of many porters. Figures 3.1 and 3.2 are popular culture images depicting the slow death of David Livingstone. Though these images were popularized by the British public, they align with photographs displayed in the British National Archives and historian Laura Fair’s text on slave clothing in nineteenth century East Africa.

Another confirmation of the slave status of the porters depicted in Figures 3.1 and 3.2 is their dress. The dress was a visually immediate marker of class and status in East African Society. Slaves in nineteenth-century Zanzibar typically wore only the slightest of clothes, which were usually made of cheap white cloth, known as merikani, because it came from the United States. Sources from this period indicate that male and female slaves often wore only one piece of cloth, which men wrapped around their waists (known as a winda) and women tied under their armpits. Clothing was an article of

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103 Laura Fair, Pastimes and Politics, pp. 61-62.
property that was often denied to slaves in more restrictive slave systems, such as that of the East African coastal regions. Though these systems were less restrictive and offered more autonomy to slaves that what appeared in the American South, slaves were often denied clothing to differentiate them from free people. Nudity was a means by which a slave could easily be distinguished from free people.

Figure 3.1 “The Last Mile” c. 1880, Livingstone being carried before he died. Photo by Ann Ronan Pictures/Print Collector/Getty Images. Hulton Archive. Reproduced lantern slide.
Figure 3.2 Livingstone’s embalmed corpse being carried back to the coast by Africans as depicted in a Victorian Lantern Slide. Photo by the Print Collector/Print Collector/Getty Images
To further distinguish the slave members from the free, one must observe the Muslim figures in both drawings. Because over 95 percent of those who lived in Zanzibar, including slaves, were Muslims, the covering men and women wore on their heads was also a significant marker of class and status. The importance of maintaining an immediately perceptible distinction between slaves and owners, however, overrode the Islamic prescription for believers to cover their heads. Male Muslim slaves were forbidden from wearing head coverings.\textsuperscript{104} In Figure 3.1, the man on the left, holding a walking stick, is wearing a headcover and is fully clothed. This indicates a distinction between him and the other porters carrying Livingstone, who are bare-chested and have no head coverings. This likely means that the clothed man with the headdress is a Muslim, and of a higher status than the other porters. This figure was likely a headman, who held a position at the top of the caravanning hierarchy.\textsuperscript{105} In Figure 3.2, the clothed figure appears carrying a rifle in the background. The distinction between clothed and unclothed members of the caravan was not the artists choice, but a reasonably accurate representation of the participants of a caravan. Exposure of flesh was also demonstrative of not being Muslim or a less pious Muslim. It also symbolized a lack of wealth as material goods, such as clothing, were an outward showing of the ability to trade or purchase. Thus, it can be assumed in the images of Livingstone being carried, that the porters in the images are likely Zanzibari slaves due to their lack of clothing and how they carried loads.

\textsuperscript{104} Ibid, 63.
\textsuperscript{105} The discussion of the headman and their significance will continue and go into much greater detail in Chapter 4.
Conclusion

Even with British abolition efforts in East Africa, slavery and the slave trade reached an all-time high in the mid-nineteenth century. As East Africa became increasingly relevant in global trade with exports of exotic goods, including ivory, and agricultural goods, such as clove, slave raiding increased to back the lucrative trade. Coupled with this, the Omani expansion of power and territory led to land and power disputes in the interior. Access to European firearms created an imbalance of power between communities who had access to firearms and those who did not. With these conflicts in the interior came an increase in the number of peoples captured as slaves.

Though the British were implementing abolitionist policies in the region, slavery was not readily identifiable to colonists on the ground. In order to implement abolitionist policies, British officials first had to provide a standardized definition of slavery. Most Western understandings of slavery stemmed from images of slavery in the American South, which was a high-density, closed, chattel form of slavery. Although slavery in East Africa began to more closely mirror chattel slavery with the growth of plantations along the coast, many other forms of slavery still existed. As a result, the British struggled to identify enslaved people. Increasingly, economic historians seem to be falling into the same trap the British did in the nineteenth century- disregarding the significance of slavery in the East African economy and mislabeling slave labor as a free labor source. Although free labor sources were working for the missionary caravans, it does not account for all of the laborers utilized.
Images from the nineteenth-century offer clarity on the slave labor utilized by missionaries. Depictions of the dying or dead David Livingstone depict Africans who were a part of his caravan. In these images, there are depictions of sparsely clothed Africans carrying baskets over their head, a trademark of Zanzibari slave laborers. Also present are fully clothed Arabs, carrying firearms, emphasizing the contrast between enslaved and free. The focal point of these images is Livingstone, who was allegedly an avid opponent of the slave trade. So, it seems unlikely that the artist would pay much mind to the Africans they were depicting, merely painting what they saw, and focusing on highlighting Livingstone. It also seems unlikely that an artist would intentionally include the images of slaves, as Livingstone was supposed to be an opponent of the trade, so it seems even more likely that the artist simply drew what was. This further affirms the fact that the British could not identify slaves.

It was challenging for British missionaries to define and recognize slavery in East Africa. Due to the sheer number of slaves on the coast, the British likely utilized slave labor. Even missionaries, who focused much of their attention on fighting slavery and the slave trade utilized slave labor in their caravans. Whether the status of the individuals was known to missionaries cannot be determined. However, in utilizing slaves, be known to them or not, missionaries were inadvertently providing an outlet for social mobility for enslaved peoples.
CHAPTER FOUR

ROUTES TO MANUMISSION AND SOCIAL MOBILITY

Unpublished missionary works largely contradict the conventions of published writing from the mid to late-nineteenth century. While published work was full of heroic tales, astute geographical and political observations, and notes on the benevolence of missionaries, the unpublished journals of British Protestant mission groups display a more authentic portrait of missionary life on caravan expeditions. Many official reports to the British Crown from missionary groups claim that missions are strong opponents to slavery and the slave trade and request aid from the metropole to help cease the institution. Two major hypocrisies can be noted in missionary caravanning that lend themselves to contrary occurrences. First, British missionaries were regularly utilizing enslaved porters to transport loads into the interior of Africa, even though they claimed to be upholders of abolition. Second, abolition rhetoric lends itself to a belief in bringing enslaved people out of bottom-line social status and into a higher social standing. However, strict hierarchies were enforced by missionaries within the caravan. Despite this, enslaved porters were able to subvert the hierarchy or use the caravan itself to improve their standing within the larger society’s hierarchy.

Even though British missionaries did not mean to, they presented practical opportunities for slaves to rise socially and attain autonomy. This chapter looks first at

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106 Correspondence of Foreign Office to Colonial Office, 1906, Box 24, University of London School of Oriental and African Studies Archives and Special Collections, London, England; Correspondence of Foreign Office to Mr. Cave, 1906, Box 24, Document 89, University of London School of Oriental and African Studies Archives and Special Collections, London, England.
the missionary writing conventions and the beliefs missionaries held concerning their theoretical role in empire-building. This section emphasizes the hypocrisy between what British missionaries claimed and the reality on the ground. Second, this chapter looks at the reliance missionaries had on their enslaved porters. Without the aid of porters, the missionary projects would have been unachievable. This reliance resulted in avenues for enslaved porters to subvert the hierarchy that existed and gain autonomy on caravan expeditions. The final section of this chapter discusses enslaved porters’ social mobility and how slaves could escape slavery or better their social condition through the missionary caravans.

Published missionary writing was a genre of its own. Easily distinguished in texts produced throughout the middle and late nineteenth century were the tropes and mechanics of the text. These texts were inherently individualistic and propagandistic. They left no room for discussion of Africans or African experiences beyond simple observation. Missionary journals offer a contrasting view of these published works, while missionary records in their unedited form offer a different image than that portrayed in published work. Though there is also some distinguishable methodology across unfiltered missionary journals, they lack themes of overcoming all odds without setback and the uninterrupted pious nature of missionaries.

