ABSTRACT

FRASER AND THE NGONI

A study in the growth of Christianity among the Ngoni of northern Malawi 1878-1933 with special reference to the work of Donald Fraser

by T. J. THOMPSON

The first contacts between M'mbelwa's Ngoni and the Livingstonia Mission took place in 1878, just over twenty years after the Ngoni had finally settled in northern Malawi, following their migration from South Africa, and only three years after the Scottish missionaries had arrived at Cape Maclear, near the southern end of Lake Malawi. The nature of the Ngoni migration had produced a society where raiding and military prowess held a central position, and early contacts with the mission, though not unfriendly, appeared to lend support to the view that the Ngoni had little to gain by espousing Christianity. Nevertheless their society was undergoing fundamental changes, and various external factors were restricting their ability to raid freely.

Though direct interest in Christianity was at first negligible, and the Ngoni were more concerned to achieve an alliance with the mission against the Tonga, the patient work of William Koyi, the Xhosa evangelist, did much to lay the foundations for the later growth of the church. By the second half of the 1890s both school attendance and church membership were increasing steadily. The lack of any ordained minister in ulNgoni between 1895 and 1897 meant that no baptisms took place for more than a year. Following the arrival of Donald Fraser as a missionary to the
Ngoni early in 1897, however, church membership increased rapidly, and by 1914 the Christian community stood at 18,000 – an estimated 15% of the total population of the area.

This thesis examines the growth of the church among M’mbelwa’s Ngoni. In particular it looks at the interaction between traditional Ngoni values and the missionary methods of Donald Fraser, and shows that Fraser’s methods were most successful because, and when, they approximated to those Ngoni values.

Initially the Ngoni, rather than rejecting or accepting the missionary message in toto, used the missionaries to fulfill their traditional religious needs, primarily in connection with rainfall and the agricultural year. Gradually, from the 1890s onwards, and especially after the arrival of Fraser, an Ngoni church grew up, which, while not deviating radically from the Presbyterianism of neighbouring areas where Livingstonia missionaries were working, had a distinct Ngoni character of its own. Among the distinctive features of this church were huge sacramental conventions, and the widespread use of indigenous Christian hymns. While both developments are particularly associated with Fraser, they in fact reflect traditional Ngoni social, religious and musical patterns.

The Ngoni had been the last group in Malawi to come under colonial control, and this process, in 1904, showed the mission acting as intermediaries between the Ngoni and external forces. This was a pattern which had several times previously involved Fraser, notably during the Ziehl case in 1899.

The outbreak of the First World War, however, saw Fraser adopting a more pro-British stance than previously, leading to his temporary unpopularity. Generally speaking, the war had a disruptive effect on
the work of the church among the Ngoni, though it is likely that the slightly greater degree of indigenous control among Ngoni Christians meant that the church in uNgoni suffered less than in some other areas. Nevertheless, the period after the war was one of growing African discontent at the slow rate of progress towards any meaningful process of indigenous control. This was a major factor in the series of secessions by Livingstonia ministers, (including the Ngoni Charles Chinula), in the early 1930s. In spite of the disappointments and uncertainties of the period, however, the inherent strength of Ngoni society had combined with the policies of Fraser to produce a church, which, while subject to many of the restrictions of other Livingstonia areas, may, nevertheless be regarded as genuinely African.
I declare that the accompanying thesis, Fraser and the Ngoni, has been composed by me, and is the result of my own work.

Dated: 24 January 1980
FRASER AND THE NGONI

A STUDY IN THE GROWTH OF CHRISTIANITY

AMONG THE NGONI OF NORTHERN MALAWI

1878 - 1933

WITH SPECIAL REFERENCE TO THE WORK OF DONALD FRASER

by

THOMAS JOHN THOMPSON

Thesis presented for the degree of
Doctor of Philosophy
at the
University of Edinburgh
1980
Ngipha umkami lenowadi

naku bantu benjabulo base Malawi
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ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

The writing of a thesis, (in spite of the declaration of personal authorship included), is never an individual task. It involves the help, stimulation and encouragement of numerous people. This thesis is no exception. To acknowledge individually all those who have helped and encouraged me over the years would be an impossible task. I begin, therefore by thanking collectively, all those in Malawi, Scotland and Ireland, who have given me any assistance with my research. This includes all those friends, who have done no more than express friendly interest in what I was doing - for this has proved as great a stimulus as any to the completion of the work.

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For a long time now I have had a particular interest in the photographic history of the church in the north of Malawi. In this connection I am very grateful to the staffs of both the National Archives of Malawi and, more particularly, the Church of Scotland Offices, Edinburgh, for putting up with my persistent search for old photographs. The reprinting of many of these has been undertaken by the staff of Edinburgh University Library Photographic department, to whom I am also very grateful.

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T. J. T.
### ABBREVIATIONS used in the thesis

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<td>B.C.A.</td>
<td>British Central Africa</td>
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<td>C.B.M.S.</td>
<td>Conference of British Missionary Societies</td>
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<td>C.C.A.P.</td>
<td>Church of Central Africa, Presbyterian</td>
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<td>C.O.</td>
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<td>P.R.G.S.</td>
<td>Proceedings of the Royal Geographical Society</td>
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<td>Public Record Office</td>
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<td>R.C.N.P.N.A.</td>
<td>Representative Committee for Northern Province Native Associations</td>
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<td>S.O.A.S.</td>
<td>School of Oriental and African Studies</td>
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<td>S.V.M.U.</td>
<td>Student Volunteer Missionary Union</td>
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<td>U.F.C.</td>
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<td>U.M.C.A.</td>
<td>Universities' Mission to Central Africa</td>
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GLOSSARY

The following words used in the thesis have been listed alphabetically by initial letter rather than by stem, for the benefit of those not familiar with the languages of Malawi. Those not of chiNgoni origin are marked as follows: chiTumbuka (T), chiChewa (C), kiSwahili (S).

abafo - serfs, domestic slaves
abantu benhloko - prophets, dreamers
abaZansi - the Nguni-speaking core of the Ngoni; those from the south east
akusonyezeka (T/C) - catechumens
amadlozi - ancestral spirits, the ancestors
amasi - curdled milk
antenga-tenga (C) - carriers
askari (S) - African soldiers
bafumbiriri (T) - catechists; (literally) questioners
balalakasi (T) - women elders, deaconesses
Bayete - greeting given to Ngoni paramount
bokristu - Christianity
boma (C) - government station
charichi (T/C) - church
chiNgoni (T) - the Ngoni language
chiTumbuka (T) - the Tumbuka language
chikoti (C) - a whip made from hide
chokoro - marriage to a deceased brother's widow
gogo - (of a village) the village of a deceased chief where his spirit is guarded.

impi - army
inocwala - feast of the first-fruits
indaba - meeting, discussion
induna - councillor, headman
ingoma - an Ngoni dance, (literally a song)
inkosana - little chief
inkosi - chief, lord
inkosikazi - the chief's main wife
inkosi ya makosi - chief of chiefs, paramount
izanusi - seers, prophets
isingoma - songs

kayeyi (T) - a medicine promising immortality
lobola - dowry, cattle transferred in marriage
lorujo - the traditional Ngoni test of guilt or innocence
machila (S) - a hammock, often for carrying Europeans on journeys
machona (T) - lost ones, migrant workers who have never come back
madoda - senior men
manina - senior women
mankwala (T/C) - medicine
masesioni ghacoko (T) - sub-sessions
maulendo (T) - journeys
maungano (T) - meetings, large gatherings
mbirigha (T) - a substitute wife (often the sister of an existing wife)

misasa (T) - grass huts, temporary shelters
mkristu (T) - a Christian
mlomo wenkosi - the mouthpiece (or spokesman) of the chief
Mlungu (C) - God
mtenga-tenga (C) - the system of carrying loads
mwavi (T/C) - the poison ordeal
mzungu (T/C) - a European

ng'anga (T) - a doctor
nlanzi - (as mbirigha), a substitute wife

phemba (T) - medicine taken as a protection against witchcraft
qeda - the paradise fly-catcher, from whose tail feathers the Ngoni paramount's headdress is made

ruga-ruga (S) - mercenary soldiers

session likuru (T) - the main Kirk Session
simemo - a simplified form of the incwala
sumu (T) - songs, hymns
Ukristu (T) - Christianity
ulendo (T) - journey
ulubende - cooked blood
uluvi - (as qeda), paradise flycatcher
umteteleli - spokesman, advocate, interpreter
umZansi - a member of the Nguni-speaking core of the Ngoni
uNgoni - the Ngoni land and people
uTonga - the Tonga land and people.
Route Survey of the Western Side of Lake Nyassa (Northern Portion) by M.Jr. Stewart, C.E.
Livingstone Mission 1879

NORTHERN MALAWI IN 1879
UNGONI AFTER THE FIRST WORLD WAR

(reproduced by permission of the Longman Group)
**INTRODUCTION**

**NGONI ORIGINS, MIGRATION AND SETTLEMENT**

M'mbelwa's Ngoni made their first contacts with the Livingstonia Mission in 1878. By then, they had been settled in Malawi a mere twenty years, following their heroic migration of around two thousand miles and 35 years from South Africa. The nature and the length of the migration combined to make of the Ngoni a group of very diverse composition. This very diversity makes it necessary, before attempting to assess the nature of their relations with the Livingstonia Mission in general, and with Donald Fraser in particular, to attempt to define who the Ngoni were, and what was the nature of their society on the eve of their first contacts with Livingstonia.

This is made all the more necessary since the views of many early European travellers and historians are often both simplistic and inaccurate on the question of Ngoni origins and society. Such early European accounts almost always emphasized two facts about the Ngoni - that they were of Zulu origin, and that they were 'bloodthirsty savages ...... utterly regardless of life'. Such views rapidly became

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1. Throughout this thesis M'mbelwa will be spelt thus. The earliest missionary spelling was Mambelwa, (Robert Laws, 1 November 1877, Notebook for 1877, Laws Papers, Edinburgh University Library. Other early missionary spellings were Mbelwa and Mombelwa (Kaning'ina Journal, entries for Dec. 1878, National Library of Scotland Ms.7910. Both these soon became corrupted to Membera, which remained the standard spelling until at least the 1930s, when the form Membera began to be preferred. More recently most historians have preferred the simplified form Mbelwa, which has also been used by some Ngoni. However, the longer form M'mbelwa is here used as the spelling preferred by both the present paramount chief of the northern Ngoni and his immediate predecessor. Linguistically the name appears to mean 'the one who is buried'.

commonplace. Donald Fraser, though one of the most pro-Ngoni of the Livingstonia missionaries, described them as 'a horde of wild savages', and almost all European writers up to the 1950s, (and occasionally even beyond), assumed that they were of Zulu extraction.

In making such statements, early writers were, in effect, attempting to define both Ngoni origins, and the nature of their society. The Ngoni themselves, and most modern historians, have painted a somewhat different picture - seeing Ngoni origins as Swazi or Ndwandwe, and attempting to set the undoubted violence of their migration and settlement into the context of the harrowing yet dynamic process now known as the Mfecane.

Even among modern historians, however, there is some disagreement on the precise nature of the Ngoni impact on Central African society, some, like Omer-Cooper, arguing that it was 'a terrible disaster for the peoples of East Central Africa', others like Roland Oliver describing it was 'a kind of inoculation against what was to follow'.

Such disagreements make it prudent to re-examine briefly the questions of Ngoni origins and society in an attempt to set their first contacts with the Livingstonia Mission into a wider context than that previously provided by early missionary sources, while at the same time trying to reconcile the views of Ngoni historians themselves with those who see their impact as essentially destructive.

6. Ibid., p.83.
Ngoni Origins

The precise origins of the Ngoni in South Africa in the early
years of the nineteenth century are somewhat difficult to pin down.
In addition to the Zulu origin assumed by many early writers, (really
an attempt to place the Ngoni geographically rather than a precise
tribal definition), Swazi, Ndawande, and even Mfengu origins have also
been suggested.

Two separate problems are really involved; the clan to which
Zwangendaba, first leader of the Ngoni, belonged, and the tribal and
clan mixture of the group with which he started his migration. The
failure to appreciate the separate nature of these problems has some-
times led to confusion in past attempts to unravel Ngoni origins.

Several precise theories about the area of origin of Zwangendaba
and his immediate followers have been put forward. William Koyi, the
longest serving of the Lovedale evangelists, who joined the Livingstonia
Mission in 1876, described the Ngoni in 1883 as 'undoubtedly Kafir ....
driven away from their own country by their inveterate enemy the Zulus';
and a few years later Elmslie quoted Koyi as believing that the Ngoni
were 'related to the Abambo - a tribe of Fingoes [Mfengu] far south'.
This theory is not altogether impossible, for, as the *Oxford History of South
Africa* points out

One outstanding fact is the enormous area over which
Ngoni people dispersed within thirty-five years.
People with the same clan, praise or family names
scattered from Natal, reaching the Fish river in the

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8. The Free Church of Scotland Monthly, August 1883, p.241. In the
period 1880-1900 the official magazine of the Free Church changed
its name several times, sometimes being known as the Monthly
Record, sometimes the Monthly, and sometimes as the Monthly and
Missionary Record. In footnotes it will be referred to as F.C.S.M.
south and Lake Victoria in the north. The similarity in the names of the refugees from Natal who settled on the Eastern Cape frontier in 1835, and of the Ngoni of Malawi and Tanzania is conspicuous; Nguni (or Ngoni) is a praise name still used by a lineage in the Tyhume valley; Jele, the clan name of the Ngoni leader Zwangendaba, is also the praise (in the form of Jili) of the famous Jabavu family, long linked with Fort Hare; and the names Mzimba and Mbeya, townships in Malawi and Tanzania in the areas once dominated by the Ngoni, are familiar family names on the Tyhume.

While this quotation says little about the area of origin of the Ngoni, it does, in fact, throw light on one of the major problems in tracing that origin: the fact that widespread movement of population has blurred the original areas of settlement of many of the clans involved. It is nevertheless possible that relatives of Zwangendaba and his people did move south at much the same time that he was beginning his migration to the north. Elmslie, in a little-quoted introduction to his 1891 Introductory Grammar of the Ngoni (Zulu) Language suggests that the Ngoni originated at the confluence of the Tugela and Mpisi rivers, and that their original tribal name was Hlongwa. Such a suggestion if fascinating, and not altogether impossible. In the first place Laws mentions that an old Ngoni woman specified the Tugela as the area from which she had come, secondly Chibambo says that the Tugela is one of the rivers mentioned by the Ngoni in the traditions about their origins, and thirdly Bryant, (though suggesting a quite distinct origin for the Ngoni), confirms that the Hlongwa lived at precisely the spot mentioned by Elmslie. Perhaps most fascinating of all, is the fact that in Bryant's

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genealogy of the abakwa Shinga, a small group closely related to the Hlongwa and originally living alongside them near the Tugela river, the names Magadlela, and his son Jele appear. Now Magadlela, (a slight variant of the same name), appears as Zwangendaba's great-grandfather in the genealogies of both Chibambo and Nhlane, and Jele, (more usually spelt Jere), is, of course the clan name of Zwangendaba's descendants.

Nevertheless there are difficulties with this theory. The first involves the source of Elmslie's information. If it was from Ngoni informants then it is absolutely crucial: if, on the other hand, (as a footnote seems to indicate), it was from an American missionary in Natal, then its value is much more limited. Secondly Elmslie himself does not mention this theory again in any of his later work, including Among the Wild Ngoni - a strong indication that he may later have regarded it as inaccurate. Thirdly, the Nhlane tradition quoted by Margaret Read, while including the name Magadlela, remembers him as being an induna of Ndwandwe the grandfather of Zwide - thus indicating an origin much farther to the north.

The question remains, 'How much further to the north?'. Some authorities would suggest as far as Swaziland. According to Margaret Read many of the Ngoni claim their origin as Swazi, (though this is not necessarily the same thing as saying that Zwangendaba was from Swaziland). Chibambo also claims that very many of the Ngoni came from Swaziland, and certainly several Ngoni clan names appear to be Swazi.

14. Elmslie, Grammar, p.VIII.
15. Read, Ngoni, p.52.
16. Ibid., p.5.
In addition, *amadwazi* was an early Ndebele name for Zwangendaba's Ngoni.  

On the other hand the term Swaziland, as it is used today, had no real meaning at the time of Zwangendaba's migration. Margaret Read points this out in commenting that most Ngoni regarded themselves as people of Swazi stock. In addition, a close reading of Chibambo's use of the chiTumbuka term *uSwazi* indicates that he was referring, not to the modern Swaziland, but to the area under the control of Zwide.

It is likely that Chibambo's use of the term *uSwazi* is meant to emphasize that the Ngoni were a quite distinct people from the Zulu, rather than to suggest that they originated north of the Tongolo river.

Most modern writers on the Ngoni follow Bryant in putting their place of origin somewhere in the region of the kingdom of Mdawande; defined by Nurse as 'the segment of Zululand to the north and east of the Black Mfolozi River, excluding, apparently, the part to the south of Lake St. Lucia but extending vaguely northwards across the Mankatini Flats east of the Ubombo Mountains to take in part, and probably all, of the Ntaba and Tembe country included in what is now "Tongaland".

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18. Read, Ngoni, p.5. Professor Read also emphasized in a recent personal talk with the author (16/1/1979) that Gomani's Ngoni put much more emphasis on their Swazi origin than did M'mbelwa's Ngoni.
Bryant, in fact, is quite specific, claiming that Zwangendaba was a member of the Jele or Gumbi clanlet, an off-shoot of the emaNzwangeni clan, who lived on the Hluhluwe river, just west of Lake St. Lucia.\(^23\) Though part of his argument is apparently based on the presence of the Ngoni isibongo Jele, and some Ngoni historians consider that the adoption of this name postdated the beginning of the migration, Bryant's theory takes particular strength from the fact that it places Zwangendaba in close proximity to Zwide, whose headquarters were a few miles to the west.\(^24\) The connection between Zwide and Zwangendaba is one of the very few traditions on which almost all historians of the Ngoni are agreed. Even Elmslie, while positing a different area of origin for Zwangendaba and his followers, accepts the connection with Zwide. It would thus seem logical, in the absence of any strong contradictory evidence, to place Zwangendaba and his immediate following in the area of the Hluhluwe river, just west of Lake St. Lucia, in the period from 1815 onwards.