Like the published experiences of missionaries, unedited journals also largely disregard African experiences and contributions. However, they do include pages of documentation of sickness, delays, and troubles in the voyage into the interior. Except for descriptions of disobedience from African porters, most of these details are brief, though
they are plentiful. Sickness was marked by short statements such as “sick today, no travelling” or “I have been struck with fever, I am struggling to write”. These small markers explicitly expose the vulnerability of missionaries. Since meeting deadlines were essential to the survival of established mission sites, caravans could not stop for extended periods without severe consequences. With this in mind, it is clear that missionaries would have relied on the porters in the caravan to carry out leadership roles within the caravan.

It is essential to understand the genre of missionary writing and the significance of reoccurring tropes and themes to see best the reliance missionaries had on the porters working within their caravans. Missionaries needed porters to help them in times of illness and dispute. They also depended on them for day to day tasks such as cooking, translating, and navigation. Of course, they also needed porters to carry the enormous loads transported into the interior. Desperate for these labor sources, it is easy to see how the slave status of an individual was overlooked. The goal of this chapter is not to venerate or vilify missionaries, but to recognize the impact missionary caravans and practices had on enslaved porters.

Missionary writing as a genre

On May 14, 1834, Reverend Robert Burns’ preached before the London Mission Society. His sermon, The Indirect Benefits of the Missionary Enterprise, sought to

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explain the four primary advantages of missionary work. These four points are as follows:

1. Our views of man have been enlarged and rectified – no longer should Europeans see Oriental culture as elegant or wise, but simply heathen
2. Missionary enterprise has led to the successful culture of some important branches of intellectual and religious inquiry- a vast amount of ethnographic, linguistic, and translation work missionaries carried out
3. Missionary efforts have enriched the world with certain distinguished specimens of moral and religious excellence- missionary celebrities such as John Williams and David Livingstone had provided British evangelicals with figureheads of religious and national stature, men whom all should revere, and attempt to emulate
4. Missionaries efforts have proved highly beneficial in securing the essential rights and liberties of mankind.¹⁰⁸

Reverend Burns’ sermon underscores a changing attitude in evangelical mission groups abroad. Most explicitly, it highlights a hierarchy between Europeans and the Oriental, by which Europeans are of superior standing. This sentiment, that was iterated by Reverend Burns, is seen in missionary records in how they wrote about Africans and by their treatment of African porters.

The sermon is also a call to action. Burns discusses the significant roles that missionaries played in the development of empire. He illuminates the contribution that evangelization sought to make to imperial representation and ideology, to British self-fashioning on both an individual and national scale, and imperial reform of cultures. The work of the missionary goes beyond the conversion of people. Attributed to the work of the LMS and other religious organizations were vast amounts of discovery in various

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scientific fields. Burns' four points mark the strategic nature of missionary interventions globally.

The nineteenth-century imperial imagination was obsessed with controlling information about the colonies and missionary work yielded the perfect opportunity to do just that. Missionary work was especially appealing to young men. The work provided young men, frequently limited by class and education, opportunities for social advancement, community standing, and an exotic career.\textsuperscript{109} What persuaded religious people to travel to regions, like East Africa, could largely be attributed to the recognized power of missionaries. Famous missionary figures, like David Livingstone, gave individuals something to aspire to become. Ordinary people wanted to try their hands and impact the empire. Generations of British schoolchildren learned that the British empire was built by high-minded men who brought morality and civilization to the dark corners of the world.\textsuperscript{110} Colonial mission writing changed how crucial facets of nineteenth-century culture could be represented.

Published missionary texts were fundamentally propagandist in nature. Their aim was variously to inculcate public support for missionary endeavors. Missionaries needed to ensure an ongoing supply of funds from individuals, institutions, and governments. Missionary writing conforms to an identifiable set of generic regulations which 1) emphasized positive evangelical achievement and 2) highlighted that missionary figures were heroic, long-suffering, and did not experience religious doubts, debilitating diseases,

\textsuperscript{109} Johnston, \textit{Missionary Writing and Empire}, pp. 7-9.
\textsuperscript{110} Barczewski, \textit{Heroic Failure and the British}, pp. 37.
or personal crises. These tropes and themes emphasized both the glory of the British Empire and that the missionaries were superior to the native population, who behaved in a vulgar manner. There is a stark contrast between the uniformity of authorship of published works versus the unedited journals carried by missionaries. Namely, there is a conglomerate of behaviors and actions that contradict the moral beliefs of missionaries and missionaries faced many trials, including losing track of time, delays in the missionary voyage, disease, and personal crises.

**Losing Track of Time**

Established British missionary sites relied heavily on the timely arrival of caravans from the coast. Food supplies, cooking utensils, medicine, and trade goods were all transported by these caravans. Thus, missionaries traveling with the caravans were fixated with tracking time. The trip from the coast to Ukaguru could be made in a week if one were very fit and traveled light, though as late as 1900, CMS Bishop William Peel (an experienced caravanner) required two weeks with a party of only 160. Travel from the coast of Tanzania to Mamboya in central Ukaguru (175 miles) took about 16 days, and an added five days were required to reach Mpwapa (a further distance of 47 miles). This timeframe excluding the weeks spent in Zanzibar recruiting for and stocking the caravan. Delays in travel created great distress and frustration among British missionaries. The recording, tracking, and complaining about time is a theme within all missionary journals.

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Before further investigating the dilemmas faced by British missionaries, some of the uniformities of unedited journals must be discussed. Throughout the missionary records, statements testify to qualitative phenomenological awareness of time.\(^{112}\) Missionaries complained about the lack or loss of time. They lamented about the time it took to get up and keep a caravan organized, the slowness of progress, or the detours that needed to be made. Departures and arrivals from locations were savored. It was essential to keep a record of the date, which was written before most every journal entry or at the top of a journal page. Time-keeping kept the expedition on track. It was essential to the survival of missionary sites that loads of supplies be delivered promptly. Keeping track of time was also essential to establish when to pay porters and provide them with time off. The European calendar set days of rest.\(^{113}\)

Most importantly, keeping track of times allowed for missionaries to celebrate holidays. All celebrated certain holidays, including Christmas, New Year’s, the king or Emperor’s birthday, and others. Holidays were important occasions for missionaries as it allowed them to recall and stage their “Europeanness”. The missionaries would dress up, share meals, usually including fowl (protein was a scarcity amid caravanning travels, so this was a treat), and spending time together exchanging memories of life back in Europe to celebrate such occasions.\(^{114}\) In a sense, the clock and calendar were an umbilical cord to European society. This focus on lack of punctuality further distanced British

\(^{112}\) Fabian, *Out of Our Minds*, pp. 57

\(^{113}\) Ibid, 55.

\(^{114}\) Ibid, 56; Letters and Journal Entries of AW Dodgshun and JB Thomson, 1879, Box 3, doc 23, CWM Central Africa.
missionaries from the metropole, and the time-loss affected their perspective of Africa. The “dark continent” was a place of disorder and maddening practices. Much to the distress of missionaries, the planned trajectory of expeditions was punctuated by events that caused a delay, often referred to as “moments”, “incidents”, and “scares”.