What then of the other theories, which attempt to argue an Ngoni homeland north of the Pongolo, or south of Tugela? Are they to be thrown out entirely, or do they contain part of the explanation of Ngoni origins? Strange as it may seem, it is in the very confusion of possible origins that the explanation lies.

One major difficulty is immediately removed if we are prepared to abandon what may be termed 'the wallpaper theory'; i.e. the assumption that if the different layers of Ngoni assimilations are stripped away we will eventually arrive back at a single 'pure' Ngoni strain. This in turn is based on the implicit but erroneous assumption that the Ngoni

\(^23\) Bryant, *Olden Times*, p.458.
migration was started by Shaka. In fact, Shaka did not produce the 
Mfecane - the Mfecane produced Shaka, and had already begun before he 
became prominent.

From the point of view of Ngoni origins one important factor was 
the large number of pre-Shakan clashes which occurred in the area 
between the Pongolo and Mkomazi rivers. Rapid and considerable 
population movement was both a cause and a result of such clashes, one 
of the first of which, in the period between 1815 and 1820 involved 
Zwide and Sobhuza, the respective leaders of the Ndawande, and what may 
be called the proto-Swazi. Another was that between the Ndawande and 
the Mtewa, as a result of which Dingiswayo was put to death by Zwide.²⁵

From about 1816 onwards Shaka himself became increasingly involved, 
attacking groups like the Elangeni, the Butelezi, the Qwabe and the 
Mtewa.²⁶ One result of such clashes was that both as captives and 
refugees many groups began accumulating around Zwide. These newcomers 
were incorporated into his military system, and divided among his 
indunas, one of whom was Zwangendaba.

Thus in the years 1815 to 1818, before any clash between Zwide 
and Shaka at all,²⁷ Zwide's indunas, including Zwangendaba, and possibly 
Soshangane and Nxaba,²⁸ were building up a heterogeneous following drawn 
from many clans to the north, south and west of them. It is even 
possible that the genuinely Swazi elements in Zwangendaba's following 
were assimilated in this way, prior to migration, for Swazi warriors

²⁵. Omer-Cooper, Aftermath, pp.29-32.
²⁶. A. T. Bryant, A History of the Zulu and Neighbouring Tribes, Cape 
1966, p.53.
²⁷. Shaka is said to have taken no part in the Ndawande-Mtewa battle 
in 1817 or early 1818 in which Dingiswayo was killed. See, e.g. 
Omer-Cooper, Aftermath, p.32.
²⁸. Chibambo, 'Makani', p.54.
fought in Zwide's *imis* during the 1819 campaign against Shaka, and Zwangendaba may not even have passed through Swaziland on his way north. Chibambo seems to indicate that at least some of the Swazi elements were incorporated prior to migration when he points out that some of Zwangendaba's group had not at first been under Zwide, but had joined him because of Shaka's cruelty. Amongst this group he includes the Swazi clans Nkosi, Nkambule, Sibande and Cheche. This interpretation is also accepted by Barnes.

It may be said then, that the group led by Zwangendaba, was, on the eve of migration, of very mixed origin - mainly Ndumbwe, but containing Qwabe, Ntungwa, Swazi and other elements. Its composition was probably of very recent creation, perhaps many of the constituent parts having become associated with Zwide and his followers only within the previous five to seven years. Thus it was not the migration alone which produced the heterogeneous content of Ngoni society, and it may even be said in the light of this, that the term 'Ngoni culture' refers not so much to an inherited and unified system of behaviour, as to an evolved and pragmatic response, not only to the changing circumstances of migration, but, also to the diverse composition of the original group.

The Ngoni Migration

The immediate cause of Zwangendaba's migration was the Ndumbwe defeat by Shaka at the battle of the Mhlatuze river in 1819. The

An Ngoni Warrior

a member of one of several groups encountered by Captain Owen near Delagoa Bay in 1822, and including Zwangendaba's Ngoni.
process should be seen, however, not simply as a consequence of
military defeat alone, but as part of the larger process of rapid
population growth, shortage of land, and famine which was affecting
the whole area at the time.

Following the Ndwandwe defeat Zwide fled north, and it might
seem logical to suppose that the rest of his followers, including
Soshangane and Zwangendaba did likewise. As with so much of the early
history of the Ngoni, however, the authorities disagree slightly-
suggesting dates varying from 1819 to 1825.33

Some commentators see Zwangendaba's migration as a headlong
flight.34 Ngoni sources would prefer to regard it as an ordered with¬
drawal, and while this may well be an exaggerated attempt to add dignity
to what was probably a very undignified process, it probably contains
an element of truth. In the period immediately after the Ndwandwe
defeat at the Milatuze, Shaka was busy further to the west, in 1820
defeating the Tembu and Cunu clans on the Buffalo river.35 This may
have given Zwangendaba a brief respite to gather his followers before
heading north. At any rate the move north cannot have been later than
1822, when Zwangendaba and his followers were encountered by members of
Captain Owen's expedition in the area of Delagoa Bay.36 Owen's book
describing this encounter can hardly have been known by either Cullen
Young or Chibambo, both of whom favour a slightly later date for the

33. Omer-Cooper suggests 1819, Rangeley and the Oxford History 1821,
Lancaster and Winterbottom 1823, and Chibambo and Cullen Young 1825.
34. See, for example, Bryant's reference that Zwangendaba, Zwide and
Soshangane 'scurried headlong out of their homeland'. Bryant,
Olden Times, p.459.
35. Morris, Washing, p.64.
36. W. F. W. Owen, Narrative of Voyages to Explore the Shores of
beginning of the migration. Since Owen talks of the Hollontontes, (the local name for the followers of Soshangane and Zwangendaba), carrying on trade with the Portuguese, it would seem that they had been resident in the area for some time prior to September 1822, when he first makes reference to them.\textsuperscript{37} It would be reasonable, therefore to date the beginning of Zwangendaba's migration at around 1820 or 1821 - after Shaka's immediate attempt to track down Zwide in 1819, but before he again turned his attention to the Ndwandwe area.

The comparative order in which the different Ndwandwe groups fled north is also a matter of dispute. Barnes, probably following Chibambo, states that Zwangendaba found both Soshangane and Nxaba already at Delagoa Bay. Bryant feels that Soshangane and Zwangendaba fled at the same time, and that Nxaba came a year or two later, passing through Swaziland, where, according to Nurse, he joined up with Ngwane Maseko. Rangeley claims that Nxaba was sent by Shaka, rather than fleeing from him.\textsuperscript{38} In the midst of such disagreement no definitive conclusion can be reached, but it is likely that Soshangane and Zwangendaba, (given their close connection in the period immediately prior to migration, and the fact that they were found in the same area by Owen in 1822), migrated around the same time, and that Nxaba, (not mentioned by Owen), came a little later.

Given the fact that they ended up as comparative neighbours in Malawi, the relationship between the Jere and Maseko Ngoni has come in for a good deal of attention. The fullest summary of the different views

\textsuperscript{37} Ibid.
on the matter is to be found in Barnes.\textsuperscript{39} According to his summary there would appear to be three main views on the relationship of the two Ngoni groups. The first, held by Murray, Young, Hatchell, Poole and Bruwer, is that they started off together and only split after crossing the Zambesi. The second, among whose advocates are Laws, Johnston, Soga, Lancaster and Rangeley, is that they started together but split before reaching the Zambesi. The third view, propounded by Elmslie, Read, Chibambo and Winterbottom, and supported by most recent writers on the Ngoni, is that the migrations were, from the beginning, completely separate.

While this last view may be accepted as the most accurate of the three in terms of patterns of migration, it does not do full justice to the undoubted similarities of culture, language and even clan names between the two main groups of Ngoni in present-day Malawi. It is, of course, true that certain similarities are to be expected—given that both groups migrated from the same general area—the Maseko from north of the Pongolo and the Jere from south of the same river. Yet the similarities sometimes go beyond the general cultural affinity which might be expected. Margaret Read, researching among both groups in the 1930s, found, for example, several war songs common to both, 'which', she concluded, 'therefore point to a common source in the south.'\textsuperscript{40}

At least two explanations could be posited which would reconcile both the distinct identity and the cultural affinity of the two groups. The first is that some of the Swazi warriors fighting in Zwide's impi

\textsuperscript{39} Barnes, \textit{Politics}, p.17.
\textsuperscript{40} Margaret Read, 'Songs of the Ngoni People', in \textit{Bantu Studies}, Vol.XI, No. 1, 1937, p.29.
may have fled back across the Pongolo immediately after the battle of the Mhlathuze, and rejoined the Ngwane group before later migrating with them. The second is that the two clans may have had a common ancestry a few generations previously. According to Bryant, a clan from inland of Delagoa Bay, the emalangeni migrated southwards along the eastern side of the Lubombo mountains around 1750. After settling at the southern end of the mountain range for some time, parts of the group moved on again around 1770. One section, the Ngwane, turned westwards along the northern bank of the Pongolo; the other, the Ndwandwe moved further south into the area between the Pongolo and the Hluhlwe rivers. Such an event would help to explain the many similarities between the two groups, (for their fission had taken place only fifty years before the northward Ngoni migrations), while in no way contradicting their separate identity and migration.

At any rate, having reached the Mkomati river, north of Delagoa Bay, Zwangendaba settled for several years and was probably joined by fleeing remnants of the Ndwandwe, following their final crushing defeat by Shaka in 1826. By this time over-population, one of the underlying causes of the original migrations, was beginning to make itself felt again. Not only were Soshangane, Zwangendaba, Ngwane Maseko and Nxaba carrying-on an uneasy co-existence in the area around Delagoa Bay, but Mzilikazi, leader of the Ndebele, as well as the fleeing Ndwandwe remnants, were also moving into the area.

Armed clashes were only a matter of time, and when they came they

42. Mkomati (or 'Mkomasi') is one of several rivers remembered in Ngoni traditions. See Chibambo, 'Makani', p.60, My Ngoni, pp.17-18.
43. Omer-Cooper, Aftermath, p.64.
produced a second wave of migration. Again the exact sequence of these clashes is not entirely clear, but it seems that Zwangendaba, who for some time may have allied himself with Soshangane in the area between the Mkomati and the Limpopo, eventually clashed, not only with his ally, but also with Nxaba and Makilikazi. He moved off north-west into Zimbabwe, and there found greater military success against the declining Shona. Nxaba also entered the area, after being defeated by Soshangane, and once again he and Zwangendaba clashed, and Zwangendaba moved further north, on the way defeating and killing the last of the Rozwi emperors.

It is ironic to consider that one of the proofs rightly cited for Zwangendaba's claim to greatness is that he successfully held together his followers in a migration of two thousand miles stretching over nearly thirty years; and yet the length of the migration, in both time and distance is one indication of the comparative military weakness of the group he led, for it was defeat, as much as intent which pushed them further and further north - at least until after they had crossed the Zambezi.

The crossing of the Zambezi by Zwangendaba's Ngoni is one of the few events in their early history which can be dated with any precision, since Ngoni tradition records quite clearly not only that it occurred during an eclipse of the sun, but that it took place during the month of Chiganyane - the last month before the rains begin around the end of November. Though many traditions about the crossing are remembered both in story and in song, and some of them are clearly apocryphal,
(e.g. that Zwangendaba struck the water with his wand, the waters divided and the people crossed on dry land), the tradition of the eclipse would seem to be based firmly on fact. An eclipse of the sun did take place in the area on 19 November 1835, allowing a precise dating of the Ngoni crossing.48

This ability to date the event is not without its importance, for the crossing was quite literally a watershed in Ngoni history. It marks the point at which they cut their links with the south, and became a significant influence in Central African history. In addition, the accurate dating of this pivotal event enables more accurate assessments to be made of other important dates in Ngoni history, both before and after the crossing.49

The crossing also helped to change significantly the balance of Ngoni society. Some of the group may have remained on the south side of the river, many of the Mozambiquan Thonga were massacred around 1840, on suspicion of having caused an illness of Zwangendaba's, and the period after the crossing saw the accumulation of large numbers of Senga, Chewa and Tumbuka captives.50 The result was that the Zansi-Ngoni51 found themselves both numerically and culturally more isolated within their own society. It is likely that one result of this may have been to make them more rather than less aware of their own distinctive culture and traditions.

48. Elmslie, although he was aware of the eclipse tradition, obviously was not familiar with the 'Chinganyane' tradition, and dated the crossing as June 1825, during an earlier eclipse. W. A. Elmslie, Among the Wild Ngoni, London, 1901, p.19.

49. For example, the tradition that Mtuto (Mpezeni) was carried across the Zambezi on his mother's back. E. H. Lane Poole, Native Tribes of the Eastern Province of Northern Rhodesia, Lusaka, 1949, p.5.


51. The term Zansi-Ngoni will be used throughout the thesis to indicate the original Nguni-speaking core of the Ngoni. It is based on the Ngoni term for this group, abaZansi, 'those from the south-east'. See Read Ngoni, p.4.
The ten years after the crossing of the Zambesi saw the Ngoni moving north along roughly the Luangwa-lake Malawi watershed, (the present boundary between Zambia and Malawi), before reaching the Ufipa area of the southern Tanzania, in search, according to tradition, of a superior breed of red cattle found there. Here at Mapupo, some time between 1845 and 1848, Zwangendaba died. Over the next few years a process of fragmentation took place by which the original Ngoni group split into four or five major sections. This fragmentation was caused partly by a dispute over Zwangendaba's successor, and partly by the natural tendency of Ngoni society to segment, and eventually fragment. The process should not be seen either as unnatural, or as unfortunate. The surprising thing is not that Zwangendaba's Ngoni eventually split, but that they remained together for so long. That they stayed together is a tribute to the personality of Zwangendaba himself; that they eventually split, and yet retained their distinctive Ngoni identity is an indication of the ability of their developing culture to maintain a balance between change and continuity.

The Succession Dispute, and the Settlement of M'mbelwa in Malawi

As Barnes has pointed out, the tendency of a state such as that of Zwangendaba's Ngoni to fragment, was greatest at the time of the chief's death. In the case of Zwangendaba this tendency was made all the more likely by the complicated marital arrangements brought about

52. See Barnes, Politics, pp.57-61. He has used the word 'fission' rather than 'fragmentation'.
53. Ibid., p.19.
partly by the nature of the migration itself, but mainly by an incident on the journey north, when, as a result of an accusation of witchcraft Zwangendaba had apparently wiped out part of the segment of his inkosikazi (great wife), from which his heir would naturally have come. This created confusion as to who then was his inkosikazi, and from which house the heir should eventually be chosen. The fullest account of the dispute is given in Barnes.\(^{54}\)

Chibambo's version,\(^{55}\) which, for the sake of clarity will be followed here, is as follows: Zwangendaba's inkosikazi was Lompetu, the daughter of Zwide, but as she was barren her younger sister Soseya became her co-wife, or seed-bearer (chíNgoni - nlanzi; chíTumbuka - mbiriche). In due course Soseya bore a son, Ntuto, later known as Mpezeni. Just before the birth Zwangendaba was sent some beer from Emveyeyeni, the house of Lompetu. A hair was found in the beer, and Zwangendaba, fearing witchcraft, ordered the whole house to be put to death. He then installed Munene Nzima as his inkosikazi, and she eventually gave birth to Mhlahlo, later known as M'mbelwa. Meanwhile Gwaza Jere, the leading induna in the Elangeni house ofHLachwayo, Zwangendaba's father, took and hid Soseya, and later revealed both her and her child to Zwangendaba. Zwangendaba accepted the mother and child, but, according to Chibambo, left her in Elangeni, the village of his father Hlachwayo,

kurongora kuti wakawura kukhumba kumunweregeraso Ntuto ku ufumu, chifukwa ufumukazi sono ukaba pa Munene nyina wa Mwambera.\(^{56}\)

54. Ibid., pp.15-19.
56. Ibid., 'Makani', p.65.
to show that he did not want Ntuto to be restored to the chieftainship, because [literally] the queenship was now with Munene the mother of M'mbelwa.57

With Zwangendaba's death the various versions of this dispute became of extreme importance, for since, traditionally, there could only be one inkosisi to whom the 'bayete', or royal salute, could be given, it was important to each of the contending parties to put forward a version of the dispute which justified their own claim to the chieftainship. Thus while the supporters of Mpezeni stress that he and his mother were reconciled to Zwangendaba, M'mbelwa's supporters point out that they were kept in the gogo village of Emveleyeni from which the new chief could not come.58 Oral tradition, no less than written history, is concerned with interpretation as well as with fact.

There are many different versions of the struggle for succession. Omer-Cooper and Rangeley, among others, say that Zwangendaba had named M'mbelwa as his successor; Elmslie and Tew say he nominated Mtawalo, another of his sons; Chibambo that Ngodoyi, the son of his brother Ntabeni, was his choice; Lancaster claims that he chose Mpezeni.59 These accounts, in the form in which they are now presented, are little more than attempts to justify the claims of the various disputants. The succession dispute was a symptom, rather than a cause of the fragmentation of the state which now took place.

57. My translation of above. Stuart's translation omits the last clause.
Ngodoyi, Ntabeni's son, together with his chief induna Njenje, moved off north. (Ntabeni died soon after his brother Zwangendaba).

A second group under the induna Zulu Cama broke away and moved off down the eastern side of Lake Malawi, fighting off an attempt by the M'mbelwa group to bring them back and eventually joining up with Maseko's Ngoni in the Songea district of Tanzania. A third group made up of the followers of Mpezeni and Mpherembe broke away and moved for a time into eastern Zambia. Here they clashed with the Lungu, the Bisa and the Bemba in the 1850s, before Mpezeni moved on again, finally settling in the Chipata area of eastern Zambia. Mpherembe remained in north-east Zambia until around 1870, when he was expelled from the area by the Bemba chief Chitapankwa following a battle at Chipekeni. He then moved eastwards and rejoined M'mbelwa's group, who, following the final fragmentation of the state some time around 1850, had moved south into the Mzimba district of Malawi, where they are still found to-day.

Within that group the question of the chieftainship was not finally decided until around 1855, for M'mbelwa, (probably born around 1840 at Mabiri, not far from the present-day headquarters of inkosi Mzukuzuku), was still a boy when the fragmentation took place. When M'mbelwa was finally thought to have come of age he was addressed with the royal greeting of 'Bayete' and given the plume of the paradise flycatcher (chíngoni gedé: isiZulu: uluví), one of the Ngoni symbols of chieftaincy, which only the paramount may wear. This installation took place at Ng'onga, in the Henga valley, and from there, according

60. Omer-Cooper, Aftermath, pp.74-79.
to Cullen Young, the Ngoni settled at the confluence of the Rukuru, Kasitu and Ruzi rivers for a few years,\(^6\) before moving on to the slopes of Choma mountain, not far from present-day Mzuzu. Although the headquarters of the Ngoni paramount was to shift several times again, (first to near Njuyu mountain, and eventually to its present site of Edingeni, a few miles from the Zambian border), with the settlement at Choma, on the edge of modern Mzimba district, the long migration of the M'belwa branch of Zwangendaba's Ngoni may be said to have come to an end.

The period of migration had lasted about thirty-five years, during which time many changes had taken place both in the composition and the culture of the total Ngoni group. The abaZansi were now in a small minority. Many in the newly assimilated groups such as the Thonga and Senga had taken over important functions within the state, such as doctors and war leaders. Two such men who became particularly well-known to the early Scottish missionaries were the Thonga induna Ng'onomo Makamu and the Senga ng'anga Kalengo Tembo, (father of the first two Ngoni converts). Many Ngoni customs had been modified or destroyed by this contact; circumcision is said to have died out some time around the late 1830s, during the Ngoni settlement at M'koko among the Senga;\(^6\) the traditional Ngoni test for innocence or guilt, the lorujo\(^6\) was replaced by the more unpleasant mwavi poison ordeal of the Thonga; by the period of the settlement in Malawi the important incwala ceremony, at least among M'belwa's group, was on the point of extinction.\(^6\)

\(^6\) i.e. near Njakwa Gorge, just east of the present-day town of Rumphi.

\(^6\) T. Cullen Young, Notes on the History of the Tumbuka-Kamanga Peoples, London, 1932, p.112.

\(^6\) Ibid., p.148. This reference occurs in a contributed chapter, probably by Simon Nhlane.

\(^6\) See M. Read, Ngoni, p.22.
Yet in many ways the state had been strengthened, rather than weakened by these changes. The heterogeneous group which had started the migration now regarded themselves as the aristocracy of the state - the abaZansi. Their very minority almost certainly heightened their awareness of their own identity. This strong cultural awareness was imparted to their children, whether by Zansi mothers or not, while the assimilation of large numbers of abafo (serfs) en route - taking them as it did away from their homes and placing them under Zansi-Ngoni lords, gave them little choice but to adopt an Ngoni identity, to some extent at least. The fragmentation of the state, following Zwangendaba's death, far from being a disaster, left each new group of a more manageable size for the difficult and gradual task of adapting to a settled way of life after so long on the move. Such an adjustment was not going to be easy, and was made more difficult by new contacts with groups like the Swahili Arabs, and, later, the Europeans; but, it may be argued, the hard lessons of the march from the south had at the same time tempered the steel of Ngoni identity and given it a real, if reluctant flexibility. Nevertheless, the Ngoni willingness to change was not a primary or obvious characteristic - especially to the tribes of northern Malawi with whom they now came into permanent, and often painful contact.

The Ngoni and Local Tribes

The Ngoni interaction with the tribes among whom they finally settled, notably the Tumbuka and the Tonga, is open to various interpretations. Basically there are three sources for accounts of these relations. The first is the indigenous tribes among whom the
Ngoni settled, the second is the Ngoni themselves, and the third is the occasional European traveller, such as Livingstone. Early Livingstonia missionary accounts also throw some light on Ngoni-Tumbuka and Ngoni-Tonga relations in the period before missionary intrusion into the area.

Naturally these accounts differ considerably according to the viewpoint of those concerned. Local tribes, for example, tended to paint a very black picture of the effects of the Ngoni incursion into the area. Saulos Nyirenda, for example, in an article on the history of the Tumbuka, claimed that 'the Ngoni have come and spoiled this land.' He claimed that before the coming of the Ngoni there was a time of peace, when the Tumbuka chief Chikulamayembe ruled the whole area between Karonga in the north and the Chewa country in the south, including the lakeshore area of uTonga. The whole tone of Nyirenda's article is one of resentment at the trouble the Ngoni caused, and is sometimes reflected even in the form of chifumbuka which he uses. He refers to the Ngoni, for example, as 'vyaZowa' - 'those cattle-stealers'. Similar attitudes are not unknown amongst the Tumbuka, even to-day.

The Ngoni themselves naturally saw things somewhat differently, tending to stress the values which they felt improved the society into which they had come. Chibambo, for example, in a specific attempt to counter Tumbuka and Tonga claims that the Ngoni accomplished no good, argued that not only did the coming of the Ngoni prepare the way for the coming of Christianity, but that

67. Ibid., p.46.
The Ngoni also showed these people better ways of government and laws and discipline. They were taught to live together and to show mutual help in face of dangers threatening the life of the village. They learnt to obey their chiefs and headmen and their parents. Ultimately they found that there was protection in building large villages.

European travellers, too, looked at the situation from their own point of view, and while tending to condemn the effects of Ngoni raiding, often pointed out the advantage to be gained from an English alliance with a strong military state. Livingstone, for example, commenting on the possibility of stamping out the slave trade by placing a small steamer on Lake Malawi, continued:

An influence would be exerted over an enormous area of the country, for the Mazitu about the north end of the lake will not allow slave traders to pass round that way through their country. They would be most efficient allies to the English, and might themselves be benefitted by more intercourse.

E. D. Young, writing in 1877 had a similar point to make. After speaking of the Ngoni as 'this desperate horde, whose terror is known through a vast portion of Africa', he went on to comment, 'If we once get on friendly terms with the Mazitu there is no end to the influence it may have on future events for Central Africa'.

Any attempt to reach an objective conclusion on the impact of the Ngoni on surrounding tribes must, therefore, keep in mind the obvious

68. cont'd. with its ancestor cult was superior to that of local tribes, and that this, together with their centralised society, helped to prepare the way for Christianity.

69. Chibambo, My Ngoni, p.60. The corresponding passage in 'Makani' is much longer.

70. Livingstone did not know that Lake Malawi extended as far north as it actually does. He believed that the north end was at about 10°50' south, i.e. roughly in the region of modern Chilumba. (see map after p.608 of D. & C. Livingstone, Narrative of an Expedition to the Zambesi and its Tributaries, London, 1865). It was thus natural for him to speak of the Ngoni as living at the north end of the lake.

71. Ibid., p.128.

bias of each of the groups from which the sources are drawn. Nevertheless, an attempt must be made, by examining in somewhat more detail a few areas of Ngoni interaction with indigenous society in northern Malawi in the years between 1855 and 1880.

The Ngoni and Raiding

The Ngoni activity most criticised by indigenous tribes and early European commentators alike, was their raiding of villages for captives and food. Livingstone, writing of the area around Mchata Bay commented, 'The Mazite or Mazitu live on the highlands, and make sudden swoops on the villages of the plains. ....... Beyond Mankambira's we saw burned villages, and the putrid bodies of many who had fallen by Mazitu spears only a few days before.'73

E. D. Young, speaking of the area to the east of the Lake talks of 'hundreds of skeletons lying about everywhere' as a result of Ngoni raids. Shortly afterwards he writes again, 'Here, as elsewhere, we are told that the Maviti spare none when they attack: the children are carried off, but men and women are massacred without mercy.'74 Later missionaries such as Laws speak of areas wholly deserted because of the Ngoni, of villages built on stilts in the lake to escape Ngoni raids, and of people living in caves behind waterfalls.75

In attempting to assess whether or not this is an accurate picture of northern Malawian society in the period under discussion it is important to accept right away that raiding was undoubtedly a major

73. Livingstone, Narrative, p.381.
74. Young, Nyassa, pp.104-5 and 108.
element in Ngoni society. By its very nature it involved suffering and sometimes death. Even the Ngoni themselves do not deny that. On the other hand, the picture of simple innocent villagers set upon by blood-thirsty savages and massacred in large numbers, is not only far from accurate but may well be deliberately misleading.

Ngoni raiding was primarily an economic, rather than a purely military activity. It was aimed at strengthening the state by the incorporation of new captives and the capture of cattle and food. The main raiding season was in the months following the harvest, and since the success of food raids depended on the continued existence of adult food producers, the large scale massacre of villagers made no economic sense. Where killing became indiscriminate it was as a result of the break-down of the Ngoni policy of raiding, not of the policy itself.

Furthermore, once the Ngoni had imposed their authority on an area, fighting ceased and peace was restored. Even non-Ngoni writers like Nyirenda admit this. 'Thus when all had come into Ngoni domination the fighting in the near-by areas ceased and only went on in distant territories.' Surrounding uNgoni was a great belt of uninhabited

77. Nyirenda, 'History', p.32.
78. Throughout this thesis the chiNgoni/chiTumbuka term uNgoni will be used to designate the area where the Ngoni lived, and over which they had immediate control. The original chiNgoni term for the area in which they lived was ubulugoni. This referred not only to the geographic area, but also to the people who lived in it, and even to their characteristics. In certain circumstances it could be translated 'Ngoni-ness'. Probably as a result of Tumbuka influence the term became contracted to bulugoni or uNgoni. See Elmslie to Laws, 8 and 24 July, 1889, Ms.7892, N.L.S. and Donald Fraser, 'The Zulu of Nyasaland: their Manners and Customs' in Proceedings of the Philosophical Society of Glasgow, Vol.XXXII, 1900-01, p.62.
territory, beyond which lay their raiding grounds. Since European observers like Livingstone and Young operated largely on the fringes of Ngoni society, and seldom had contact with the Ngoni heartland, it is perhaps not surprising that the view they obtained was not typical.

Some of the most destructive raiding during this period seems to have been carried out, not by the Zansi-Ngoni themselves, but by small bands of recently incorporated elements. Nyirenda admitted that many Henga youths 'settled down in their own villages by themselves and when they had fashioned Ngoni shields, and others with bows, it was they who ravaged and broke up the Lake areas, the Poka country and the Senga lands', while Daniel Mhlane claimed that his father Chiputula's 'multitude of indisciplined serfs' (most of lakeshore Tonga origin), were among the most troublesome elements in the population. In addition, not all so-called Ngoni raids were what they seemed. Alpers points out that the term Maviti, (usually identified with the Ngoni), was in the late nineteenth century 'more often a euphemism for any brigand, rather than an Ngoni party', and that such robber bands were often more destructive than the Ngoni themselves. Livingstone noticed another interesting feature of the situation, in September 1866 at the south end of the Lake, when an Arab, apparently robbed of his slaves by the Mang'anja, blamed the attack on the Ngoni, because (in Livingstone's opinion), 'it is more respectable to be robbed by them than by the Mang'anja, who are much despised and counted nobodies'.

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79. Ibid., p.63.
81. Donald Fraser, Autobiography, p.21.
The Ngoni were certainly not the only group involved in raiding, even in northern Malawi, for Nyirenda while attempting to argue that the era before the coming of the Ngoni was a time of peace goes on to describe a pre-Ngoni Bemba invasion of Mkwamanga in which the invaders 'laid flat the Katumbi country' to such an extent that 'corpses there were and the young men were finishing'.

The truth of the matter, of course, in respect of Nyirenda's account of Ngoni-Tumbuka relations is that Nyirenda, who was related by marriage to the Chikulamayembe, was attempting to push the claims of his dynasty by painting an exaggerated picture of the importance of the Chikulamayembe in the immediate pre-Ngoni era. His account of Tumbuka history was basically accepted by Cullen Young, but has been radically revised by Leroy Vail.

Furthermore, the traditional picture of persistent Ngoni attacks on the Tonga implies a view of Ngoni-Tonga relations in which the Ngoni were always the aggressors, and the Tonga always the defendants. The situation was not nearly as straightforward as this. Raiding was often a two-way process. Laws reported that during his first visit to M'Ngoni in the late 1870s, 'We came to what was an old village occupied previously by one of their Chiefs and his people, but being near the Lumpasa Valley it was liable to sudden attacks from the Tonga, who destroyed their gardens and property. This led the Angoni to go further.

85. Leroy Vail, 'Suggestions towards a re-interpreted Tumbuka History', in B. Pachai (ed.) The Early History of Malawi, London, 1972. I am grateful to Dr. Vail for pointing out to me the relationship between Nyirenda and Chikulamayembe. It is only fair to add that Dr. Vail, while accepting that Nyirenda's account of the importance of the Chikulamayembe dynasty is exaggerated, feels that his attack on the Ngoni is largely justified. (Personal Communication, Dr. Leroy Vail, 19 May 1973).
westwards. Various references in the journal kept by the Livingstonia missionaries in 1878-79 during the period they occupied Kaning'ina, just east of the modern town of Mwuzu, paint a similar picture. In 1882 Laws wrote of groups of Tonga attacking outlying hill villages in order to capture slaves, and the Tonga Christian Yuraia Chirwa wrote of Tonga attacks on the Ngoni in his submission to the Chilembwe Commission in 1915.

In conclusion it may be said that Ngoni raiding was undoubtedly a cause of much suffering and disruption in the Central Africa of the 1860s and 70s. Towards the end of the period in particular, it seems to have become more brutal and less disciplined, as more and more assimilated peoples, as well as various brigand groups realised the short-term advantage to be gained from it. Nevertheless, it would be a mistake to see the process as wholly destructive. It was a central part of the Ngoni culture created during the long migration from the south and in purely Ngoni terms it was a means, not only of acquiring wealth and strengthening the state militarily, but also of building up national sentiment and pride, as Margaret Read has pointed out. Its effect, even on the Tumbuka and Tonga, was by no means wholly destructive either. Though unpleasant and disruptive in the short term, it could be argued that by driving both tribes into larger and better protected villages, forcing them to defend themselves against alien incursions, and producing a clearly non-Ngoni identity among them, Ngoni raiding

86. Laws, Reminiscences, p.72.
87. Journal of Kaning'ina and Bandawe, 2 January 1879, 5 July 1879, 1 Oct. 1879, 23 January 1880, etc., Ms.7910, N.L.S.
88. F.C.S.M., September 1882, letter from Robert Laws, p.270; and Yuraia C. Chirwa, written submission to Chilembwe Commission, C.0.525/66, Public Record Office.
89. Read, Ngoni, p.42.
actually helped to prepare them, to some extent at least, for the approaching innovations of a labour economy and a colonial government.

The Ngoni and the Slave Trade

In an area so closely connected with the slave trade in the 1860s and 1870s, the question inevitably arises as to whether the Ngoni, with their obvious capacity for capturing large groups of people, were involved in the trade themselves. On this question the evidence is mixed. Several early commentators on the Ngoni such as E. D. Young and Montague Kerr, suggest that they were. Others were equally certain that they were not—among them Livingstone and Goodrich. In fact, most of the evidence connecting the Ngoni with the slave trade, comes from the area of Maseko's Ngoni; Montagu Kerr's contacts, for example, were entirely with this group.

Most of the early European contacts with M'mbelwa's Ngoni seemed to indicate that they were not involved in the trade, and the Ngoni themselves have always vigorously denied such involvement. In 1885 Acting Consul Lawrence Goodrich reported M'mbelwa as claiming that 'the Angoni never sell people, their principle being to incorporate conquered peoples into their own tribes.' Earlier Livingstone had claimed that the Ngoni never sold their slaves, and in 1890 Harry Johnston wrote that the Ngoni discouraged the slave trade, and were not on friendly

92. Goodrich to Sec. of State for Foreign Affairs, 24 April 1885, F.0.84/1702, P.R.O.
93. Livingstone, Narrative, p.385.
terms with the Swahili Arabs, (though he seems later to have modified his views).  

If M\'mbelwa's Ngoni had been involved in the slave trade to any great extent, one would have expected to see some material evidence of it in terms of Ngoni possessions, yet as Fraser pointed out their only real wealth appeared to be cattle.

That is not to say, of course, that there was absolutely no slave trading in the northern Ngoni area. While it is true that the general Ngoni attitude towards the Swahili Arabs was one of hostility, there is evidence that there was a certain amount of contact between them. Even while claiming to Goodrich in 1885 that the Zansi-Ngoni never traded in slaves, M\'mbelwa admitted that the Tumbuka-Ngoni did sometimes sell slaves to the Arabs in exchange for guns and gun-powder - a practice that M\'mbelwa tried to discourage by levying a tax on all Arabs passing through his lands. That such contacts did exist between the Swahili Arabs and the Tumbuka-Ngoni, is also borne out by a comment by George Williams, the Lovedale evangelist, just a few months earlier, that there had been underhand buying of slaves going on in the area. 'I say underhand buying of slaves,' he added, 'because none of the real Angoni does it. It is carried on by their freed slaves.' According to Chibambo a few Ngoni traded with the Arabs for slaves, though most of the Ngoni-Arab trade was in ivory.

95. Fraser, Autobiography, p.36.
96. Goodrich to Sec. State for For. Affairs, 24 April 1885, F.O.84/1702 P.R.O.
97. George Williams to Laws, December 1884, Shepperson Collection.
98. Chibambo, My Ngoni, p.50.
That the Ngoni occasionally became involved in a trade which was so prevalent amongst the surrounding Tumbuka and Tonga cannot be denied. What seems clear is that slave-trading was certainly not a primary economic activity amongst the northern Ngoni, where the main purpose of raiding was the assimilation of captives, and not their sale.