**Moments of Violence and “Incidents”**

Another reoccurring matter throughout missionary writing were “moments”. These moments or incidences where missionary authority was challenged or there were outbursts of misconduct among the porters. Wissman reports an “incident” where he had to intervene in a brawl among porters who were under the influence of palm wine:

“Moments such as this are perilous for the European because it often happened that senseless rage turned against the caravan’s leaders and resulted in the murder of whites”.115

Likewise, A.W. Dodgshun details a “scare” with porters on his voyage to the Lake Tanganyika region. On February 27th, 1977, he wrote:

[a porter] foolishly and unlawfully tried to push in front and break the line. Mr. Broyon seeing this went forward and tried to give the leader a poke in the back with the butt end of his gun, but unfortunately struck to high and hit his neck, stunning him and making him fall as if dead. By the aid of cold water and a mouthful of the D’s cognac he was revived a little and was soon able to walk on, but another man has to carry his load. His companion at once put down his load and ran off into the bush, believing him killed and threatened all manner of vengeance, saying he would shoot Mr. B, would go to Umyamyembe and get people to declare war with Mirambo’s people, etc.116

Both Wissman and Dodgshun include these incidents amid the mundane record-keeping of the weather and their miles traveled. These incidents were commonplace in missionary

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115 Mittheilungen der Afrikanischen Gesellschaft in Deutschland, no 1, published in Berlin (1883), pp. 42.
116 Letters and Journal Entries of AW Dodgshun, 1877, Box 3, doc 23, CWM Central Africa.
journals. They reveal the frailty of the missionaries’ control over porters and the real fears faced by missionaries traveling into the interior. The reactions of missionaries to these moments of chaos and disorder contradict the notion that missionaries met hosts and porters clear-minded and self-controlled. It instead reveals the lack of control missionaries had over their porters and their surroundings. Likewise, it also demonstrated why British missionaries needed their porters, who managed the caravan and worked as liasons between missionaries and African communities.

The actions and behaviors of missionaries before, during, and after incidents such as the ones detailed by Wissman and Dodgshun contradict the moral superiority outlined by Reverend Burns and detailed throughout published missionary writing. Often, missionaries would act out in rage and use violence against the porters. In a fit of rage, Alexander Mackay, one of the most admired Church Mission Society missionaries, shot and wounded four mutinous porters.\(^{117}\) CMS missionary Rachel Stuart Watt wrote of a missionary who was sent home and had to transfer to independent missionary work elsewhere after he tied up and flogged several porters caught stealing- one of these porters died from related injuries at Mamboya. Mrs. Watt also wrote about a leaflet given to the CMS, stating: “Stopping men’s pay is no good, as the negro does not look forward. Stopping their ‘posho’ (rations) when not actually on the march, and flogging in extreme cases are best”.\(^{118}\) The heroic Bishop James Hannington found it necessary to snatch firebrands from the campfire and hurl them at the disobedient porters, who refused to

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\(^{117}\) Oliver, *The Missionary Factor in East Africa*, pp. 83

take up their loads and move out of camp. Evangelical of the London Missionary Society, A.W. Dodgshun, defended ruthlessness by diminishing the humanity of the porters, which ironically contradicts Reverend Burns fourth point: “Of course, I object to fighting but in this case we are two defending ourselves against the unjust demands and insolent violence of bloodthirsty wildbeasts and if I shot, it will be against wolves”.120

In the first entry in his 1877 journal, A.W. Dodgshun writes on the burial of his fellow missionary, Mr. Waulier. Though Mr. Waulier’s death is relatively insignificant, the labor utilized for the burial further emphasized the hierarchy that existed within the missionary caravan. Laborers from the caravan performed the manual labor of the burial, not missionaries. Dodgshun remarks on the apathy of the individuals digging out the burial plot and lowering Mr. Waulier into his grave, stating, “Careless of the death of their fellows, what do they care of the loss of a somewhat tyrannical foreigner!”121 The apathy Dodgshun describes iterates the distinct hierarchy within the caravan. Dodgshun states that these Africans did not care about the death of their fellows, which he contradicts in his entry describing the outrage displayed by a porter upon another porter being knocked unconscious. In reality, the slave laborers operating within the caravans likely did not concern themselves with the multi-lingual translators, converts, and especially not the Europeans. Instead, they focused their attention on payments, finding

119 Ibid.
121 Letters and Journal Entries of AW Dodgshun, 1877, Box 3, doe 23, CWM Central Africa.
additional tasks such as a burial, to put towards their profit, separate from the portion that would be awarded to their master.

It also emphasizes a European assertion that unskilled African labor were heartless and incapable of feeling more complex emotions. Throughout his journals, Dodgshun describes Africans, both porters, and locals, as either violent or simplistic. He described the behaviors of compliant and friendly villagers as awestruck, mesmerized by the appearance of Europeans and their bounty. While Africans who inconvenienced or challenged the missionaries were labeled as foolish, unlawful, and mischievous.122 Though one label is more spiteful than the other, both iterate European simplification of the African mind. Africans were either childlike or barbaric. The exception to this was African Christian converts, who still needed the paternalistic aid of the missionaries to develop, and the Swahili, who, based on the labels given by Europeans, were not seen as genuinely African.

The role of the missionaries in the imperial project was one that was supposed to shape the potential of the African natives. However, Dodgshun and many other missionaries lost this zeal as their journey into the interior progressed. The rhetoric carefully crafted by Livingstone and his predecessors about the mysticism and magic of interior Africa that spurred a major pull to the colonial front from the metropole was lost to the missionaries upon their encounter. Instead of focusing on how to utilize the talents of natives, they instead wished for a martial rule or elimination of people unwilling to bend to the whims of Western idealism.

122Ibid.
Reflecting on the points Reverend Burns preached on, published missionary records present missionaries as cool, calm, and collected when facing troubles. These instances of violence and rage shown in missionaries’ unpublished journals exhibit the frailty of the missionary condition. They lacked the control and power they sought after and resorted to acts of violence in an attempt to maintain the farce of control. However, the ratio of porters to missionaries indicates that, even in with these fits of rage, porters would have to willingly cooperate with missionaries for the caravanning process to be successful. The cooperation of enslaved porters was not an act of compassion, but rather a means of potential social mobility through pay and other means allotted to porters via working on the missionary caravans.

**Illness**

Another significant delay within the missionary caravan was illness. Illness was perhaps the most significant contributor to Western dependence on enslaved porters. Entry after entry in missionary records detail illness ranging from fevers to stomach flu to problems as extreme as fluid in the lungs and heart complications. Missionaries would commonly fall asleep after a day of fever and never awaken the next day. Essential nutrients were a luxury item that was infrequent, lacking access to many fruits and vegetables for months at a time. In these incidences, the headman, an African porter at the top of the caravan hierarchy that held a managerial role, would assume even more

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123 Reverend G.S. Pilkington’s early caravan to Uganda in the 1880s numbered 2,200; Charles Stokes (a former CMS missionary turned trader) caravan numbered 2,500; Reverend Robert P. Ashe and six other missionaries journeyed with Stokes to Buganda via Ukaguru with 500; Dr. S.T. Pruen claimed that a short round trip of about 600 miles and three months would require about 30 men.

124 Letters and Journal Entries of AW Dodgshun, 1877, Box 3, doc 23, CWM Central Africa.
authority. This individual would set the pace of the march, choose the navigation route, and dictate when the caravan would stop to rest and set camp. Porters would be responsible for carrying the sickly missionary in either a bath chair or hammock, forcing other porters to take up heavier loads to compensate.

Quinine, a medicine used to treat malaria, though revolutionary for 19th-century exploration on the African continent, caused complications of its own. British East India company ships began stockpiling the medicine, not leaving room for doctors or other medical supplies. Resultingly, missionaries would perish not only in the interior but on the journey to the East Coast and upon arrival, especially children. Bouts of illness were further complicated by the fact that missionary doctors were a scarce resource on the caravan routes outside of outposts and settlements. Like other missionaries, doctors were susceptible to new bacteria and diseases and were frequently ill or had perished themselves.