Somewhat surprisingly, perhaps, the attitudes of both Elmslie and Fraser to the institution of abafo in Ngoni society was comparatively sympathetic. Elmslie wrote in 1891, 'The position of the slaves is not devoid of comfort ...... They are well treated, and as no slaves are sold, they enjoy the fruit of their own labours and live in peace.' Fraser commented ten years later, 'their position is not a hard one. If they are discontented they may change masters. They give their masters a little free labour, and in return are made members of his family'. Yet the position of the abafo in Ngoni society, and, in particular, their contribution to agricultural production, has given rise to another controversy - the question of whether the Zansi-Ngoni possessed an efficient agricultural system, or whether they were largely dependent for their food supplies on raiding and the agricultural work of the abafo.

The Ngoni and Agriculture

Two quite distinct attitudes towards their agricultural methods are discernible in those who have studied the Ngoni. The first, that they were primitive or non-existent, can be summed up in Fraser's quaint phrase 'they hoed not, neither did they spin'. The second, that they

100. Fraser, Autobiography, p.19.
were distinctive and advanced, finds its most powerful expression in the work of Professor Margaret Read, who claims that 'in pre-European days the Ngoni had a superior and efficient organization for the production of food supplies.'

Clearly both attitudes cannot be accurate, at least not at the same time, and herein may lie at least part of the explanation of the apparent contradiction. It would be likely that in the immediate period of Ngoni settlement in northern Malawi, while the Ngoni were adjusting to the end of a migratory way of life, and local tribes were reacting to Ngoni intrusion, agricultural production would obviously suffer. As the Ngoni settled down, and gathered local serfs about them, so their agricultural system would begin to function once again.

This, however, cannot provide a totally adequate explanation of the wide divergence of opinion on the matter, and some other must be sought. It is to be found in changing European attitudes to traditional African agricultural methods.

There is considerable early evidence of Ngoni agricultural activity. Most of what may be called the favourable evidence comes from those who had only a passing acquaintance with the Ngoni. The earliest witness is Owen, who, in 1822 noted that Zwangendaba's Ngoni manufactured their own iron agricultural implements, and even sold these to the Portuguese at Delagoa Bay. Another early piece of evidence comes from James Stewart, C. E., who, writing in 1879 of M'mbelwa's early settlements in the Kasitu valley, commented, 'The land though

101. Read, Ngoni, p.38.
poor, is cultivated to a considerable extent.\textsuperscript{103}

Crawford Angus, who first encountered Mpezeni's Ngoni during a
gold prospecting journey in 1896, wrote of his great surprise at the
size of Ngoni villages, and commented as follows on their agriculture:

\begin{quote}
Village after village surrounded by waving corn-fields, and green plains dotted with herds of cattle stretched away into the distance. Never before in any of my African wanderings had I seen such an extent of land under cultivation; the cornfields seemed unending and the size and number of the villages fairly astonished me; it was not till then that I realised what a powerful and prosperous people were those whose acquaintance I was about to make.\textsuperscript{104}
\end{quote}

By contrast, the severest criticisms of Ngoni agriculture often
came from the Livingstonia missionaries who had lived amongst the Ngoni
for a considerable period, though even Fraser, who claimed that the
Ngoni did no hoeing, wrote of the large variety of vegetables to be
found in Ngoni villages, and claimed that he had counted twenty-two
varieties in one village alone.\textsuperscript{105} Many of the criticisms were based
on what was considered to be the destructive nature of Ngoni agricultural
methods, and the frequency with which such methods necessitated the
moving of villages. Cullen Young, speaking of the early days of Ngoni
settlement, wrote 'The utter destruction of the country under Ngoni
methods of cultivation led to periodic flittings into new ground'.\textsuperscript{106}

Rangeley, perhaps basing his views on this and other missionary
criticisms, talked of the Ngoni 'having driven themselves from Coma
Mountain by their own destructive methods of cultivation and the
trampling of their vast herds of cattle'.\textsuperscript{107}

\begin{itemize}
\item \textsuperscript{103} James Stewart, C. E., 'Lake Nyassa and the Water Route to the Lake Region of Africa', in \textit{Proceedings of the Royal Geographical Society}, Vol.III, 1881, p.263.
\item \textsuperscript{104} H. Crawford Angus, 'A Trip to Northern Angoniland' in the \textit{Scottish Geographical Magazine}, Vol.15, No. II, Feb. 1899, p.73.
\item \textsuperscript{105} Fraser, 'Zulu', p.69.
\item \textsuperscript{106} Cullen Young, Notes, p.118.
\item \textsuperscript{107} W. H. J. Rangeley, 'Mtwalo', p.66.
\end{itemize}
Modern Tropical agriculturalists accept, however, that the shifting cultivation represented by such methods as 'slash and burn' is a more efficient mode of production in terms of labour input/crop output ratio, (given a plentiful supply of land), than European methods based on fixed cultivation.¹⁰⁸ The frequent movement of the Ngoni from place to place, is therefore, no necessary indication of inefficiency in agricultural methods, and may, on the contrary, signify agricultural efficiency.

It has, of course, been argued by Cullen Young, amongst others, that 'the original owners of the land were looked upon by the Ngoni as purveyors of food'.¹⁰⁹ To argue in such terms is to isolate the production of food from the whole Ngoni social process. The Ngoni social system was in many respects feudal. Newly incorporated serfs would give service to their lords and would, in return, receive food and protection. Part of their service would undoubtedly be agricultural production, but this does not imply any Ngoni ignorance about agriculture, for, according to Margaret Read, 'the organization of production was directed and controlled by the chief men and women and was closely correlated with the social and military grouping in the state.'¹¹⁰

Similarly, ownership of cattle amongst the Ngoni cannot be regarded in isolation as a solely economic interest. Cattle ownership has always played an important part in Ngoni life, and as Margaret Read has shown, has important social and religious connotations, as well as

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¹⁰⁹ Cullen Young, Notes, p.117.
the more obvious economic and nutritional aspects.

Looking at Ngoni agriculture as a whole, it would seem that the Zansi-Ngoni possessed an efficient method of cultivation, not only of maize, but of many secondary crops as well. Their method of cultivation, (directed by one of the leaders of the village, and undertaken largely by incorporated serfs), reflected the feudal nature of the Ngoni state and did not indicate any agricultural ignorance on the part of the Zansi-Ngoni themselves. On the contrary, their methods of planting, ash fertilization, weeding, contour ridging, etc., were probably more efficient than those of surrounding tribes, while their possession of cattle not only represented a potentially more nutritious diet, but contributed to the social and religious continuity of the Ngoni state.¹¹²

**Ngoni Decline?**

The outbreak of several revolts against the Ngoni in the years immediately preceding and contemporaneous with the first missionary contacts has led some historians to speculate as to whether or not the Ngoni were declining by this period. Barnes suggests that one possible cause of these revolts may have been that while Mpezeni spread his tribal captives throughout the state, M'mbelwa tended to leave particular tribal groups as units under the control of certain indunas.¹¹³ Chijutula Nhlanje, for example, lived on the eastern edge of ulNgoni and was responsible for many of the Tonga abafo. This system, and the fact that

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¹¹¹ Read, *Ngoni*, pp.30, 125-7 & 168-77; 'Native Standards' p.28 and 33; 'Western Education', p.346.
the Tonga and Tumbuka abafo lived in close proximity to their original homes, allowing them to retain a separate identity which either capture on route or dispersal throughout the Ngoni would have made more difficult.

The first of this series of revolts took place in 1877 following the death of Chiputula Nhlane - though whether the revolt was caused by his death, or by a Tonga fear of a plot to kill them, is uncertain. Certain groups of Tonga abafo fled to the lakeshore and there, led by Mankhambira, built a stockade north of Chintechi. An Ngoni impi which attacked them was badly defeated - a victory, isolated though it was, which the Tonga still remember with great relish.

A year or two after the Tonga revolt, various Henga and Kamanga groups under Kanyoli, Mwendera, Mjuma and Kambondoma gradually broke away from their Ngoni masters and moved into the Henga valley. Calling themselves Majere-Henga, they used Ngoni fighting methods, and were sufficiently strong to cause the Ngoni to delay attempting to subdue them until they had obtained help from Mwase Kasungu. In the meantime a further revolt had taken place near Hora, led by the Tumbuka Baza.

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114. Most authorities date the Tonga revolt around 1875, though without giving any specific reason. Yuraia Chirwa in a contributed chapter to Young, *Notes*, p.126, quotes a definite oral tradition which places the revolt in the same year that 'Dr. James Stewart of Lovedale came to Lake Nyasa & toured round the lake'. Stewart arrived at Cape Maclear in October 1875 and sailed around the lake between 17 Sept. and 16 Nov. 1877. He called at Mankhambira's on the southward journey and spoke of the war with the Ngoni as in progress, but in terms which seem to indicate that the main Ngoni attack had not yet taken place. Dr. James Stewart, 'The Second Circumnavigation of Lake Nyassa' in *Proceedings of the Royal Geographical Society*, Vol.1, No. 5, May 1879, p.299.


115. Cullen Young, *Notes*, p.120 & 129.

Dokowe. Though Fachai claims that it was more in the nature of a private quarrel between Baza and the Ngoni war induna Ng'onomo Makamu, the incident has gone down in Ngoni tradition as an example of Ngoni determination and strength in dealing with rebellion, and in Tumbuka tradition as proof of Ngoni ruthlessness and cruelty; for the Tumbuka were surrounded on Hora mountain, and many were starved to death, or killed trying to escape. The leader Baza Dokowe escaped with his wife to Kasungu.

Having disposed of the Tumbuka revolt in 1880, the Ngoni, with help from Mwase Kasungu, turned against the Henga and Kamanga breakaways early in 1881. In a series of encounters Mjuma, recently installed as Chikulamayembe, was killed, though Kanyoli and his followers escaped into the foothills of the Nyika plateau and later to the lakeshore, where some of them eventually allied themselves with Mlozi and the Swahili in 1887.

With these clashes in 1881 outright warfare between the Ngoni and their neighbours came to an end, though raiding and counter-raiding continued for many years to come. Whether the fact that three separate groups had been able to revolt against the Ngoni proved that they were declining, or, conversely, the fact that the Ngoni had reasonably effectively, (though not totally), crushed these risings showed that they had strengthened their position, is a matter of some dispute between historians.

Saulos Nyirenda, van Velsen, and, more recently, McCracken all suggest to varying degrees that Ngoni power was declining. McCracken suggests that 'the balance of power in their favour, on which depended the continued vitality of the state, was beginning to tilt against them.
by the 1880s.\(^{117}\) He goes on to point out two military developments which helped to tilt the balance of power. The first was the retreat of the potential victims of the Ngoni into well stockaded villages; the second was the increasing availability in the area of more efficient firearms.\(^ {118}\) Both developments seriously reduced the effectiveness of the traditional Ngoni weapons, the stabbing spear and the oxhide shield.

Rennie and B.achai, on the other hand, argue that Ngoni power was not declining. Rennie devotes an entire article to the proposition, arguing that though the years between 1875 and 1880 saw a temporary decline in Ngoni power, after 1880 their power revived. He rejects the argument that the Ngoni were becoming weak and effeminate by interbreeding - countering that they had assimilated large numbers from other tribes on their migration north, with no apparent ill-effects. He ends by suggesting that there is no evidence that Ngoni society was on the decline before the arrival of the European.\(^ {119}\) B.achai takes much the same line suggesting that the series of revolts between 1877 and 1881 'ended in a consolidation of the Ngoni position.'\(^ {120}\) The Ngoni themselves not unexpectedly take the same view. According to Margaret Read, 'One of the often repeated grievances of the older Ngoni was that the Europeans "arrived too soon", before the Ngoni were able to establish effective authority over the whole country.'\(^ {121}\)

Both views to some extent beg the question of what precisely is

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118. Ibid.
121. Read, Ngoni, p.17.
meant by 'decline' or 'Ngoni power'. It is clear that the nature of the relationship between the Ngoni and the surrounding tribes was of necessity bound to change during this period. A way of life based on big national raids was possible and perhaps even essential during the migration. A policy of raiding to capture food made good sense for a people on the move, with limited opportunity for agricultural production; so too did raiding to assimilate captives into an expanding military force. It could not be sustained indefinitely, however, once the Ngoni had come to settle in a fairly limited area. What was necessary then, was the conversion of a purely military supremacy into a political supremacy - and this is perhaps what the Ngoni mean when they say that the Europeans came too soon.

In purely military terms it would be true to say that the Ngoni were declining - or, more accurately, that other tribes were learning how to cope more efficiently with Ngoni raids by the building of stockaded villages and the growing of crops such as cassava, which could not so easily be raided. Yet the real test of Ngoni survival was not their ability to take on and defeat all comers. (Their reputation for military efficiency and ruthlessness has sometimes disguised the fact that they were by no means universally successful in their military expeditions, even before the mid-1870s). Though Ngoni culture was deeply intertwined with their military way of life, as Margaret Read has pointed out,122 their eventual survival depended, not so much on their ability to maintain that way of life, as on their ability to adapt it to the changing circumstances of a non-migratory society.

By about 1880 then, something of a military stale-mate had been

reached. Ngoni military power was still considerable, as was shown, for example, by their defeat of the Bemba chief Makala at Kabondwe in 1887, but they no longer possessed, (if, indeed they ever had possessed), the military power totally to subjugate the areas outside uNgoni and under the control of the Tumbuka, Tonga and Ngonde. Instead they were forced, by their military limitations, by various tensions within the state itself, and by the arrival of the Scottish missionaries in their area, to concentrate on consolidating their political position within uNgoni. That increasingly in the 1880s and 1890s raiding became more of a symbolic demonstration of Ngoni virility, and less of an economic and military necessity was an indication, not so much of the Ngoni failure to maintain their military supremacy, as of their attempt to adapt their culture to the changing circumstances with which they had to cope.

Conclusion

On the eve of their first contacts with the Livingstonia Mission the Ngoni were not the bloodthirsty savages portrayed by many early writers. Undoubtedly their intrusion into northern Malawi, involving as it did widespread raiding, caused, in the short-term, a good deal of suffering and hardship. Whether it was, in Omer-Cooper's phrase, 'a terrible disaster for the peoples of East Central Africa' is open to question. He himself goes on to admit the Ngoni achievement that 'more than any other group in this period they perfected a system for uniting

123. Roberts, Bemba, p.376.
124. See next chapter, and McCracken, Politics, pp.87-89.
125. Omer-Cooper, Aftermath, p.83.
people of different cultures in enduring units. 126

Alongside the suffering and disruption their intrusion caused, must be set its positive results. These included the forging, both within uNgoni and beyond its borders of stronger more centralised state systems than might otherwise have existed. It is possible to argue that by creating a strong centralised society the Ngoni enabled the other peoples of northern Malawi more effectively to cope with the other intrusions of the period—those of the Swahili and European.

The Ngoni intrusion, leading as it did to a very uneven distribution of population had one interesting side-effect on the spread of Christianity. The creation of pockets of dense population in large stockaded villages made the initial spread of Christianity an easier task for the Livingstonia Mission in the first few years of its existence in the area. 127

Finally Ngoni society itself was by 1880 in a state of transition. The rebellions of the late 1870s had highlighted the limitations of an Ngoni supremacy based on military strength alone. Within the state itself various pressure groups were vying for influence. The uncertainties inherent in these developments and the desire of the Ngoni paramount to strengthen his own position, ensured that the Ngoni approach to the Livingstonia Mission would not be nearly so hostile as might otherwise have been the case.

126. Ibid., p.84.
The Ngoni Embassy to Bandawe 1881

included, in the middle of the front row (L to R)

are William Koyi, Chiputula Nhlane, and Robert Laws
CHAPTER ONE

THE NGONI AND THE LIVINGSTONIA MISSION -
EARLY INTERACTION 1878-90

The first direct contacts between M'mbelwa's Ngoni and the Livingstonia Mission took place in September 1878, when, during an expedition to explore possible sites for future mission stations, Robert Laws the acting leader of the mission, accompanied by William Koyi, James Stewart C.E., Fred Zarakuti and forty-five porters, reached the village of Chiputula Nhlane, at that time situated in the area between Choma Mountain and Bwabwa Hill, a few miles east of modern Ekwendeni. Though Laws had earlier come into contact both with Chikusi's Ngoni, and breakaway Tonga-Ngoni elements on the lakeshore near Mankhambira's, it is this meeting with Chiputula which initiated permanent contact between the northern Ngoni and the Livingstonia Mission.

In the twelve years between this contact and the baptism of the first Ngoni converts to Christianity in April 1890, relations between the Ngoni and the mission were often strained. The missionary attitude to the Ngoni, at least in theory, was fairly clear. Laws, addressing the Livingstonia Committee in Scotland during his first furlough in 1884, 'considered that the Angoni were the dominant race, and that the great object of the Mission should be to win them'. The Ngoni attitude

4. Minutes of the Livingstonia Committee, 2 May 1884, Ms.7912, N.L.S.
towards the Livingstonia Mission, on the other hand, was much less clear-cut. The reasons for this were several: first, uncertainty about the precise nature of what the missionaries had to offer, (due in large measure to the way in which the Gospel was first presented), secondly the volatile inter-tribal situation in the area around uNgoni during this period, and thirdly internal divisions amongst the Ngoni themselves.

Earliest Contacts

Laws' visit to uNgoni in September 1878 had several important consequences. The first was the forging of an alliance between the Nhlane clan and the mission which, in spite of difficulties, survived well into the present century. The second was the opening of communications with M'mbelwa5 which led to personal contact within the next few months. The third was the choice of a site for an experimental mission station on Mount Kaning'ina, just beyond the eastern edge of what was then indisputably Ngoni territory.

Early in December 1878 Laws and Koyi arrived back in the area, this time accompanied by the agriculturalist Alexander Riddel, and while Koyi went on to make contact with the Ngoni, the two Europeans began the erection of the first temporary dwellings at Kaning'ina (just east of the modern town of Mzuzu).6 While Laws returned to Bandawe on the lakeshore, (also opened as an experimental station at this time) and then to Cape Maclear, Koyi and Riddel settled in on the edge of uNgoni.

In the first few weeks after the occupation of Kaning'ina two events occurred which foreshadowed developments of the next few years.