Quinine also came with side effects, referred to by missionaries as “quininism”. These side effects included fatigue, confusion, stomach pains, and blurred vision that left missionaries “unable to write for days”. These incidents of medicine induced incoherence that was no rare occurrence on the journey to the interior. The incoherence was not a brief occurrence. Days would go by where missionaries would be unable to march for long or at all. Severely hindered if anything disturbed the regular

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125 Headmen will be discussed in greater depth in the section “Hierarchy of the Caravan”.
126 Ibid.
127 Ibid.
128 Ibid.
flow of loads inland, missionaries were encouraged to keep moving even if they were not entirely lucid. Moments of debilitating illness and clouded cognition further added to missionary anxieties of losing track of time. In one incident, A.W. Dodgshun was so delirious he could “not speak Swahili”\(^\text{129}\). Though this is likely true, times of sickness were not the only time when missionaries struggled to produce African languages.

**Language Barriers**

Language was another barrier faced by missionaries, both within the caravan and when dealing with communities in the interior. For a caravan to operate effectively, orders would have to be understood. However, contrary to the assertions made by missionaries that they were well versed in African languages, most likely could only utter a few phrases, which would be in Swahili, not languages used in the interior. Missionary Price admitted that he only knew how to say two Swahili words, “**ngombe** and **majiri**” meaning ox and water. Language barriers caused many delays within the caravanning process. In one instance, porters were instructed to kill sickly oxen to be eaten by the caravan. Poor communication skills resulted in the natal oxen being killed, eradicating a means to transport loads, and a valuable trade good\(^\text{130}\). With such a limited understanding of language, missionaries relied on multilingual porters, typically caravan headmen, to communicate with members in the caravan and outside communities.

Beyond looking at missionary writing, it is crucial to understand the structure of the missionary caravans. There was a distinct hierarchy amid the caravan, which allotted

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\(^{129}\) Ibid.
\(^{130}\) Letters and Journal Entries of AW Dodgshun and Price, 1877, Box 2 and 3, CWM Central Africa.
different porters’ different opportunities. In understanding how the caravan functioned, one can better understand the crucial roles porters filled. Understanding the roles and hierarchy of the caravan also will better illustrate the level of dependence missionaries had on their porters, especially amidst sickness and delays.

**Structure and Hierarchy of Caravan**

Missionary caravans were highly hierarchical. Generally, the hierarchy fell as follows: European male missionaries, wives, single white women, and children, headmen, armed guards, cooks and personal servants, the drummer who accompanied the headman (his role was to set the pace for marching), professional porters who carried the heaviest loads and frequented caravan routes (*wapagazi*), porters transporting cloth and beads, weaker men, and lastly the “magic men” who sometimes accompanied missionary caravans to ward off evil.  

This was the hierarchy, according to missionary accounts. However, it seems more realistic that the porters would see the headman and more respected porters as the head of the hierarchy, while the missionaries, male and female, were mere employers and burdens. The fact that a “magic man”, probably a witchdoctor, was present in the missionary caravan at all indicates the level of authority Africans had over their European counterparts. Europeans, especially missionaries, would likely be averse to the use of “witchcraft” on their holy expedition.

European women were also present during missionary caravan voyages. Prior to the 1860s, unmarried women were excluded from foreign missionary work because of the

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threat to their virtuous natures. Missionary wives were the only Protestant missionary women during the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries. Protestant Societies refused to employ single women until after the middle of the nineteenth century. The British belief in the natural piety of evangelical women and the assumed delicacy of women in general meant sympathetic communities at home and abroad were very interested in missionary wives. The self-sacrificing nature of a missionary wife enhanced the emotive appeal to the British public. Women were able to convince societies to change their initial policies of only employing men because of the necessity of having a group to work with indigenous women. As church leadership changed in the mid-nineteenth century, some single women were allowed to voyage into the interior of Africa. However, it appears that the majority of these women stayed at developed outposts and were not a part of establishing new or growing mission sites. This was the case of Miss Stokes and Miss Copplestone, members of the London Mission Society, who lived in Unyanyembe in 1877. Little more was discussed of these women other than they occupied a house in the city and aided missionary caravans upon their arrival. Their presence alone is significant in the fact that they are single women, as denoted by their prefix being “miss”, and seemingly lived without male supervision in the African interior. Furthermore, as missionary sites became permanent, there was a push to introduce families, not just individuals, to the sites.

132 Johnston, Missionary Writing and Empire, pp. 21; Watt, In the Heart of Savagedom.
133 Johnston, Missionary Writing and Empire, 21.
Children present on missionary caravans often suffered the most. Within the first couple of days into the interior, notes of children passing would begin. Some children did not even make it off the coast before becoming ill on the voyage from Europe. Beyond sickness and death, children are seldom discussed. Women and children being brought into the interior of East Africa emphasizes the push for familial settlements in East Africa. Families settling is indicative of permanence. A male missionary traveling alongside other males would likely leave the continent to return to his family in Europe. A male missionary traveling with his family into the interior would likely be there to settle. This tied into missionaries’ understanding of colonialism- that territory could only be claimed when a nation effectively occupied the territory.\textsuperscript{135} The presence of women and children on missionary caravans generated more interest in missionary writings, as people were intrigued by the work and daily life of women and children in the interior of Africa.\textsuperscript{136}

The chief headman usually wore distinctive garb, often red, and an eye-catching cap so that he would be readily noticed. The European missionaries highly valued headmen. These were the few Africans ever given a name during the caravan voyage. These headmen held several roles. Perhaps their most vital role was that of a translator. These men were responsible for translating orders to the African caravan. They also worked as ambassadors for missionaries traveling into foreign territories, going and speaking to political leaders on behalf of the missionaries. In some instances, white

\textsuperscript{135} Lauman, \textit{Colonial Africa 1884-1994}, pp. 11.

\textsuperscript{136} Johnston, \textit{Missionary Writing and Empire, 1800-1860}, 21.
missionaries would not be allowed to come before political leaders as they were feared or not respected.137 Headmen would negotiate *hongo*, or tolls for safe passage through a territory, with the community leaders. They would also provide the terms and conditions to caravans regarding where they would be allowed to set up camp. Headmen were also intelligence workers, speaking with locals about the best routes to utilize.138 Also discussed were predicted or expected prices of *hongo* of communities that the caravan would later encounter.

The guide was another role assigned to headmen. Generally, they aided missionaries in planning the most efficient routes and would navigate the caravan when missionaries opted to go off course. For example, headmen discouraged missionaries from using campsites frequented by other caravans as these were breeding grounds for disease and infection. During the rainy season, there was an increase in malaria, and other pest carried diseases, so headmen would advise avoiding areas with still water. Moreover, were there any questions of crocodiles, porters would refuse to cross, so headmen were responsible for finding alternative routes.139 Headmen were invaluable to British missionaries as they worked as a bridge between the missionaries and Africans at large. Headmen were especially crucial when missionaries fell ill, because they then assumed the position of head of the caravan. Though missionaries would postulate themselves as

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137 Letters and Journal Entries of AW Dodgshun, 1877, Box 3, doc 23, CWM Central Africa.
138 Routes utilized changed regularly, depending on the season. There were also conflicts among other communities to consider and routes that may have been blocked or washed away.
139 Beidelman, “The Organization and Maintenance of Caravans”, pp. 603
the top of the caravanning hierarchy, they would have been unable to pilot the caravan without headmen successfully.

Africans who held weaponry possessed a coercive ability that moved them towards the top of the hierarchy. Most missionaries did not wish to arm any of their porters. However, porters refused to travel into the interior unarmed.\footnote{Ibid, 607.} Slaves were often provided firearms by their masters, as they worked as traders and armed forces for the master’s estate. Having possessed weapons in previous expeditions would have furthered enslaved porters’ demand to possess a firearm, as it was not out of the ordinary for a slave to carry a weapon.\footnote{Mohammed Bashir Salau, “Slavery in Kano Emirate of Sokoto Caliphate as Recounted”, found in \textit{African Voices on Slavery and the Slave Trade}, Chapter 8 (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2013) pp. 90-112.} Porters with weapons also had several responsibilities. Missionary caravans utilized the same routes used by heavily armed ivory and slave caravans, so it was crucial to have a body of men to defend the caravan should an attack ensue. Armed porters would also fire off rounds before entering a new territory to demonstrate the might and the size of the caravan. This was a practice learned from slave and ivory caravans.\footnote{Beidelman, “The Organization and Maintenance of Caravans”, pp. 613.}

Cooks and personal servants worked closer with the missionaries than any other African on the caravan.\footnote{With the exception of converts and perhaps headmen.} Cooks were responsible for producing rations for the entire caravan, which could amass to hundreds of people. Servants would carry mail between outposts and settlements, fetch supplies for the missionary they served, and offer a means of communication between missionaries and other Africans within the caravan.
connection to the interior of East Africa benefitted the cooks and servants greatly. Cooks would be familiar with the vegetation and game in the region, allowing them to prepare the rations better. Servants were familiarized with the trade routes throughout the interior and could easily transport correspondence. Servants worked closely with British missionaries, tending their daily needs and travelling independently from the caravan to deliver messages to outposts or other missionaries. Headmen and servants were often the only porters named in missionary journals, indicating their closeness with missionaries. It also emphasized the significance of language in breaking barriers between missionaries and natives. Common language allowed for relationships to form, breaking down prejudices held by missionaries and further contradicting the rhetoric of Reverend Burns’ and his notion of non-Western savagery.

Not surprisingly, African women were a part of caravans. In his memoir, *La vie en Afrique*, Jérôme Becker included both an image and some descriptors of his female African servant, Risiki. Risiki was a present to Becker from his friend Tipo Tip, along with two other slave women, one whom Becker identified as Madenngué. Though the more personal details of his relations with these slave women are unknown, Becker does explicitly discuss his conversations with these women.

I am not going to report the amazing conversations that take place in the course of these intimate meetings… These demoiselles want to know the why and the how of things and ask us the silliest questions about our Western morals… Our joyful and frequent exchanges the dames d’honneur of the chief of Konko, our increasingly intimate relations with the natives, our conversations with the men of our escort, and our studies assisted by the immediate help we had from our personal servants, appointed language teachers, made me amazingly competent in the Swahili dialect.¹⁴⁴

Doubtlessly, these slave women taught Becker much about East Africa in a way that differed largely from his usual encounters with men. The language study offered by these female servants demonstrates how vital these relationships were to the enterprise of caravanning. Victorian conventions, accompanied by the pious nature of missionaries generally, complicates the role of native women in the caravan. Interactions with native women could imply that immoral acts may have been committed by a male missionary. To avoid such accusations or assumptions, be they true or not, native women were simply left undiscussed, except in brevity. Becker’s writings are unique in their explicit mention of native women and the services they performed. Though there is scant documentation of African women being present in missionary caravans beyond Becker’s work, the sheer volume of the caravan industry provides unquestionable evidence that native women were present.

Professional porters carried the heaviest loads and frequented caravan routes (wapagazi). Should there be Nyamwezi free labor porters in the missions’ caravan, they would have fallen into this class of porter. Missionaries and other Europeans traveling into the interior of Africa did not travel light. Dr. Septimus Tristam Pruen provides a list of missionary essentials in his work The Arab and the African. These items included “clothing, shoes, bedding, rifle, shotgun, revolver, kerosene, medicines, and home furnishings, such as 60 pounds of washing soap, 92 pounds of jams, 24 pounds of tinned vegetables, 14 pounds of tinned coffee, 30 pounds of tinned fruit, 24 pounds of tinned meat… tents, camp-beds, chairs, stools, buckets, pots, pans, cups, and saucers, plates, blankets, guns, pistols, boxes of clothing and books, scientific instruments, provisions,
and medicines”.

145 Should a caravan be traveling during the rainy season, these professionalized porters were ever more essential, as items in transport had to be wrapped and divided between crates, producing additional and heavier loads.

Six extra porters were needed if traveling with a woman or a sick person, as they required a hammock. Female missionaries and children were always carried through the interior. Male missionaries were also often carried in hammocks over the more treacherous footing and to avoid ailment.146 The wapagazi had professionalized the trade, aware of the most trafficked trade routes. Missionaries relied heavily on these porters, as livestock typically could not make it past the coastal regions because of the presence of tsetse and the nature of the paths traveled. Missionaries themselves could not transport heavier goods on their own, so strong porters with knowledge of the terrain were highly sought after. These porters were also aware of their impact on the success of the caravan and would often be the first to challenge the authority of missionaries.

Less seasoned or weaker porters were responsible for transporting cloth and beads. These porters were newer to caravanning and learning the trade from the more professionalized porters. These porters may also have been older individuals or even children and adolescents who were recruited to work because of the high demand for porters. This group of porters most likely would have been made up largely of slaves who were hired out by their masters. With the large-scale plantation economy on the coast, Zanzibar, and Pemba, slaves were predominantly used for farming. However, with the

146 Fabian, Out of Our Minds, pp. 59-61.
growing demand for porters, masters would be inclined to utilize slaves as porters during the dry season when planting was not occurring.

Lastly, the “magic men” who sometimes accompanied missionary caravans to ward off evil. Regarding missionary records, witchcraft, or uchawi, was denoted as a threat to the Christian mission. Missionaries viewed uchawi as a religious endeavor rather than seeing it as a means used by East Africans to maintain agency. Resultingly, missionaries did not believe that Christianity and uchawi could coexist. Missionaries thus began to demonize uchawi, even going as far as to perform exorcisms on some of its partakers. Missionary records provide sensationalist accounts of uchawi as a means of underscoring its threat to the spreading of the Christian faith and garner support from London. There were even ordinances in parts of Tanzania and across East Africa banning the practice of witchcraft. Yet, there are accounts of “magic men” being present on caravan routes. African porters valued these magic men. They were a means of warding off evil during the journey to the interior. The presence of these practitioners of magic demonstrates the level of persuasion that porters had over missionaries. Missionaries were fervently opposed to witchcraft, even more so than colonial officials, yet they allowed them to be participants on their caravan expeditions as was demanded by the porters. There is little information offered about the magic men, but their presence alone demonstrates the ability porters had to negotiate their conditions.

Enslaved porters working within missionary caravans were not limited to social mobility through aiding missionaries. To achieve social mobility, porters acted in ways

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that hindered the success of the missionary caravan. Negotiating pay, desertion, rebellion, and theft were standard among enslaved African porters. In committing these acts, porters were providing themselves with social mobility independent from the British missionaries. Desertion offered a way to seek better payment and treatment. Rebellious behavior offered an avenue for negotiation. Theft provided material goods that could improve social standing and conditions. The British missionary caravan did not only provide routes of manumission and social mobility through serving the caravan but by impairing it as well. Though British missionaries worked to establish a strict hierarchy in the caravan, enslaved porters were able to circumvent it by impairing the whole operation.