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5. For a note on the spelling of M'mbelwa see Introduction, Footnote 1.
6. Laws to Rev. Thomas Main, 16 December 1878, Ms.7876, N.L.S.
The first was a message from Mtwalo, half-brother of M'mbelwa, and a powerful chief in his own right, that news of the settlement of the missionaries had been concealed from him, but that he was nevertheless willing to receive their message. The attempt to conceal the missionary presence from Mtwalo, (if such it was), could not have hoped to succeed, except in the very short term. Nevertheless it suggests tensions within the Ngoni state which were to remain throughout the period under consideration in this chapter. The most likely explanation is that the Nhlane brothers, (Chisevi, Njomani and Magoda), whose powerful following had recently been weakened by the Tonga rebellion, were hoping to establish some sort of exclusive alliance with the mission as a means of re-asserting their own importance. They at least succeeded in at first convincing the missionaries that Chiputula was a more important chief than M'mbelwa.

The second important event to occur shortly after the establishment of Kaning'ina was a summons from M'mbelwa on 15 December, saying that he wanted to hear why the missionaries had come. It was the missionary reaction to this summons, rather than the call itself, which proved to be significant in the next few years. After arriving at M'mbelwa's on the afternoon of 19 December Riddle became ill with fever, but by the following afternoon was well enough to meet with the Ngoni chiefs and headmen and explain the mission's purpose in the area:

At noon I got up and called them to the tent door and told them whence we had come - from a far off country full of every good thing - for what we had come - to give the people of this country God's message to them.

7. Kaning'ina Journal, 13 December 1878, Ms.7910, N.L.S.
8. Laws, 'Journey ...... 1876', p.315. 'Chiputula' was the title of the leader of the Nhlane clan. The old Chiputula had died around 1875, and the title had been assumed by Chisevi, probably his half-brother. (See Kaning'ina Journal, 29 December 1878, Ms.7910, N.L.S.)
I showed them a Bible and told them it was it that made our nation rich and powerful, and that now one of their own tribe had come to tell them what the Book had done for him and his people in their own old country. I then gave a sample of the commandments and some of the leading virtues it inculcated. I said if they received it, it would make them wise and happy and teach them how to become wealthy by fair means not by robbery etc. Whether by accident or design the mission's purpose among the Ngoni had been spelt out in what amounted to economic and military terms, and it was in such terms that the Ngoni immediately reacted to it — welcoming the fact that the Europeans were not making an exclusive alliance with Mankhambira, expressing their concern lest be given war medicine or the help of an English army, and inviting the mission (as they were to do on so many occasions in the next ten years) to leave the Tonga and come and settle among the Ngoni.

A few weeks later, in January 1879, Laws paid his first visit to M'mbelwa, thus beginning an attachment which Elmslie later compared to that between Mzilikazi and Moffatt. Though his explanation of the mission's purpose in entering the country differed significantly from Riddel's, and included an assertion, in face of Ngoni pressure, 'that our commission was to bring the gospel to every creature, to the despised Atonga as well as to the Angoni themselves', in one significant aspect it confirmed Riddel's explanation. Present with Laws during this visit, and introduced to the Ngoni by him as one who was willing to trade with them, was Fred Moir, manager, together with his brother John, of the recently formed 'Livingstonia Central Africa Company Limited',

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9. Ibid., 20 December 1878.
10. Ibid.
11. Elmslie, Wild Ngoni, p.94.
On this occasion, or possibly later in the year when his brother John visited the area, a store of trade goods were left at Kaning'ina, hoping to encourage the Ngoni to sell ivory.\(^{14}\)

Moir later wrote that the Ngoni had been split over whether or not to receive the missionary party in January 1879, and that they had done so only after mwavi had been administered to a hen, which had vomited. 'The fate of our expedition', he commented, 'had thus trembled in the balance of a hen's digestion'.\(^{15}\) It was to tremble in the balance for several years to come. Yet, on the surface, that in itself might appear as something of a surprise, for, as McCracken has pointed out, 'In contrast to the Tonga, the northern Ngoni appeared unlikely candidates for conversion.'\(^{16}\) That their response was one of cautious acceptance, rather than outright rejection may be surprising, but is not inexplicable. Its causes can be found in the problems confronting Ngoni society at the beginning of the 1880s.

The Ngoni Response

The initial Ngoni response to these first contacts appeared, to the missionaries at least, to be favourable. While it is true that some early reports, including Fred Moir's, quoted above, pointed out a division of opinion amongst Ngoni chiefs and headmen about the advisability of receiving the Europeans, the fact remains that they were

13. Ibid.
received, and that contacts with them increased as time went by.

The first messages of friendship to M'mbelwa and Mtwalo were acknowledged with the gift of a cow from each, and the initial meetings of both Riddel and Laws with M'mbelwa seem to have been conducted, (Moir's mwavu account notwithstanding), in a reasonably friendly atmosphere.

Yet it is important to recognise at the outset that Ngoni and missionary expectations of the results of their mutual contact were quite different. This is clear from a close study of the Ngoni reaction to Riddel's speech of explanation in December 1878. The main Ngoni concern at this point seems to have been to prevent an exclusive European-Tonga alliance, and having expressed their relief that this was not the intention of the missionaries, they went on to point out that they regarded the European as a wife come to be married to M'mbelwa—a metaphor which had a much more concrete meaning than may have appeared at the time.

The Ngoni response must be seen, therefore, in terms of the expectations they held in respect of their contact with the missionaries. As already pointed out in the Introduction, the nature of Ngoni power was, by this period, changing. Their ability to raid indiscriminately and successfully was now limited by the increasing efficiency of local tribes in defending themselves. Barnes assessment that 'the Ngoni did not trade with their neighbours, or send ambassadors to them, or enter into alliances with them; they merely killed or captured them', was

17. Livingstone, Laws, p.156
18. Kaning'ina Journal, 20 December 1878, Ms.7910, N.L.S.
19. See below, section headed 'Ngoni Traditional Religion'.
20. See above, Introduction - Section headed 'Ngoni Decline?'.
certainly no longer true by this period. Even in the uncertainty and suspicion of Ngoni-Tonga relations, there was room for both negotiations and trade, and on several occasions Ngoni raids were carried out in conjunction with other tribes.22

It is likely, therefore, that at least some elements amongst the Ngoni saw the mission as a potential ally against the Tonga, and as a bringer of economic good fortune - even though both expectations were largely disappointed. The basis of the Zansi-Ngoni response to the mission both initially and, indeed, for a considerable period thereafter may be said to have been a desire to retain those elements in their culture which they regarded as basic to it, to reject those parts of the missionary message which they thought threatened their supremacy, and to be willing to adapt those parts which they saw as strengthening that supremacy. Such an approach would explain both the differing attitudes towards the mission within the Ngoni power structure, and the differing Ngoni approach to individual parts of the missionary message, for example preaching and schools.

Although the Ngoni response to Livingstonia was conditioned initially largely by military and economic factors, it had also undoubtedly a religious element to it. It would therefore be prudent to look briefly at those elements of Ngoni traditional religion which may have affected their response to Christianity.

22. See, for example, Bandawe Journal, 7 January, 10 March, 20 March and 25 August 1879, Ms.7910, N.L.S., 2 July 1884, Ms.7911, N.L.S., and Elmslie to Laws, 7 November 1887, Ms.7890, N.L.S.
Ngoni Traditional Religion

The Religious beliefs of the Zansi-Ngoni may be defined in Idowu's phrase as 'implicit monotheism'. That they had a distinct idea of a Supreme Being is admitted even by those missionaries who were generally unsympathetic to their religious beliefs. This belief can be seen in the survival amongst the Ngoni of several quite distinct names for God. Of those outlined by Chibambo for Margaret Read (Umkulumqango, Uluhlanga, Umkulu Kakulu, Umnikasi we Zinto Zonke), by far the most common surviving to-day is Umkulumqango - translated by Margaret Read as 'the great deviser', but perhaps being nearer in meaning to 'the great original' or 'the great source'.

Umkulumqango was approached through the ancestral spirits (amadlozi) who, as Levi Mumba pointed out in an article published anonymously in the International Review of Missions, were not gods, but the media between the living and the God-Spirit. The place of the ancestors in Ngoni traditional religion was of extreme importance, and was closely connected, as Margaret Read has pointed out at some length, with the ownership of cattle. Many of the religious ceremonies involving the ancestors, involved also the participation of cattle - such as, for example, the ritual surrounding the death of a chief or other leading umZansi.

26. A typescript of Levi Mumba's article appears in Box 2, Livingstonia Papers, National Archives of Malawi. The article in International Review of Missions, Vol.XIX, 1930, pp.362-76, is introduced by Thomas Cullen Young, but the author is not identified, though a sketch of his life is given.
27. Read, Ngoni, Part VI, Chapter II, 'Cattle and the Ancestor Cult.'
At the time of the missionary incursion into ulNgoni, and, indeed, for long afterwards, the place of the ancestral spirits was central to Ngoni religion, and was recognised as such by the early missionaries. Ngoni Christians such as Yesaya Chibambo justified it by reference to the place of saints in the worship of western Christianity.

It is probably true to say, as Monica Wilson does for most small societies in Africa, that Ngoni religious rituals were closely integrated with the economic and political activity of the people in general. One of the major functions of such rituals was the well-being of society as a whole. They were, therefore, often connected with important events and cycles in the life of the nation, and were carried out, for example, in time of drought, before hoeing, before harvest, and before going into battle.

In terms of the Ngoni response to Christianity two points might be made at this juncture. The first is the observation of Richard Gray that 'with their eclectic insistency on practical results, African religions have been flexible, open to innovation and thoroughly capable of assimilating new concepts'. The second is that, in the Ngoni case in particular, many of those who performed such religious functions as those of the izanusi (diviners), and the abantu benhloko (prophets), were not Zansi-Ngoni themselves. These facts could help to explain the early religious attitude of the Zansi-Ngoni towards the missionaries. To some extent they attempted to use them as practitioners within the

28. See, for example, Fraser, 'Zulu', p.72, and Elmslie, Wild Ngoni, p.162.
31. Fraser, 'Zulu', p.73, and Read, 'Native Standards', pp.29-30.
context of Ngoni religious ideas, rather than as advocates of a completely new religion.

This can be seen clearly in two respects in particular. The first was the use of the missionaries to pray for rain; the second, not unrelated function, was the attempt to use the missionaries to fulfil certain religious functions connected with the agricultural cycle. The place of the inowala (feast of the first fruits) and its relationship to the Sacramental Conventions begun by Donald Fraser will be dealt with in detail in Chapter 2. Here one example may help to indicate the way in which the Ngoni were prepared to use the new religious practitioners to fulfill a traditional religious need.

At the end of December 1882, the precise time of year normally associated with the Zulu and Swazi feasts of the first-fruits, M'mbelwa told Koyi that he must pray to God to give them plenty of food this year. That the service which took place at M'mbelwa's village on the last Sunday of 1882 was no ordinary one in Ngoni eyes, is shown by the fact that Koyi estimated the congregation at one thousand five hundred - and that at a time when Ngoni allegiance to Christianity as such was nonexistent. 34

Ngoni Christians such as Yesaya Chibambo were later keen to link Ngoni traditional religion with God's gradual revelation of Himself 'in every nation of mankind in the world, even among the backward and despised'. 35 Chibambo went on to remind his readers that Ngoni seers had prophesied the coming of the white man. Such prophesies were, of

33. See below, 'The Rain Question - A Turning Point?'
35. Chibambo, Ny Ngoni, p.52.
course, widespread in African society; D. R. MacKenzie mentions them among the Ngonde, and modern African novelists such as Ngugi wa Thiong'o make use of them in their work. 36

It is, of course, true, as Margaret Read points out, that such an attitude on the part of the Ngoni was a rationalisation of an existing situation - but it was a rationalisation which was deeply believed, and which helped Ngoni Christians 'to make a bridge between the old and the new concepts of man and the supernatural'. 37 Yet it is clear that this was not simply a rationalisation thought up after the event, but an existential reaction to a new set of values which were not totally unacceptable. Fraser relates how, at a slightly later date, during the installation of M'baleselwa as M'mbelwa's successor, inkosi Mpherembe sacrificed a bull and prayed to the spirit of M'mbelwa to bless the new chief, adding 'and O Mombera, bless the teachers when they go about teaching the people the words of God.' 38

What is clear then, is that for reasons political, economic and religious, the Livingstonia Mission was not rejected out of hand by the Ngoni, and during 1879 there was frequent, if irregular contact between the two groups, both at Kaning'ina (at first manned by Koyi and Riddel and later by Koyi and A. C. Miller), and at various centres in uNgoni itself.

This early contact culminated in June 1879 in the visit of William Koyi to M'mbelwa's village of Echigodhlweni to take part in the formal welcome of the mission by the Ngoni chiefs. Part of this welcome

37. Read, 'Western Education', pp.365-6.
38. Fraser, 'Zulu', p.73.
involved the gift from the chiefs to the mission of eleven cattle\textsuperscript{39} and there is reason to believe that the transfer had a symbolic importance far greater than has generally been recognised.

The symbolic importance of cattle in Ngoni society is, of course, well attested, particularly in the writings of Professor Margaret Read. Cattle were used in many rituals concerning marriage, death, communication with the ancestors etc.\textsuperscript{40} At the same time they obviously fulfilled less symbolic functions in society, such as the provision of meat, milk and associated foods like amasi and ulubende, and the supply of a reasonably secure form of wealth. In addition, gifts of individual cattle to important guests were reasonably common in Ngoni society. Both M'mbelwa and Mtwalo gave a cow to the mission in 1878, and Mzukuzuku gave one in March 1879.\textsuperscript{41} What evidence is there, therefore, that the gift of eleven cattle in June 1879 was in any way different from earlier gifts?

First of all the occasion of the gift was, in itself, of some importance. On 31 May councillors representing M'mbelwa, Mtwalo, Mharule and Chiputula had arrived at Kaning'ina asking both Miller and Koyi to come up to M'mbelwa's to hear a formal welcome from the chiefs.\textsuperscript{42} In spite of internal disagreements about their relationship with the mission the Ngoni were on this occasion obviously attempting to present a united front, as is shown by the speeches at Echigodhlweni on 12 June.

\textsuperscript{39} Bandawe Journal, 20 June 1879, Ms.7910, N.L.S.
\textsuperscript{40} See, for example, Read, Ngoni, pp.126-132, 158-160, & 165-178.
\textsuperscript{41} Livingstone, Laws, p.156 and Bandawe Journal, 1 April 1879, Ms.7910 N.L.S.
\textsuperscript{42} Kaning'ina Journal, 31 May 1879 and Bandawe Journal 7 June 1879, Ms.7910 N.L.S.
Secondly the gift of eleven cattle, rather than one or two, is a clear indication of the importance of the occasion.  

Thirdly, the Ngoni at first insisted on keeping the cattle in uNgoni, and in July Miller had to go up from Kaning'ina and build a kraal for them, most probably at M'mbelwa's village. Fourthly, the physical transfer of the cattle to the mission only took place after the mission had permanently settled at Njuyu in 1882; and fifthly continued Ngoni references to the gift as late as 1887 make it clear that they regarded the transfer as an event of considerable importance.

These Ngoni references suggest that they regarded the gift as a pledge of friendship - not in an ordinary sense, but in a mystical and more binding way. In many respects the gift bore strong resemblances to the transfer of the lobola cattle on the arrangement of an Ngoni marriage, and the Ngoni certainly spoke of the relationship of M'mbelwa and the mission in these terms.

Furthermore, the Ngoni feared that unless the mission clearly acknowledged acceptance of the gift, and its consequences of an Ngoni-Mission alliance, other tribes would be encouraged to attack them. Once the cattle had been accepted, on the other hand, their safety became a missionary responsibility, and M'mbelwa warned the Lovedale evangelist George Williams, during the crisis of 1887, that 'your safety and the safety of all the missionaries depend upon the keeping of the cattle that was given to Dr. Laws.'

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43. Five of the cattle were given by M'mbelwa, and another five by Mtwalo and Mpherembe. The source of the eleventh cow is not clear. (Kaning'ina Journal, 12 June 1879, Ms.7910, N.L.S.).
44. Ibid., 5 July 1879.
45. Koyi to Laws, 26 August 1882, Shepperson Collection.
46. See, for example, Read, Ngoni, pp.125 ff and 133.
47. Kaning'ina Journal, 24 June 1879, Ms.7910, N.L.S.
48. Williams to Laws, 21 September 1887, Ms.7890, N.L.S.
Even William Koyi was not clear about the precise significance of the gift. He recognised, however, that 'they may have been given with a view that we may not know', and urged Laws to be cautious in respect of them. In retrospect it would appear that the gift was a symbolic gesture of considerable importance, perhaps representing a mystical marriage between the Ngoni and the mission.

If the gift of the eleven cattle was an event of outstanding significance in 1879, the day to day contacts of the Ngoni and the mission were also important in the building-up of confidence between the two groups. Throughout the year Ngoni headmen and councillors visited Kaning'ina regularly — for example, councillors from Mtwalu, Mharule and Chiputula visited the station on 25 August — to be followed three days later by representatives of M'mbelwa, and by Chiputula himself. At the same time the missionaries paid sporadic visits to the headquarters of several Ngoni chiefs — Mtwalu, for example, being visited by Koyi in January and Miller in September.

Yet just at the time when the Ngoni were beginning to accept the missionary presence as normal on their borders, and were indeed encouraging them to come and settle within uNgoni itself, the whole relationship was endangered by Laws' decision to abandon Kaning'ina, in October 1879. This decision was made primarily because of the difficulty of finding food, in what was still basically a no man's land, but in

50. Kaning'ina Journal 15 January 1879 and 1 October 1879, Ms.7910, N.L.S.
51. Ibid., 31 May 1879. Mtwalu enquired, 'Why, if we had really come as they had been told to tell them "good news" we settled down here amongst trees. What was the use of speaking to them. Why did we not come where there were plenty of people?'
52. See, for example, Kaning'ina Journal, 4 September & 3 October 1879, Ms.7910, N.L.S., and Livingstone, Laws, p.169.
making it, Laws seemingly failed to take account of the effect the withdrawal would have on the Ngoni. In fact it was considerable. In January 1880 Chiputula sent two men to Bandawe to find out why the mission had given up Kaning'ina, 53 and in the following month Allan Simpson, one of the original mission party in 1875, wrote to Laws from Bandawe complaining that the Ngoni had turned completely against the mission and offering the opinion 'we have ourselves entirely to blame'. He went on:

It seems we have made some unmanly and thoughtless promises which there was no hope of fulfilling (sic) when it was made. I learnt (sic) that not only white men but black had done this also. The result is that they have lost complete confidence in anything we say or do. Zukuzuku plainly said that we told lies and did not wish to help them. Can no help be given to these fine independent natives for which I am certain there is more hope than for those grovelling slavish Atonga we have around us here who care for nothing but women and Moa.  54

Even after the settlement at Njuyu had been established in 1882, the Ngoni still remained suspicious that the Mission might not settle permanently among them, and when Koyi left briefly in 1884 to collect his wife who had come up from the Cape, the Ngoni thought he had gone permanently. 55

There were, of course, many complex reasons for the difficulties in Ngoni-mission relations in the 1880s, but it is likely that these difficulties were compounded by the extravagant promises made to the Ngoni in 1878 and the sudden abandonment of Kaning'ina in 1879.

53. Bandawe Journal, 16 January 1880, Ms. 7910, N.L.S.
54. Allan Simpson to Laws, 10 February, 1880, Aurora (manuscript edition), Church of Scotland Archives.
55. Koyi to Laws, 26 August 1882, 15 September 1882, Shepperson Collection; Bandawe Journal 30 September 1884, Ms. 7911, N.L.S.
PLATE 4

William Koyi in 1876
The Work of William Koyi

Throughout this early period of contact between the Ngoni and the Livingstonia Mission the brunt of the work and responsibility was borne by William Mtusane Koyi, one of the four Lovedale evangelists who arrived at Cape Maclear with the second Livingstonia party in October 1876. Koyi was of the Ngqika branch of the Xhosa nation, born near Thomas river in 1846. He began his education at Lovedale in 1871, and in 1876 was one of fourteen men who volunteered to accompany Dr. James Stewart to Lake Malawi. Koyi, the least educated of the four eventually chosen, and selected more for his ability as a handyman than for his educational or evangelistic attainments, became by far the best known of the Lovedale evangelists, and established a reputation and respect which remain even to-day.56

In a period when the work of African Christians was often underestimated and sometimes totally ignored in contemporary missionary literature, Koyi proved a partial exception to the trend.57 Though not totally escaping criticism, especially from Elmslie, he was regarded with special warmth and affection by most of the early missionaries. Yet Koyi had an importance far beyond that indicated by his qualities of patience and humility, so admired by the missionaries. He had a cultural and spiritual impact upon the Ngoni of which the missionaries were not, perhaps, fully aware.

Linguistically, his ability to speak both Xhosa and Zulu, and consequently to communicate easily with the Ngoni, was of vital importance

57. The chapter 'Other Stations', in Laws' Reminiscences of Livingstonia, for example, describes the opening and development of work at Njuyu, Kora, Loudon, Kasungu, Tamanda, Lubwa, Chitambo and Chasefu without mentioning a single African other than William Koyi.
in the first years of contact. Laws first became aware of this advantage during the very first contact between Livingstonia and the Ngoni - an unexpected visit by one of Chikusi's headmen to Cape Maclear in 1877. Koyi's ability to converse with the visitors in Zulu convinced Laws of his importance in any future approaches to the Ngoni. After that Koyi played a leading role in all negotiations with the Ngoni, sometimes advising the missionaries on aspects of Ngoni culture which they had failed to understand. During Laws' first visit to Chikusi, for example, in August 1878, the southern Ngoni refused to allow the missionaries to meet the chief until after a present had been given to the chief through a man described as 'Chikusi's right hand'. (Possibly the mlomo wenkosí). Laws insisted that it was the English custom to give the present personally to the chief, but on the advice of William Koyi eventually deferred to Ngoni custom.

When Kaning'ina was opened in December 1878 Koyi was one of the original missionaries placed there, and he remained there almost constantly during the next eleven months before Laws ordered its closure, and the missionary withdrawal to the lakeshore. Koyi's importance during this period is well illustrated by a curt Journal entry in July 1879, while he was accompanying John Moir on a trading expedition to the Ngoni. Miller, left behind at Kaning'ina makes the brief entry for Sunday 20 July, 'No interpreter. No meeting'.

Following the abandonment of Kaning'ina, Koyi and Mapas Ntintili, the other remaining Lovedale evangelist, returned to South Africa on
furlough. Their expected return to Malawi was delayed by Stewart, who refused to allow them to leave until the Committee had sanctioned the occupation of a more healthy site than Cape Maclear. One result of this dispute was that the Livingstonia Committee ordered Laws in October 1880 to occupy Bandawe 'and such healthy localities inland as he may select'.

This minute opened the way, not only for Koyi's return, (Mtintili in the end did not return to Malawi), but for the recommencement of work among the Ngoni. Shortly after his return to Bandawe in December 1881, Koyi visited Chiputula and M'mbelwa, and later in 1882, following a visit by Laws to uNgoni, a permanent station was opened near Chiputula's village of Hoho, now on the western slopes of Njuyu mountain, and just across the Kasitu from M'mbelwa's main village. With the opening of Njuyu early in 1882, a permanent missionary presence in uNgoni had been established.

Though joined by James Sutherland in July 1882, and Peter McCallum in January 1883 Koyi remained the dominant missionary figure in uNgoni until the arrival of W. A. Elmslie in 1885. In August 1882 Laws admitted that 'William Koyi is doing valuable work which no European could have accomplished', and throughout 1882 and 1883 in particular, his letters to Laws are full of authority and advice. In December 1882, for example, when he once again seems to have been alone at Njuyu, Laws invited him down to Bandawe (possibly for Christmas). Koyi replied, 'I would have come down this time as you wish me to do so, but there is this that storys (sic) may go about that we are leaving the country again. So that I think it is better for me to stay till another one comes.'

62. Minutes of the Livingstonia Committee, 18 October 1880, Ms.7912, N.L.S.
63. Livingstone, Laws, p.197
64. Quoted in, Elmslie, Wild Ngoni, p.194.
This instinctive concern with Ngoni reactions to missionary activity was of considerable importance during a period of continued Ngoni suspicion. It is apparent again in Koyi's insistence on more than one occasion on the psychological importance of erecting a permanent brick house at Njuyu to show the Ngoni that the mission intended to stay. As Koyi put it, 'we must get Roots in theire (sic) country'. 66 That the concern was not without basis is shown by the fact that when Koyi left Njuyu to go and meet his wife who was coming north from the Cape, the Ngoni were reported as thinking that he gone for good. 67 In fact he arrived back with his wife in November 1884.

By this time the missionary personnel in uNgoni had expanded considerably, for as well as Koyi and his wife, there were Sutherland, Peter and Mrs. McCallum, and George Williams, the last of the Lovedale evangelists to serve at Livingstonia, who had arrived at Bandawe in December 1883, and went to work in uNgoni soon afterwards. 68 Yet it was with Koyi, (in the absence of Laws), that the Ngoni in general, and M'mbelwa in particular most often wanted to communicate. To some extent, this was obviously due to the linguistic short-comings of the other missionaries, particularly in the early days of missionary occupation at Njuyu; yet even after Sutherland had been resident at Njuyu for well over two years, it was not he, but Koyi who was summoned to a meeting to discuss school work in uNgoni, immediately after his return with his wife in November 1884. 69

66. Ibid., 5 April 1883.
67. Ibid., Sutherland to Laws, 23 December 1884.
68. Ibid., William Scott to Laws, 26 January 1884.
69. Ibid., and 13 September 1882.
The arrival of Elmslie at Ejuyu early in 1885 changed Koyi's status in the eyes of the mission, if not of the Ngoni. The earlier European missionaries to uNgoni had both been artisans—Sutherland an agriculturalist and McCallum a carpenter. Elmslie was a graduate doctor, and was clearly regarded by the mission authorities as in charge of their work in uNgoni, even though he obviously could not match Koyi in experience, and knowledge of Ngoni culture and language.

Though in general Elmslie seems to have got on well with Koyi, (especially in comparison to his acrimonious relationship with George Williams), he criticised Koyi, as he was later to do with Williams, for being too friendly with the Ngoni:

Mr. Koyi's ability to know the people is invaluable but there is not that weight with him which a white man carries. There is a danger in knowing the people too well and while Koyi is invaluable here there is not that respect shown to him which should be and which is a factor in raising the people from their low condition. 70

Though Elmslie in his turn was to play a vital and distinctive role in the spread of Christianity amongst the Ngoni, it was not for his friendliness that he was to be remembered.

Koyi's death in June 1886, brought to an end a unique contribution to Ngoni-mission relations. The tributes from his European colleagues, including Elmslie, were generous and sincere; it was in the Ngoni reaction, however, that yet another facet of his relationship was revealed. Following Koyi's death several of the councillors asked Elmslie who was to be the umteteleli now. Elmslie, interpreting the word as 'the one for speaking between us', complained, 'they must have such an one even though I could make them understand but they won't try

70. Ibid., Elmslie to Laws, 9 June 1885.
to do so, being so long accustomed to Mr. Koyi's ways.'\(^{71}\) Yet in wanting an umteteleli it was not Koyi's ways but their own deeply-rooted custom upon which the Ngoni were insisting - for the function of umteteleli was not simply that of interpreter, but was more akin to that of an advocate. During Laws' first visit to M'mbelwa, for example, it was his head councillor who answered on the chief's behalf,\(^{72}\) and even to-day it is both customary and mannerly to approach the chief through an intermediary, and on certain occasions, such as when giving judgement in a traditional court, the mlomo wenkosi speaks on behalf of the chief.

Thus Koyi was regarded by the Ngoni not simply as the interpreter for the mission, but as their official spokesman through whom the most vital communications were given and received. His own sympathy for the Ngoni and their respect for him had been apparent as early as 1883 when he had written, 'I am quite at home with the Angoni. They have a true love for me, I the same for them.'\(^{73}\) What is now obvious is the much deeper significance of the cultural role played by William Koyi in the relations between the Ngoni and the mission in the early 1880s.

**Ngoni Attitudes 1880-86**

The period during which William Koyi was working in uNgoni was a vital one in determining not only the nature of Ngoni-mission relations, but also to some extent the tripartite relations between Ngoni, Tonga and mission. Indeed, the reaction of the Ngoni to the coming of the

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71. Ibid., 5 November 1886.
72. Laws to Rev. Thomas Main, 26 March 1879, Ms.7876, N.L.S.
73. Koyi to Laws, 4 August 1883, Shepperson Collection.
Livingstonia Mission cannot be looked at in isolation from their relations with the Tonga, for the two were inter-dependent.

The traditional picture of fierce Goni attacks on the helpless Tonga is not entirely without basis, but a close study of contemporary records, especially the Bandawe and Kaning'ina Journals, shows that it needs to be re-assessed for the period from 1878 onwards.

To begin with, although the journals are full of rumours of impending Goni attacks on the lakeshore, actual raids seem to have been much less frequent. The Tonga, in attempting to secure mission sympathy and support often exaggerated and sometimes invented Goni attacks and depredations. On 17 November 1885, for example, only four days after a previous false alarm, representatives from Chintechi arrived claiming they were about to be attacked. They were followed by Fuka, Chikuru, Marenga and Mbiwe, all with the same story, but there seems to have been no basis for it, and no attack materialised.

In addition, at certain periods, for example in 1884-5, and again in 1886, the Tonga seem to have suffered more from small scale civil wars between themselves than they did from Goni raids. One indication of the extent of this disruption within uTonga itself is that many Tonga began returning to uGoni in 1884, to such an extent that Marenga came complaining to the missionaries. It is also the case that increasingly in the 1880s groups of Tonga made sporadic attacks on outlying Goni.

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74. Bandawe Journal, 17 Nov. 1885, Ms.7911, N.L.S. See also 30 June 1881, 14 July 1883, 17, 20 & 21 Nov. 1884, 28 & 30 May 1885, etc.
75. Ibid., 19 Fe. & 2 May 1883, 3 Dec. 1884, 22 & 23 Feb. 1885, and letter from D. Kerr Gross, 15 March 1886 in F.C.S.M., August 1886, p.239.
76. Bandawe Journal, 24 April 1884, & 2 July 1885, Ms.7911, N.L.S.
villages, carrying off captives in Ngoni fashion. This trend increasingly frustrated those Ngoni, especially Mtwalo, living on the eastern borders of uNgoni, who resented M'abelwa's reluctance to order full-scale reprisals on the lakeshore. 77

That Ngoni raids to the lakeshore, and elsewhere, did take place, and that they were sometimes vicious and cruel goes without saying. In addition to the many false alarms and deliberate falsifications, the Bandawe Journal records many actual raids in which people were killed or captured. 78 That these have not been stressed here is not due to any desire to deny their existence, but, rather, to the fact that the Ngoni reaction to the presence of the mission both in uNgoni and uTonga in the early 1880s, was determined more by the limitations in their ability to attack the Tonga, rather than by the supposed comprehensiveness of those attacks.

One genuine and repeated Ngoni desire was to get back the children carried to the lakeshore during the Tonga rebellion of 1877. 79 To the Tonga, belonging as they did to a matrilocal society, the children, in the event of a break-up of the marriage, obviously belonged to the mother's family. 80 However, this was a state of affairs which the Ngoni could not accept, and about which resentment continued for many years.

While Ngoni attitudes to the mission were in fact divided, the division on this issue was one of tactics as much as anything: could the mission be used to help recover the children, or would it be better to force the mission out of Bandawe before mounting an all-out attack. Variations

77. See, for example, Bandawe Journal, 2 Jan. 1879, Ms. 7910, N.L.S., 14 July 1883, 14 Jan., 19 May 1886, 18 August 1887, Ms. 7911, N.L.S.
78. Ibid., 2 Nov. 1883, 3 Nov. 1884, 11 May 1885, 2 Oct. 1885, 20 Jan. 1886, 12 June 1886.
80. Kaning'ina Journal, 11 February 1879, Ms. 7910, N.L.S.
on this theme were to continue right up to the end of 1887.

Divisions in the Ngoni approach to the mission had been apparent from the very beginning of contact between them. ⁸¹ The underlying causes of these have been explained in some detail by McCracken. ⁸² One internal division was between the attitude of the Zansi-Ngoni and the abafo. By 1884 George Williams was writing of the Ngoni response to the Gospel, 'The real Angoni who are very war-like and proud, despise it; their slaves seem to think it is too good for them'. ⁸³ Some idea of the attitude of the Zansi-Ngoni to Christianity at this period can be gauged by the name they gave to Njuyu mission station. The missionaries themselves, glad to get a permanent house erected, called it Sibehleli (we are settled). The Ngoni, on the other hand, referred to the station as Ekusinda Nyeriweni - a term which Victorian etiquette did not permit Elmslie to translate, since its meaning is 'a place to spread shit around'. ⁸⁴

Another division in Ngoni society which complicated their relations with the mission was the apparent split between M'mbelwa and Mtwalu. Chibambo denies that any such split existed, claiming that 'Mwambera and Mtwaro continued in friendship until the end. There were certain people who wanted to make mischief between them, but because of their friendship they failed to separate them.' ⁸⁵ To the extent that no open rift took place between the chiefs, and that Mtwalu remained under M'mbelwa's jurisdiction, Chibambo's statement is correct. To the extent

⁸¹. Ibid., first entry for December 1878, and 12 June 1879.
⁸³. F.C.S.K., January 1885, p.18.
⁸⁵. Chibambo, My Ngoni, p.61.
that it implies continual agreement on matters of policy throughout the 1880s, it is clearly mistaken.

It is important to realise, however, that the disagreements between M'mbelwa and Mtwalo were not created by the coming of the mission, but were there in the period immediately preceding missionary incursion. That this is so is made likely by references as early as January 1879 to Mtwalo's desire to join Mpherembe and move to a new part of the country 'where they can carry on undisturbed their plundering career.'

Nevertheless, the settlement of the mission at Njuyu may have exacerbated such disagreements as existed. First of all the identification of the mission with M'mbelwa and Chiputula, both of whom lived within a couple of miles of Njuyu, meant that they, rather than Mtwalo or Mpherembe, gained whatever limited economic advantage was to be had by contact with the missionaries. Secondly the placing of the mission station, (and, incidentally, the Nhlane village of Hoho sometime between 1880 and 1882), towards the west of uNgoni and out of range of increasing Tonga raids, meant that M'mbelwa and Chiputula were more willing to listen to missionary pleas not to attack the lakeshore. On the other hand, those Ngoni, such as Mtwalo, on the eastern edge of uNgoni, became increasingly frustrated by minor Tonga raids, by M'mbelwa's refusal to sanction widespread reprisals, and by the apparently restrictive presence of the missionaries at both Bandawe and Njuyu.