**Hongo and Pay for Porters**

A classic ethnographic theme that all sources record as one of the significant nuisances that plagued travel to the interior was the exchanging of gifts between caravans and communities. These gifts, also known as *hongo*, were payments made by caravans upon traveling into new territories or cities within a given territory. When elephants were hunted out of many regions by ivory traders, the only profit many communities received were from these *hongo* payments. Missionaries were often subject to pay several *hongo* payments before they would be allowed to cross waterways or leave campsites or depots peacefully. An explicit statement from Capelo and Ivens concerning the payment of *hongo* reads:

> Following the vicious systems in operation throughout Africa, of not selling anything to the European but making him a present of it, they extort from him in turn all his goods and effects, bit by bit, until the unhappy man finds himself under the necessity of refusing
all presents, and thus giving birth to the serious questions affecting the customs and prejudices of the country.\textsuperscript{148}

\textit{Hongo} was typically fulfilled via payments of cloths- American and Indian textiles were highly valuable exotic goods to most territories in East Africa, guns, as well as gun powder.\textsuperscript{149} Depending on the services needed, \textit{hongo} could fluctuate from 35 cloths for a service such as transporting the caravan across a body of water to hundreds of cloths and pounds of gun powder. In return, African communities would give caravans rations, typically consisting of fowl, goat’s milk, and rice to distribute between porters and the missionaries.\textsuperscript{150}

Burial payments were also a required form of \textit{hongo} should a missionary perish within the territory of an African community.\textsuperscript{151} In the journal of AW Dodgshun, the death of a Mr. Waulier is the first entry. Buried by unskilled slave laborers, the missionaries paid these men three cloths for services. On top of this, the chief of the Bembe, who had never met Mr. Waulier, demanded a mourning fee of five clothes.\textsuperscript{152} Furthermore, a burial fee, mourning fee, and \textit{hongo} had to be paid to the chief of the Ukimbu district. Dodgshun discloses the death of Waulier in totality cost 108 cloths, 2 guns, and 40 pounds of gun powder.

\textsuperscript{148} Mittheilungen der Afrikanischen Gesellschaft in Deutschland, no 1, published in Berlin. Translated by Johannes Fabian. 1882, 1:116-117.
\textsuperscript{150} W. Griffith, Box 2, CWM Central Africa “June 16th through July 9th, 1879, Saadani to Chakombe”. School of Oriental and African Studies, London.
\textsuperscript{151} Burials were frequent as many Europeans, both adults and children, perished along the routes- in this account alone, 7 deaths are documented in varying territories.
\textsuperscript{152} The Bembe were a subgroup existing within the territory of Ukimbu.
For missionaries and other Europeans traveling into the interior, these payments were nothing but tolls or a form of tax. They were written about to exemplify African rulers’ deviousness and greed, which aligns with Reverend Burns’ implications that there was no novelty in Orientals, they were simply heathens. Africans used these gifts to buy time and establish obligations. Missionaries regularly complain of headmen and community leaders refusing to meet with the caravan spokesman, stating they will meet with them “the next day”. Frustratingly enough for the missionaries, this could go on for days. However, African leaders were coercing Europeans to stay in their domain for lengthier periods to form an obligation to the host. The longer Europeans were held in a location, the more indebted to the locale they would become for the food and supplies through hongo. What missionaries viewed as an inconvenient delay, Africans saw as a form of contract of allegiance for the food, supplies, and safety provided while missionary caravans stayed within their territory.

British missionaries would not have been able to negotiate hongo with community leaders without the aid of enslaved porters, including headman, who was familiar with languages and customs in the interior. Often, chiefs or leaders would refuse to meet with British missionaries. Missionaries attributed this to “fear of white men”. However, this was likely because interacting with white missionaries was futile without the presence of their porters available to translate.

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153 Reverend Robert Burns, “The Indirect Benefits of the Missionary Enterprise”.
154 Letters and Journal Entries of AW Dodgshun, JB Thomson, and Price, 1877, Box 2 and 3, CWM Central Africa.
155 Ibid.
Porters could negotiate with British missionaries was via their pay. Hiring out porters was a time-consuming task for European missionaries, one that could take several weeks to accomplish. By the later 1880s and through the 1890s, it is reported that some 20,000 porters left for the interior each month. There was a tremendous competition during the dry season to hire porters, and, during the rainy season, the majority of labor was concentrated on farming instead of porterage. The Nyamwezi established settlements dedicated solely to porters in both Zanzibar and Bagamoyo, who professionalized portership. Coastal chiefs and patrons established settlements of their own to make a commission off porters. These settlements lived under a headman and a recruiter. Missionaries would then begin making negotiations about pay and the number of porters needed for a particular journey. Regularly, there were disagreements about the terms of payment. These arguments included discussion of whether they should be paid by the journey (advantageous for hirer) or by the day or month (advantageous for the hired). Since missionaries traditionally did not return to the coast after reaching their mission station, porters were only needed for a one-way trip.

Porters often joined other caravans heading back to the coast but still demanded round trip pay from missionaries. A medical officer for the Church Mission Society, Dr. Septimus Tristam Pruen, describes the items used for hongo payments and rations for porters:

… This article [calico cloth], therefore, he will have to lay in literally by the mile. It is sold in bales of thirty to forty yards each; and five or six of these bales, making a total of one hundred and eighty or two hundred yards, are tightly packed in cord, and then sewn

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156 Europeans labelled these men as recruiters, when in actuality, they were probably slavers; Lyndon Harries, *Swahili Prose Texts* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1965), pp. 180-183.
up in matting, constituting one man’s load. About two yards of this calico is weekly allowance to each porter for the purchase of his food, which is the only thing allowed to him on the march, his wages being paid partly in advance, and partly on his return to Zanzibar.\textsuperscript{157}

Porters initially were paid with money, called posho, which was accepted in the “upcountry” or the coastline north of Zanzibar. However, few communities in the interior accepted payments in money and instead demanded trade goods in return for supplies, this necessitates the switch to hongo.

Slaves hired out as porters received a quarter to half of their earnings and their masters the rest, half of the sum being paid before the trip and the rest on return. Slaves were allowed to keep portions of their earnings and utilize that currency for either additional food, items to utilize for trade goods (perhaps carvings or textile works), or to save and put towards their manumission. Ironically, missionaries may have inadvertently been completing a task they preached they had come to Africa for- manumitting enslaved populations. However, it was the ingenuity of the enslaved through the management of money and the negotiation of wages, that ultimately resulted in manumission, unknowingly missionaries simply presented the opportunity.

**Problems in Route**

Desertion was a significant problem faced by missionaries traveling into the interior. In December of 1877, the London Missionary Society missionary E.C. Hore made a horrendous journey over the central route, passing through the flooded and muddy route between Bagamoyo and Mpwapwa. Porters were pushed to cross dangerous

\textsuperscript{157} Pruen, *The Arab and the African*, pp. 164.
floodwaters and carry heavy loads across challenging terrain. Porters would adamantly refuse to cross water were there were even rumors of crocodiles being in the area. These difficulties prompted desertion and demands for higher pay by the suffering porters. Irritated by the frequency of desertion, missionary Watt hastily wrote: “Alas, how often has the African traveler to write in his journal that his men have bolted; he is only fortunate if they do not take some of his valuables with them”.

Few are the travelers who have penetrated the interior of Africa with a native caravan, which has not significantly been tried, at times, by the insubordination of their porters. All the great Missionary travelers and explorers alike have suffered in this respect. The iron heart of Livingstone was often crushed at critical moments by the abandonment of his followers who fled, leaving him comparatively helpless and thwarting his projects. The late Bishop Hannington, in his last journal, wrote ‘Desertion, treachery, and a few other nightmares and furies hover over our heads in ghastly forms’.

Missionary caravan routes provided the optimum opportunity for enslaved people to escape their slave status on the coast. Porters were given half of their salary upon accepting the agreements drawn up by missionaries. These payments would provide a means for runaways to purchase necessities or negotiate their social status to surrounding communities. This was especially effective for slabs hired out by Muslim masters. Porters

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158 Hore, *Missionary to Tanganyika 1877-1888*, pp. 17-28
159 Watt, *In the Heart of Savagedom*.
that belonged to Muslim masters were often circumcised before traveling into the interior so that they could hunt. Circumcision was only performed on free Muslims as an exemplar of religiosity. Slaves were not circumcised to delineate them from freeborn Muslims. Slaves owned by Muslims that deserted the missionary caravan, having been circumcised alongside possessing items of value, would be able to rid themselves of the stigma of being enslaved and argue that they were freeborn.\textsuperscript{161} Additionally, since caravan routes utilized by British missionaries were also highly trafficked by other caravans, enslaved porters who deserted missionary caravans had opportunities to garner higher profits via joining another caravan. Since missionary caravans used the same routes navigated by ivory and slave caravans, enslaved porters who deserted British missionary caravans could easily join other caravans passing by. There was much movement from caravan to caravan during expeditions to the interior, making it increasingly easy for many slaves to run away and escape bondage with the money and rations they had collected en route or align with other caravans for greater profits.

Competition for labor sources led to opportunities for better pay or better treatment if a porter moved from one caravan to the next. Trade caravans would often wave a sizeable red flag above their outposts or when moving through the interior to signify they were recruiting porters.\textsuperscript{162} Missionary caravans were unique in that they only traveled one direction, which was into the interior. Porters would often join trade caravans to journey back to the coast and increase their pay. In other instances, if porters


\textsuperscript{162} Beidelman, “The Organization and Maintenance of Caravans”, pp.611-612.
felt they were inadequately paid or not fed appropriately, they would desert the missions’ caravan to join another.

Alongside desertion, there were also instances of sabotage along caravan routes. A.W. Dodgshun tells the occurrence of trouble caused by a man named Mirambo near Ujiji. Mirambo, an ally of Seyd b. Salim, former governor of Ujiji, regularly took advantage of missionaries’ “good will” according to Dodgshun. Mirambo was notorious for being polite to missionaries traveling via caravan and was given generous gifts in return. Nevertheless, as the caravan trade became more lucrative and more routes developed, Mirambo developed a different strategy. He apprehended caravans in the town of Uyui after aiding foreigners and directing them towards his town, so they would pay him *hongo*. When missionary caravans would traverse the road to Ujiji, Mirambo and his group of porters, who he later identified as slaves, would apprehend the missions’ caravan and hold several loads from the caravan hostage. Upon Mirambo’s orders and threats of bloodshed, many porters from the missionary caravan would drop their loads and return to the coast without pay.

Mirambo, and presumably many other Africans, used the caravans and their routes as a means of rising socially and economically. In the case of Mirambo, the hospitality that could quickly shift to hostility was a way for him to surpass rivals and surmount political and material clout. His greatest rivals were located in Unyanyembe, some 276 km north of Uyui and home of the Nyamwezi porters. As missionaries traveled west towards Lake Tanganyika, Unyanyembe offered labor the labor of the Nyamwezi.

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163 This good will as labeled by Dodgshun is more likely naivety and fear of combativeness.
Mirambo’s goal was to encourage or coerce foreigners to utilize his slave labor instead, so he could also reap the profit of their labor.

Even with the aid of the Belgians, who, upon hearing of the behavior of Mirambo, sought after soldiers and support from the neighboring territory of Kiessa, Dodgshun and his fellow missionary Mr. Broyon, were unwilling- or unable- to make the ransom payment for the return of the loads taken by Mirambo.\(^\text{164}\) Without their loads, Dodgshun and Broyon were unable to pay the porters who had not already fled and had to utilize their supplies to pay remaining porters. The actions of Mirambo left Dodgshun and Broyon in an awkward position. Unable to pay porters, they were forced to release them of their duties, and unable to pay hongo, they were unable to proceed on their journey to establish a reach the mission site. Regarding the incident, Dodgshun writes:

In England, we should call it an extensive burglary- Mirambo under the extensive favor of the counsel, calls it friendship. I feel it my duty to express my opinion that this dark country should be cleared by some outside power, enough to cause due respect to life and property.

Dr.Kirk chooses to send presents of fine guns and ammunition to this man because as he said in a late letter to Mr. Thomson, ‘he has always considered the best way to civilize and benefit Africa is to raise the standard of the native chief’.\(^\text{165}\)

The writings of Dodgshun demonstrate a couple of themes present in many missionary journals. First, it demonstrates the lack of understanding of African norms and societal structure in East Africa. What Reverend Burns’ and Dodgshun would see as simply heathen, was an act of self-interest to manifest social, political, and material wealth. British missionaries were inadvertently providing means of social mobility in East Africa.

\(^\text{164}\) Letters and Journal Entries of AW Dodgshun, 1877, Box 3, doc 23, CWM Central Africa.

\(^\text{165}\) Ibid.
via caravanning. Second, the encounter with Mirambo further demonstrates the frustration missionaries displayed when facing a delay in travel. Their obsession with timekeeping perpetuated resentment towards Africans when porters and natives caused a delay. These assumptions about African inferiority are concretely demonstrated in discussions of unskilled labor in the missionary caravan. Despite the hierarchy of the caravan and the disdain missionaries held for the natives, porters were able to negotiate their conditions within the caravan.

Theft was a frequent companion of desertion on caravan routes. When porters would flee, they would not do so empty-handed. Most of the goods stolen, missionaries did not find of great value, yet clearly held significance to the porters who were stealing them. Items frequently recorded as stolen were bottles of liquor, cooking fat, and cloth. The alcohol and cooking fat seemed a blatant steal, as alcohol was needed to avoid drinking still water, for its mood-altering abilities, and cooking fat would be utilized to prepare food with and consume. However, the theft of cloth is essential to note. Clothing was an outward symbol of one’s status within a society, and with the proper attire, one could attempt to alter their social standing.

Missionaries utilized cloth in their caravan routes as forms of payment and barter. Both coastal communities and communities in the interior sought after cloth from India, Europe, and the United States. Clothing was an outward demonstration of status, so having expensive or vibrant cloths could offer an outlet for social mobility. S.T. Pruen noted in his writings the demand for cloth, stating, “[cloth] is the standard article of barter- it is the coin, and common coarse calico is the kind of cloth which is everywhere
in demand, whatever the particular fashion of the place may be as to coloured and fancy cloths.”¹⁶⁶

Furthermore, in East Africa, material culture embodied identity. The importance of dressing up to one’s status—be it actual or aspirational—was widely recognized throughout East African society.¹⁶⁷ The fewer and less ornate clothes one wore, the lower was one’s status. Several of the stories contained in Edward Steere’s *Swahili Tales, as Told by the Natives of Zanzibar*, initially published in 1869, have plots that focus on a poor and scorned character who later dresses in the clothes of the elite and then is treated with respect by a sultan.¹⁶⁸ In stealing cloth from the missionary caravans, slaves would be able to make clothing and headdresses adorned by the coastal elites. Like these Swahili tales, the enslaved porters in the caravans would be providing themselves with the opportunity to move up socially through dress.

Ironically, British missionaries were providing routes to manumission and upward social mobility in their hypocritical use of slaves in caravans. By paying enslaved porters, missionaries were providing an income for slaves. Though this payment was split with their master, the additional income could be put towards manumission or material items that could lead to improved social conditions. Theft worked in a similar manner, as slaves who stole from the caravan were now in possession of material wealth they would not have ordinarily had access to. Desertion could provide multiple outcomes for slaves. Slaves who deserted the missionary caravan could either align with other caravans, such

¹⁶⁶ Fair, *Pastimes and Politics*, pp. 61.
¹⁶⁷ Ibid, 61.
¹⁶⁸ Ibid, 60.
as ivory and slave caravans, so they would gain profit from their work in the missionary caravan and the other caravan they participated in. Desertion also allowed slaves to escape into the interior with some form of wealth, whether it be rations, cloth, or some sort of monetary payment from the missionaries. By utilizing slave labor, British missionaries were inadvertently aiding their goal of ending slavery in Africa.