Even those elements of the Ngoni reasonably favourable to the mission in the mid-1880s, and particularly M'mbelwa himself, distinguished

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86. Kaning'ina Journal, 13 January 1879, Ms.7910, N.L.S.
87. Missionary concern for the area to the west was not nearly so great, and increasingly in the 1880s large Ngoni raids took place in that direction.
between different aspects of the missionary message. On the one hand, as pointed out above, they were willing to accept the missionaries as one more set of religious practitioners, on the other hand, they were extremely suspicious of the educational role of the mission. Though a school was started by William Koyi shortly after the opening of Njuyu, M'mbelwa almost immediately ordered its closure, and though the missionaries approached him on the subject several times in the next few years, (for example in October 1883 when Laws visited Echigodhlwendi and asked M'mbelwa's permission to open schools), it was not until May 1886 that permission was finally granted.88

What was it about mission education that the Ngoni particularly feared? Margaret Read, in her research in the 1930s, was given at least three reasons by the Ngoni of that period. First, their ancestors had a genuine fear that if they lost their military power the basis of their kingdom would be undermined. Secondly, they feared that education, by withdrawing youths from the cycle of raiding, would destroy the economic supremacy of the Zansi-Ngoni. Thirdly, they held a strong belief in the efficacy and value of their own system of social and political controls, and thought that the new learning would weaken their traditional way of life.89

These factors can be distinguished in the comments to the early missionaries of Ngoni leaders such as M'mbelwa and Ng'onomo, the most famous of which in this context is, 'God has given you the Book and cloth, and has given to us the shield and spear, and each must live in his own

89. Read, 'Western Education', pp.355-6.
An Anonymous article published in 1886 on 'The Missionary Position among the Wild Angoni Zulus', and almost certainly written by Elmslie, makes clear missionary thinking on why the chief's councillors would not allow schools to be opened:

One very important reason is that they know the result of our work will be to overthrow their power over their slaves and to crush the war spirit in their children. Another and very strong reason is their superstition. They are a very religious people when any occasion calls for worship of the forefathers' spirits.\(^{91}\)

Margaret Read attributes the eventual Ngoni change of heart around 1886 to the development of M'mbelwa's admiration for Laws, and the growing Ngoni respect for William Koyi and the other Scottish missionaries.\(^{92}\)

While these factors undoubtedly played a part in the eventual and gradual Ngoni acceptance of mission education, there were other deeper causes as well. These may be summarised as a growing Ngoni awareness of outside pressures upon their state, the realisation by M'mbelwa that friendship with the mission might provide a bulwark against such pressures, and the dimly emerging recognition that Ngoni supremacy could no longer be maintained primarily by a policy of raiding.

The outside pressures on the Ngoni state were epitomised by the attempt of the African Lakes Company in 1885 to sign treaties with both the Tonga and Ngoni. (As well as a large number of other groups).\(^{93}\)

The whole process, with regard to the Ngoni, saw the mission adopt a role which it was to play increasingly in the next twenty years, and which is dealt with in more detail in Chapter 3 - that of intermediary


\(^{91}\) *F.C.o.M.*, May 1886, p.136.

\(^{92}\) Read, 'Western Education', p.358.

\(^{93}\) A list of most of the treaties signed can be found in John Moir to Anderson, 22 April 1886, F.C.84/1784, Public Record Office.
between the Ngoni and other groups of intruding Europeans.

According to Macmillan, the main purpose of the treaties signed by the African Lakes Company in 1885 was not to take over the administration of large parts of Malawi, but to forestall occupation of the area by another power. The treaties were in two parts - the first requesting Queen Victoria to declare a Protectorate, the second in the event of the Queen declining, ceding sovereign powers to the A.L.C. 94

Whether or not the Moirs at first intended including the Ngoni in the treaties is not entirely clear; what seems clear is that they would almost certainly have approached the Tonga first. Elmslie realised the danger of such a course, especially after rumours of the A.L.C. wanting to purchase land in uNgoni began to circulate in June 1885. He therefore decided to break the news privately to the Ngoni in an attempt to forestall suspicion of a European-Tonga plot against them. Their reported reaction was first to be taken aback by the news and secondly to request an opportunity of signing the treaties before the Tonga. 95

In the event, the behaviour of the African Lakes Company representatives, Stuart and Stevenson, aroused so much hostility among the Ngoni during their visit in August, that the Ngoni refused to sign the treaty. Elmslie accused Stuart in particular of causing trouble by swearing and asking for Ngoni women, and added that a further cause of Ngoni suspicion was Stuart's 'having a real Zulu of the late Chaka's people with him'. 96 The whole tone of Elmslie's letter is one of aggrieved resentment at the damage which had been done to Ngoni-Mission relations, not least by the fact that Stuart is said to have encouraged the Tonga

95. Bandawe Journal, 12 June 1885, 13 July 1885 and 21 July 1885, Ms.7911, N.L.S.
96. Elmslie to Dr. Scott, 20 August 1885, Ms.7876, N.L.S.
in the opinion that the Ngoni would be easily defeated and that they should therefore attack them.

The fact that the Tonga did sign a treaty with the A.L.C. had, in the short term, a quiescent effect on the Ngoni, who probably feared what Elmslie himself anticipated - A.L.C. protection for the Tonga against Ngoni raids.97 At any rate, Ngoni raids on the lakeshore were comparatively rare for the next few months, though there was one serious attack in October, probably related to M'mbelwa's shifting of his village a few miles north to the Thithimira tributary of the Kasitu, and the consequent sending out of war parties which traditionally accompanied such a move.98

One of the overriding impressions of the mid-1880s in Ngoni-mission relations is of the apparent lack of an overall pattern in what was happening. At the same time as the treaty question, for example, there is a strong indication that the Nhlangulo brothers, disappointed by the lack of economic advantage in alliance with the mission, were beginning to be less than enthusiastic in their support of the missionaries.99 It is, in fact, in this apparent confusion and changing of positions, that the real explanation of Ngoni-mission relations in these years lies. The essential nature of Ngoni society was at this time undergoing a major change as the Ngoni sought to relate to changing circumstances such as the intrusion of the A.L.C. into the area and the increased ability of the Tonga to cope with raids. In these circumstances their attitude to the Livingstonia Mission was ambivalent, for while some saw it as a cause of the changes which they abhorred, others regarded it as

97. Elmslie to Laws, 12 October 1885, Shepperson Collection.
98. Bandawe Journal, 2 and 10 October 1885, Ms.7911, N.L.S.
99. Elmslie to Laws, 9 June & 1 September 1885, Shepperson Collection.
a potential ally in a changing world.

It was at this point that the Livingstonia Mission became involved in what some have seen as a turning-point in their relations with the Ngoni - the drought of 1885-86 and the various attempts to bring it to an end.

The Rain Question - A Turning Point?

For several years in the 1880s the rainfall in Ulgoni had been sporadic and unpredictable. During the wet season of 1885-86 the position was particularly bad, with rain falling only once during November, and not at all during December or the first half of January. Local opinion blamed the missionaries for the drought, but the traditional doctors were agreed that the Europeans were not responsible. According to Elmslie they were divided as to the cause of the drought - some thinking it was due to the strife between M'mbelwa and Mtwalo, others to the fact that the ancestral spirits themselves were at war, and one to the reluctance of the Ngoni to listen to the missionary message. (This final opinion was almost certainly offered by Kalengo Tembo, from near Njuyu, two of whose sons became the first Ngoni converts).

Traditional Ngoni sacrifices of cattle were made on at least two occasions, but with no obvious result, and at this stage some councillors came to ask Elmslie to pray for rain. He agreed, but insisted that the service must be held at Njuyu mission station and not in the chief's cattle kraal - the traditional place for rain-making ceremonies. Elmslie later explained that we wanted the people to come

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100. The following paragraph is based on Elmslie, Wild Ngoni, pp.168-71.
to our service on the station, and did not wish the Bible to be over at
the chief's on such an occasion, because they attached a superstitious
importance to the Book.\textsuperscript{102}

On Sunday 17 January 1886, Elsmie made special prayers for rain
during the normal service - attended on this occasion by many of
M'belwa's councillors, though by none of his young warriors. Slight
showers fell early the following morning and a further service was held
on Monday 18 January. On the afternoon of that day heavy rain fell
before the worshippers had dispersed. During the last fourteen days of
January, rain fell on nine, and the total rainfall for the entire wet
season was 19 inches. This compares with a modern average annual rain-
fall for the area between 32 and 40 inches.\textsuperscript{103}

Both near-contemporary and modern writers have described the series
of events as a turning-point. J. W. Jack in describing the events spoke
of 'a turning-point', 'the miraculous intervention of God', and 'the
beginning of a new era in Ngoniland'.\textsuperscript{104} More recently Pachai has also
seen the 'freak of nature' which followed Elsmie's prayer as a turning-
point in Ngoni-mission relations.\textsuperscript{105} The nature of the event is not of
immediate concern here, though it might be pointed out that a heavy
downpour in northern Malawi in the middle of January is not necessarily
either 'miraculous' or 'a freak of nature', especially since there had
been a lot of rain on the nearby lakeshore during the previous few days.\textsuperscript{106}

Of more importance was the impact of the event on the Ngoni. Was it,

\begin{itemize}
\item \textsuperscript{102} Elmsie, \textit{Wild Ngoni}, p.173.
\item \textsuperscript{103} Ibid., pp.175-78, & Swanzie Agnew & Michael Stubbs (eds.),
\textit{Malawi in Maps}, London, 1972, p.35.
\item \textsuperscript{105} Pachai, 'Ngoni Politics', pp.197-8.
\item \textsuperscript{106} Bandawe Journal, 14, 16 & 18 January 1886, Ms.7911, N.L.S.
\end{itemize}
in fact, a turning-point? Did it lead to a markedly different response from the Ngoni to the missionaries and their message?

Elmslie himself tended to play down the role of the 'rain question' as a factor in changing the Ngoni response to the mission, though he did acknowledge that a change in their response had taken place. In a letter written to Scotland a few months later, Elmslie commented:

I can point to no particular incident closely connected with the happy change in the feelings of the people; but nothing more satisfactory can be said than that the cumulative force of the Christian life and teaching of those resident here has slowly but surely produced its natural effects on their minds. Various incidents, such as the rain question last January, could be cited as distinct stages of advance, but no part of our work has been without its power.¹⁰⁷

While changes in Ngoni attitudes undoubtedly did take place during this period, they should not be seen as a revolutionary turn-about on the part of the Ngoni. Even the decision to allow the opening of schools, (which is sometimes connected with the rain question), while reached in May 1886, was not finally implemented until December of that year, due to internal jealousies among the Ngoni as to where the first school should be placed;¹⁰⁸ and the year 1887 was one of the most precarious in the whole history of Ngoni-mission relations.

Nevertheless, the rain question was an important step in the intricate process of Ngoni acceptance of the Livingstonia Mission. Yet its importance was of a nature which the missionaries were not entirely willing to admit, for it established them, and Elmslie in particular, as rain-makers of considerable reputation. Thus, a year later, when the rains were once again late, the Ngoni implied that they were being

¹⁰⁷. Elmslie, Wild Ngoni, p.182.
¹⁰⁸. 'Yearly Statement for Angoniland Station', 16 December 1886, Shepperson Collection.
held up by the missionaries, and at the end of 1887, George Williams, during a visit to Mtwalo, held special prayers for rain, which fell the same night. Again, at the end of the 1887-88 rainy season, after the maize crop had ripened, but before the millet needed for beer-making was ripe, a premature dry spell threatened the beer supply for the coming season. When traditional sacrifices failed to produce results M'mbelwa sent to Elmslie asking him to pray for more rain. Somewhat surprisingly he obliged, and the rain which fell two days later saved the much valued millet crop. It may also be that Elmslie’s insistence, during the 1886 crisis, on holding the prayers for rain at the headquarters of the mission, rather than in the chief’s kraal, established the mission station as an alternative centre of spiritual power in the eyes of the Ngoni, with important consequences for later ceremonies such as Fraser’s sacramental conventions – though this can only remain a matter of speculation.

1887 – a Crucial Year

By the beginning of the year 1887 the position of the Livingstonia Mission amongst the Ngoni seemed to have been strengthened. A school had finally been opened at Njuyu in December 1886 and was reported to be going well with about sixty scholars on the roll, and Mawelera Tembo, a younger son of the ng'anga Kalengo Tembo, as one of the teachers.

The year which followed, however, was to see the culmination of all the pressures – both external and internal – which had been troubling the Ngoni in the recent past, and to bring Ngoni-mission relations to a

110. George Williams to Laws, 7 January 1887 & Elmslie to Laws, 27 January 1887, Ms.7890, N.L.S.
state of near collapse.

From the beginning of the year Ngoni fears of a Swahili-Arab attack began to increase. Following the murder by the Ngoni of a group of Arabs in late 1886 or early 1887, Mlozi, the Swahili-Arab trader with headquarters near Karonga, is said to have told Monteith Fotheringham of the A.L.C. that he was going to attack the Ngoni to avenge the death of his brother. 111

Relations between the Ngoni and the Tonga worsened rapidly following an attack by an unauthorised war party of Ngoni youths on a group of Tonga carriers in March. 112 In April the Chintechi Tonga struck back, attacking some of Mtwalo's villages and killing or capturing some of the inhabitants. 113

These two sources of external pressure served only to highlight the internal divisions amongst the Ngoni. Mtwalo, on the eastern edge of the Ngoni, began to put pressure on M'mbelwa to attack the Tonga, or, alternatively, to allow the long-discussed move south to the Mzimba district. When M'mbelwa refused to allow either, skirmishes actually broke out between the two sections of the Ngoni. 114 While Mtwalo's main worry was about the Tonga, M'mbelwa and Ng'onomo were more concerned with the situation to the north and north-west, from where an Arab attack, possibly in conjunction with the Bemba, would originate. 115

Inevitably the missionaries, with loyalties in both the Ngoni and

112. Bandawe Journal, 29 March 1887, Ms.7911, and Elmslie to Laws, 21 April 1887, Ms.7890, N.L.S.
113. Ibid.
114. Elmslie to Laws, 26 Jan. 1889, Ms.7891, and 6 June 1887, Ms.7890, N.L.S.
115. Consul Hawes, Despatch No. 3, 16 Jan. 1888, F.C.84/1883, P.R.O.
Tonga camps, were dragged into the situation, with both sides vying for their support, and attempting to deny that support to their opponents.

By August, pressure on M'mbelwa from Mtwalo, Mpherembe and Mabulabo had increased to such an extent that he agreed to hold a joint-meeting with the missionaries, at which, Elmslie reported, the Ngoni would demand that the mission should leave Bandawe and come up to uNgoni. This move would serve the joint purpose of freeing M'mbelwa from his promise not to attack Bandawe while the missionaries were there, and making the limited resources of the mission more widely available to the Ngoni.

As the situation reached its crisis in the period from late August to late October 1887, the missionaries, both at Bandawe and Njuyu were under extreme pressure. This was especially true of Elmslie, who, in addition to the political pressures of the Ngoni-Tonga situation, had to deal with the emotional pressures of treating his wife when complications developed during her pregnancy — culminating in a difficult craniotomy for the removal of a still-born son.

The extreme pressure under which Elmslie found himself during this period is clear from both the tone and content of his almost daily correspondence with Laws during the crisis. This can be seen particularly in his fluctuating advice on how to react to the Ngoni demand that all the missionaries must leave Bandawe and settle in uNgoni. On 15 September he writes in favour of the proposal. 'There is ample room for us all here and it is as suitable a field as any on the West coast.' A week later he has changed his mind. 'My remarks about several coming

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117. Elmslie to Laws, 18 September 1887, Ms. 7890, N.I.S.
up here do not on more mature thought commend themselves to me.' By early in October he seems to be reverting to his former view, outlining a number of reasons why uNgoni would make a good site for a Head Station. Meanwhile, in anticipation of having to abandon uNgoni, he had been secretly burying medicines and books in the garden, and sending the most valuable of the surgical instruments to Bandawe.

At the same time George Williams, the last of the Lovedale evangelists was involved in a difficult marital case with Dingase, a daughter of Chiputula, and though its precise relationship with the crisis in general is hard to determine, Williams himself believed that it was a manoeuvre, designed to prevent him leaving uNgoni.

The importance of Williams in the spread of Christianity among the Ngoni has often been underestimated, partly because he suffers by comparison with Koyi, and partly because of the particularly bad relationship he enjoyed with Elmslie. He had arrived in Malawi in December 1883 and was soon at work in uNgoni. By October 1885, he was resident at the substation of Chinyera, some five miles west of Njuyu. Following the death of Koyi he had moved back to Njuyu where he shared a house with Elmslie and his wife. By March 1887 Elmslie was writing in terms in which praise and criticism were about equally mixed, but concluding that with Williams, as with Koyi, 'my life has been happy indeed and their hearts are good and earnest'.

To some extent, at least, Williams, known to the Ngoni as Matandani, seems to have taken Koyi's place, (in their view), as the

118. Ibid., 15 Sept. 1887, 24 Sept. 1887, and 7 October 1887.
120. Williams to Laws, 5 September 1887, Ms.7890, N.L.S.
umteteleli of the mission, and during the build-up of the war crisis in August 1887, he was several times summoned by M'mbelwa. It was often from Williams that Elmslie obtained his information of Ngoni movements and intentions at this time, though, paradoxically, it was Williams' very closeness to the Ngoni, which both made this possible and led to Elmslie's strongest criticisms of his colleague.

Early in September Williams wrote to Laws that he had been tricked into staying in the country. M'mbelwa's sister M'engaela claimed that Williams had been sleeping with Dingase. Williams denied this and asked M'mbelwa to prevent Dingase leaving the area to be married, in order that she might clear his name. The Ngoni counter-claimed that Williams' demand that she stay in the area was tantamount to demanding the girl as a wife, and besides, the fact that she had cooked for him, (in Ngoni society a more important factor than a purely sexual relationship), showed that she was de facto his wife.

The complicated case dragged on for some time, and was the occasion of a drastic deterioration in relations between Williams and Elmslie, who eventually threatened that if Williams was re-appointed to the same station as himself after furlough, he would resign from the mission. Of more importance, here however, was the fact that the case had arisen at a time when the Ngoni feared a total missionary withdrawal from the area. There is, therefore, reason to believe, that

122. Ibid., see for example, Elmslie to Laws, 24 August 1887.
123. Elmslie pointed out that Dingase's sister Dezi, was regarded by the Ngoni as Koyi's wife, because she was cooking for him. In Koyi's case there were no unpleasant repercussions in Ngoni-mission relations.
124. Williams to Laws, 5 Sept., 1887 and 24 Sept. 1887; Elmslie to Laws, 15 September, 1887, Ms.7890, N.L.S.
125. Ibid., Elmslie to Laws, 1 & 13 July 1888, Ms.7891.
whatever the facts behind the case, its prominence at this time, as Williams himself suspected, may have been a thinly-veiled Ngoni attempt to prevent a missionary withdrawal.