Conclusion

British missionaries traveling through East Africa in the nineteenth century faced many difficulties. Contrary to published missionary accounts, unedited missionary journals unveil the harsh reality of the British missionary experience. Debilitating illness made the voyage into relatively unknown territories a near impossibility. Coupled with this, language barriers and unfamiliarity with local customs would have prevented British missionaries from effectively navigating to the interior. However, with the aid of enslaved porters, missionaries were able to progress with the expeditions and meet strict deadlines. Working as translators, doctors, liaisons, etc., porters provided the skillset that enabled missionaries to navigate the interior and reach established mission sites in the Lake Tanganyika region.

However, enslaved porters were not only aiding British mission caravans. In many cases, porters would go on strike, desert, and steal from caravans. In committing these acts, enslaved porters were creating avenues for social mobility. Striking for better wages generated higher revenue for enslaved porters. Since wages were split between master and slave, unreported higher pay would allow for enslaved people to generate greater revenue. That money could be put towards manumission or material items that could
improve the slave’s condition. Desertion provided an escape from slavery. It also offered
the opportunity for enslaved porters to have access to better working conditions or
additional payment should they have received payment in advance. Theft, which often
accompanied desertion, also provided material wealth for enslaved porters. A frequently
stolen item was cloth, which was used as a visual marker of social status in East Africa.
Enslaved porters could utilize cloth to produce clothing that resembled that of free-born
individuals or wealthier individuals from the coast. Whether it be through aiding British
missionary caravans or hindering them, enslaved porters were able to utilize the caravans
to garner social mobility.
CHAPTER FIVE
CONCLUSION

“When the missionaries arrived, the Africans had the land and the missionaries had the Bible. They taught us how to pray with our eyes closed. When we opened them, they had the land and we had the Bible.”169

The phrase cited above iterates the negative feelings many Africans maintained towards missionaries even after the collapse of colonial rule. They attributed the role of the missions as one that was synonymous with colonization under the guise of benevolence. The author of this quote was correct in their belief that missionaries were cognizant of their role in empire-building. Missionaries carved the way into the interior, and the metropole followed. However, where this quote falters is with the assertion that Africans fell victim to missionaries and the colonization process. The partitioning and colonization of Africa is an undeniable fact. The haplessness of Africans, however, is doubtful.

From informal colonization through the turn of the twentieth century, Africans were finding ways to manipulate and work within the parameters of the colonial project. This thesis looks specifically at how enslaved Africans were able to garner social mobility and, at times, manumission through their work in missionary caravans. In correspondence to the Crown and published works, British Protestant missionaries claimed to be the mainstay of the abolitionist movement. However, the reality of labor

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169 The origin of this quote is contended, some say it was first spoken by Desmond Tutu, a South African cleric, theologian, and anti-apartheid activists. Others attribute the quote to Jomo Kenyatta, Prime Minister and President of Kenya from 1963-1978. Found in Religion versus empire? British Protestant missionaries and overseas expansion, 1700-1914.
shortages outweighed the morality of missionary groups, and ultimately, slaves were utilized in caravan expeditions. Missionaries enforced a strict hierarchy within the caravan, further contradicting their abolitionist message. Incongruously, missionary caravanning offered an outlet for enslaved peoples to alter their social conditions. Via payments that could be put towards manumission, desertion, or theft, enslaved porters could legally or illegally obtain manumission or purchase items that would elevate their social status. Even though missionaries were hypocritically perpetuating slavery and the slave trade, they were inadvertently completing the task they claimed to be working towards—ending slavery. Enslaved peoples were working as agents to change their conditions for the better. Their actions contradict the quote above, by rejecting the idea that colonization happened to Africans, and instead, emphasizing the actions Africans took in spite of colonization while they were interacting within the framework and limitations of their society.

The period between 1877 and 1906 was a turbulent time in East Africa. Initially, the presence of Europeans was sparse and their arrivals were sporadic. Missionaries, alongside explorers, were some of the first Europeans to penetrate the interior, despite the many potential dangers and setbacks they faced. Intentionally or not, these individuals laid the first stepping stone towards the mass colonization efforts of Africa in the 1880s. Writings and sermons from British missionaries indicate that missionaries were conscious of their role in empire staging and building. Their desire to uphold their role in empire-building resulted in a push to the interior by any means necessary to establish depots and
mission sites. Following the Berlin Conference from 1884-1885, the official partitioning of Africa began, and missionaries became more inclined to continue their work in Africa.

Missionaries needed laborers to achieve their goals of reaching the interior of East Africa and establishing mission sites. British patrolling of the East African coast, coupled with the rise in the ivory and slave trades, resulted in a larger concentration of slaves in East Africa despite Britain’s official policies intended to end the slave trade there. A large quantity of these slaves would be used on clove plantations and for agricultural purposes. However, a number of these slaves would also be hired out as porters to generate revenue for their masters. British missionaries’ power and abilities were limited, as they were a minority presence in East Africa. In order to yield labor sources, they conformed to the practices of the coast— one of these practices being the utilization of slaves in their caravans. Despite the hypocritical use of slaves in missionary caravans and the strict enforcement of a hierarchy within the caravan by missionaries, enslaved porters were able to capitalize on their circumstances to improve their social standings.

While this project focuses on the missionary caravans and unintended opportunities for social mobility that they provided, prior scholars of East Africa and slavery typically maintain different focuses. One group of scholars, who view missionaries as the benevolent side of colonization, observing how missionaries worked to provide havens for freed slaves and even purchased their freedom and, as well as examining the shifts in the slave trade during the mid to late nineteenth century. These scholars tend to exclude the interim time between when missionaries first entered East Africa to when mission sites and depots were formally established in latter half of the
1880s. The action of caravanning and working to formally establish sites is typically glanced over. The other group of scholars criticize missionaries and deny the pertinence of the slave trade in East Africa. They argue that the abundance of slaves was an attempt for missionaries to garner support and funding from the metropole. In doing so, these scholars are attempting to promote the idea that sophisticated means of commerce and capitalism were not brought to Africa by Europeans but had previously existed. Though their intentions are good, by undermining the scale and significance of slavery, they deny 1) that other systems of commerce and economic practices are equally as sophisticated to Western forms and 2) many, though not all, works by scholars of slavery exhibit acts of agency displayed by slaves.

This project fills in a gap in the historiography of East Africa and slavery in response to both camps of scholars who have overlooked the missionary caravanning process and denied the scale of slavery in the nineteenth century. To scholars who deny the magnitude of slavery in East Africa, this project works to amend that assertion. Moving forward, it would be of interest for scholars to look at both the African and female perspective of the missions’ caravans. African voices are largely nonexistent in this project, beyond the interpretations of Swahili proverbs and terms. Incorporating African, Arab, and Swahili texts concerning slavery and caravans on the coast would be monumental in supporting or upending this project. Regardless of what those sources would attribute to this particular project, the incorporation of indigenous voices is essential to recreating African history. Concerning women, there are some published works by women missionaries in East Africa; however, most of these works focus solely
on the domestic work and teachings of these women. Uncovering unpublished female works or utilizing a creative methodology to dissect published works would be a significant addition to the study of both missionaries and East Africa. Another missing perspective generally in East African history is the perspective of Catholic missionaries. English-speaking Protestant white male missionaries are the primary focus of most studies, historical or theological, concerning mission work in East Africa. It seems that the language barrier, as most of these Catholic missions, were French, and the recent scholarly trend of focusing on the African experience and pushing past Western commentary, has resulted in a gap in the historiography.

Although the mid to late nineteenth century in East Africa is most remembered for the intense colonization, both political and religious, and economic exploitation of the region, it was also a time that demonstrates many acts of African defiance and agency. These acts of defiance were not limited to acts of violence. They were also not limited to the actions of freeborn or elite Africans. Though it was not an intention of the caravan system utilized by the Europeans, enslaved people were able to alter their conditions within the parameters of colonization. They were not just gifted emancipation by missionaries and Europeans. Instead, by their ingenuity, enslaved porters used the caravan paths as routes to social mobility.
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