Meanwhile the Tonga were equally determined to prevent a missionary withdrawal from the lakeshore which would have left them more vulnerable to Ngoni attack. As a precautionary measure in mid-September Laws decided to evacuate some equipment such as surgical instruments and books to Cape Maclear, for safety. When Ilala returned he began packing other equipment intending to send it and the remaining missionary personnel to the U.M.C.A. station on Likoma island while he went inland for the delayed meeting with the Ngoni. To the Tonga chiefs this looked perilously like abandonment, and Chimbano intervened — refusing to allow the goods to be loaded on the Ilala. The dispute continued for several days, and involved most of the other Tonga chiefs in the area. Eventually they agreed to allow the ladies and some equipment to leave for Likoma, but Laws was not prepared to compromise and the stalemate remained for a few days longer. According to missionary sources the Tonga chiefs eventually agreed to allow Laws complete freedom of movement, though, in effect no missionary personnel were evacuated.

For the best part of a month, Laws had been a virtual prisoner at Bandawe, but on 17 October he hastened to uNgoni in response to an urgent call from Elmslie. When Laws arrived at Njuyu M'mbelwa summoned his council, and the long awaited meeting took place on 27 October 1887.

On the Ngoni side the main participants were M'mbelwa, Mharule (who was said to be representing Mtwalo), and representatives of Mabulabo and Mpherembe. Laws, Elmslie and Williams represented the

mission. The Ngoni at first insisted that all the missionaries should come up to the hills, leaving them free to attack the Tonga. In symbolic language they chided Laws for being an unfaithful wife to M'mbelwa, especially after cattle had been paid as lobola by the Ngoni, which were still with the mission. Mtwalos representatives in particular complained that they gained nothing from the mission, or from a policy of restraint. Eventually a solution was reached whereby the Ngoni agreed to let the missionaries keep open their station at Bandawe, provided they didn't interfere with Ngoni attacks on Chintechi. In return the missionaries agreed to open a station at Mtwalos as soon as possible, (though in fact, it was to be almost two years before it was opened).

The compromise seems strangely unsatisfactory from the Ngoni point of view, particularly since Laws records that M'mbelwa himself seemed very unhappy about it. Though the meeting had, in a sense, cleared the way for an attack on the Tonga, no such attack took place. Yet the crisis seems to have passed almost overnight.

One explanation of this may be to see the crisis primarily as an internal struggle for power within the Ngoni hierarchy. Undoubtedly one element in Mtwalos discontent was his lack of economic advantage which he believed connection with the mission implied. M'mbelwa seems to have been reluctant to allow the mission to settle at Mtwalos. There are several references to this down the years, summed up in Elmslies remark of the missionary promise to open a station at Mtwalos, 'we could have told them that we had tried for years to enter their region

127. See above, p.54.
128. The fullest account of the meeting is a letter from Laws to the Secretary of the Foreign Mission Committee, 8 November 1887, which appeared in the Scottish Leader, 27 January 1888, and can be consulted in Ms.7906, N.L.S.
but were hindered by Rombera; we refrained in the circumstances.\(^{130}\) It could well be, then, that part of the immediate effectiveness of the agreement was that it satisfied Mtwalo; this might also explain M'mbelwa's disquiet, for in spite of McCracken's assertion that 'Mbelwa's acceptance of the missionaries, however, was motivated, if my analysis is correct .... by the wish to remove a source of internal conflict by making the material assets of the mission widely available,'\(^{131}\) it is M'mbelwa's reluctance up to this point, to allow a station at Mtwalo's which needs to be stressed.

Another reason why the crisis passed was, of course, that the attention of both the Tonga and the Ngoni was diverted from their own quarrel by the outbreak of hostilities between the Swahili Arabs and the A.L.C. and Ngonde at the north end of the lake. Within a month of Laws meeting with M'mbelwa in October, Mlozi had attacked karonga and for the next few months both the Ngoni and the Tonga were more concerned with that area.\(^{132}\)

It is possible to go even further, and to argue that by the time of the Ngoni-mission meeting on 27 October the Ngoni-Tonga crisis had already passed. Indeed, as early as 24 September a large Ngoni army made up of M'mbelwa's and Ng'onomo's followers had set out for the west, where, in alliance with the Senga and Bisa, they defeated a Bemba army at Kabondwe, and killed the Bemba chief Ndakala.\(^{133}\) It had already been pointed out that from the beginning of the year the Ngoni feared an Arab attack, and there is evidence to suggest a Bemba-Arab alliance.

which could well have implied a Bemba attack on uNgoni. Thus M'mbelwa and Ng'onomo, in particular, were more worried about their security to the north and west, and this worry may well have been increased by Mlozi's build-up of ruga-ruga forces in September.

Indeed there was by the 1880s, a change in Ngoni raiding patterns, with the emphasis less on big raids against the Tonga, and more on raids to the north and west. Among the factors influencing this pattern may have been the increased Tonga capacity to deal with raids by the acquisition of guns and the building of stockaded villages; the prevalence of cassava, rather than maize amongst the Tonga; the presence and influence of the mission at Bandawe and Njuyu, and the lack of cattle on the lakeshore.

The missionary attitude towards the Ngoni as a result of their attack on the Bemba is also worth noting. Whereas previously the whole concept of Ngoni raiding had been condemned, Elmslie now wrote that, 'the Angoni are the only people who are able to meet Arab invasion, and it may be that they will be used of God to stem the tide of Islamism which threatens to swamp all lawful trading and our beloved Livingstonia Mission'.

The Free Church Monthly, which in June 1887 had been talking of 'taming the wild Ngoni', was a year later referring to them as 'that stout-hearted tribe of Zulus'. Both M'mbelwa and Ng'onomo were keen to help the A.L.C. against the Arabs, and though Elmslie himself

134. Consul Hawes, Despatch No. 3, 16 Jan. 1888, F.O.84/1833, P.R.O., and Elmslie to Laws 7 November 1887, Ms.7890, N.L.S.
135. Potheringham, Adventures, p.44.
136. Elmslie, 27 Dec. 1887, quoted in unidentified article on 'The Arab attack on Free Church Missionaries', in Ms.7906, N.L.S.
137. F.C.S.M., June 1887, p.179, and August 1888, p.139.
138. Elmslie to Laws, 2 March and 13 May 1888, Ms.7891, N.L.S.
eventually suggested they should be used, and Lugard considered employing them, they were never officially involved, though a small Ngoni party did clash with some of Mlozi's followers in October 1888. 139

Visits to Mtwalo by Elmslie in November 1887 and Williams the following month, helped to bring him within the orbit of the mission, while Ng'onomo's reluctance to attack the Tonga at Chintecho without the help of Senga guns effectively brought an end to warfare between the Tonga and the Ngoni. 140

Developments 1888—90

The crisis of 1887 which at one time had looked to the missionaries like culminating in their expulsion from uNgoni, ended by consolidating the mission position there. Yet that is not to say that the position in terms of the Ngoni response to Christianity changed drastically.

Progress throughout 1888 was slow, especially in terms of schoolwork, by which the missionaries set so much store to effect a real change of attitude to Christianity, and towards which the Zansi-Ngoni still looked with considerable suspicion. School attendance at Njuyu was reported to be very poor in March 1888. It improved with the arrival of John A. Smith as a teacher, though he was soon forced to leave again due to the illness of his wife. 141 Nevertheless slow progress was maintained, and by November numbers had crept up to thirty-three. 142

139. Ibid., Elmslie to Laws, 27 September 1889, Ms.7892, Lugard to Laws 5 January 1890, Shepperson Collection, Elmslie to Laws, 22 October 1888, Ms.7891, N.L.S.
140. Ibid., Elmslie to Laws, 10 & 26 December, 1887, Ms.7890, N.L.S.
141. Ibid., Elmslie to Laws, 16 & 22 March, and 21 May 1888, Ms.7891, N.L.S.
142. Ibid., 24 November 1888.
Chinyera was for a time re-opened, and there George Williams with one assistant teacher maintained a small school of three classes, with an enrollment of twenty-seven. 143 His final departure from Malawi in November 1888 led to the closing of Chinyera once again, though Elmslie for a time continued to hold occasional services of worship there. 144

Yet Elmslie, writing early in 1889, was able to speak of 'the changed feelings in regard to our presence and work'. 145 School attendances improved dramatically early in 1889, as did attendances at Sunday services, which were described as 'larger than I have seen them since before Koyi's death'. 146

Undoubtedly, though, the most important development of 1889 was the opening of the new station at Ekwendeni in August of that year. In the intervening period between the missionary promise in October 1887, to open a station as soon as possible, and the eventual settlement of Peter McCallum and his wife there in August 1889, Mtwalo had several times enquired of Elmslie when the station would be opened. In April 1888, for example, Elmslie wrote that Mtwalo was expecting him to open a station near his village, though he doubted whether M'mbelwa would let him go. A few months later Elmslie had to remind Dr. George Smith in Scotland of the promise to open a station at Mtwalo's, and of the size and importance of his district. 147

Apart from Mtwalo's growing impatience several others factors contributed to the opening of Ekwendeni in 1889. One was the steady drift south to the Mzimba district of groups of people from the Njuyu-Hora

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143. George Williams 'Report of Tshinyera' n.d. 1888, Ms.7891, N.L.S.
144. F.G.S.M., July 1889, p.212.
145. Ibid.
146. Elmslie to Laws, 26 January 1889, Ms.7892, N.L.S.
147. Ibid., Elmslie to Laws, 13 April 1888, Ms.7891, and 26 January 1889, Ms.7892.
area, which left the region comparatively less crowded than that around Ekwendeni. Added to this was the missionary miscalculation that Mwalo was the heir-apparent to the paramountcy and would become chief when M'mbelwa died. 148 In addition the strengthening of the missionary staff of uNgoni in 1889 by the temporary help of A. C. Murray of the Dutch Reformed Church Mission, the arrival of Charles Stuart, the transfer of Peter McCallum from Bandawe and the request for baptism of Mawelera and Makara Tembo, made the opening of another station very much easier. 149

The opening of Ekwendeni, at first situated at the confluence of the Lunyangwa and Kafurufuru rivers, some two miles west of its present site, had one important consequence. 150 It marked the end of the period of close missionary alliance with M'mbelwa alone among the Ngoni chiefs, and the beginning of an era of closer association with what was, in effect, the number two chieftaincy in the Ngoni hierarchy. M'mbelwa, perhaps realising this, early in 1890 allowed evangelistic work at his own head village for the first time in seven years. 151 The die, however, was already cast. M'mbelwa's death in 1890, the long regency which followed it, and the transfer of the headquarters of the mission in uNgoni from Njuyu to Ekwendeni in 1896 all served to confirm the shift. Furthermore, when a main station was once again opened among the western section of the Ngoni, at Hora, in 1893, it was with Mzukuzuku, rather than with the M'mbelwa segment that it was primarily associated, and this remained true, though to a lesser extent, even after the move to Loudon in 1902.

148. Ibid., Elmslie to Laws, 13 April 1888, Ms.7891, and Elmslie to Smith, 26 January 1889, Ms.7892.
150. Ibid., Elmslie to Laws, 24 July 1889.
151. F.C.S.M., October 1890, p.303.
Though unpopular with Elmslie, who regarded him as too familiar with the Ngoni, McCallum soon built up a popular reputation among the Ngoni. The late inkosana Mopho Jere, well-known Ngoni historian, who died in April 1979, was, for example given the name McCallum by his grandfather around the time that Ekwendeni opened. When school opened at Ekwendeni in November 1889, attendance shot up to 162 in the first week. Yet the traditional patterns of Ngoni life had not yet been superseded, for in the following month attendance dropped to between 70 and 80 when Mtwalo sent out a war party to the north-end to punish a tribe who had refused to pay a tribute of hoes to him, and for the next few years it became reasonably normal for young men to leave school to take part in a war raid, before returning to continue their studies.

In the same month that Ekwendeni opened, Kawelera and Makara, two of the three Tembo brothers who had been for some years attending Elmslie's nocturnal classes at Njuyu, approached him and requested baptism. (The third brother, Chitesi, was by now a polygamist and was never baptised). Though it was to be another eight months before they were actually baptised by Laws in April 1890, the occasion is of some significance in that it marks the first step towards the creation of an Ngoni church.

152. Of McCallum Elmslie wrote, 'There is a kind of popularity easily obtained, but according to what I have seen detrimental to our highest work. It may please idle young men and women to have a white man in the ring making energetic efforts to imitate their dancing, but it is not Mission work, and does not seem to further it.' Elmslie to Laws, 24 November, 1888, Ms.7891, N.L.S.
154. McCallum to Laws, 16 November and 16 December 1889, Ms.7892, N.L.S.
155. See below, Chapter 2, section headed 'The Expansion of the School System ...'.
156. Elmslie to Laws, 2 August 1889, Ms.7892, N.L.S.
Laws serious illness early in 1890, and his trip to uNgoni to recuperate in March of that year allowed him the opportunity to baptise Mawelera and Makara Tembo near their own home, and with that baptism, the period of early and uncertain contact between the Ngoni and the mission may be said to have come to an end. 157

Conclusion

The original Ngoni contact with the Livingstonia Mission took place at a period of change and uncertainty for the Ngoni themselves - spanning as it did the revolts of the Tonga, Henga and Tumbuka. To some extent their original acceptance of the mission was of a negative nature, in that they were concerned to prevent the mission concluding an exclusive alliance with the Tonga.

The gift of eleven cattle in 1879 was meant to secure the support of the missionaries, and especially of Laws, whose decision to withdraw from Kaning'ina a few months later led to a period of suspicion and mistrust on the part of the Ngoni. That this was largely overcome in the period following the opening of Njuyu in 1882 was largely due to the patient and sympathetic approach of William Koyi.

Internal divisions within the Ngoni state led to a difference of attitude towards the missionaries by different groups, but in at least two ways in the years after 1882, various Ngoni groups found the mission to be of use to them. First of all, though to a lesser extent than they had anticipated, M'mbelwa and the Chiputulas derived some economic advantage from their comparatively close relationship with the missionaries. Secondly both they, and other groups of Ngoni began to

use the missionaries to fulfill some of their traditional religious needs, primarily in the agricultural field, where, especially after 1886, Elmslie built up a reputation as a rain-maker.

During this period, and particularly after the death of Koyi in June 1886, Elmslie's importance amongst the Ngoni was considerable, and though operating under considerable strain during the crisis of 1887, his courage, together with the insights of George Williams, may well have helped to prevent a complete break-down in Ngoni-mission relations.

Finally, the period 1888-90 saw the gradual progress of the religious and educational work of the mission, and the spread of its influence beyond the original M'mbelwa-Chiputula alliance - culminating in the opening of Ekwendeni station in 1889 and the baptism of the first two Ngoni converts in April 1890.
CHAPTER TWO

THE NGONI 'AWAKENING' AND THE ARRIVAL OF FRASER:

1890 - 1900

Introduction

When Dr. Laws baptised the first two Ngoni converts, Mawelera and Makara Tembo at Njuyu in April 1890, the first long period of struggle in the history of the Livingstonia Mission's relations with the Ngoni may be said to have come to an end. True, there were many Ngoni who still opposed the mission totally, but a toe-hold had been gained. By 1890 the missionaries were operating three stations, and a total of three hundred pupils were attending the four schools in the area. The opening of Ekwendeni station in August 1889 marked the departure of the mission from dependence on the friendship of M'mbelwa alone, and M'mbelwa's permission, soon afterwards, to restart preaching at his village, after a lapse of seven years, may have been an attempt to prevent the initiative slipping to Mtwalo.

Elmslie, by now the veteran missionary to the Ngoni, must have been tempted, as he prepared to leave on furlough in April 1890, to contrast the present comparatively healthy situation with the era of struggle and uncertainty, only a few years before. Yet if the contrast seemed great to him, it was nothing, compared to the changes which took place in the next decade. By 1899 the four schools and 300 scholars

1. F.C.S.M., September 1890, p.269.
2. Ibid., October 1890, p.303.
3. Ibid.
had grown to 44 and almost 8000 respectively; the two solitary converts had been joined by more than 800 other adult Ngoni, with more than 1600 catechumens awaiting for admission to the church; and a total of around 200 teachers were leading and directing the rapid expansion of the Ngoni church.

Soon after arriving in Scotland on furlough, Elmslie wrote an article describing the last six years' work in uNgoni, and, while mentioning the progress that had been made, he gave this explanation for the fact that it had not been greater:

It is to be remembered that, unlike some of the tribes who, from the first, welcomed the mission, the Ngoni as they now look on our work, have nothing to gain but much to lose by coming under the influence of the gospel. They do not consider us to be their protectors from stronger tribes or Arab plunderers, because they are unconquered and unassailable on their own ground; and their haughty pride prevents them from submitting readily to anything initiated by an outsider. Their astuteness enabled them at an early period of the work to see that their position as a powerful tribe living by plunder could not be maintained by accepting the principles of the Word of God, and hence arose the enmity evident among the leaders, and the desire to strangle the work from the commencement without openly doing anything to create a breach in the friendship which was secured by the pioneers.

If this interpretation of the relations between the Ngoni and the mission is accepted, the question must then be asked, 'What happened in the 1890s seriously to change that relationship, and its practical outcome in terms of converts to Christianity?'

It has to be acknowledged first of all that many new factors entered the situation in the 1890s, most ominous among them from the Ngoni point of view, the encroaching possibility of European colonial

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control, as seen in the campaigns against Mlozi, Mwase Kasungu, Gomani, and eventually Mpezeni. The death of both Mtwalo and M'mbelwa within a few months of each other in 1890 and 1891 created a political vacuum which led to a temporary upsurge of raiding, but in effect enhanced the position of the mission as a stabilizing force in the area. The growing influence of the small but effective group of Ngoni Christians, both through the school system and in the day to day relations of village life, also helped to change Ngoni attitudes towards Christianity.

Whereas in the 1880s the Ngoni had regarded Christianity, as Elmslie pointed out, as incompatible with their own supremacy, they began in the 1890s to wonder whether an alliance with the mission might not be a necessary component of the survival of that supremacy.

Finally, the work of two young missionaries, George Steele and Donald Fraser, among the Ngoni - one at either end of the decade - bringing as it did a slightly more relaxed attitude to Ngoni culture and its value, made it easier for the Ngoni to evolve a response to Christianity which took account both of their traditional religious values and of the changing world in which they found themselves.

The Work of Dr. George Steele

George Steele arrived in uNgoni in August 1890, shortly after Elmslie had left on furlough. This, and the fact that Charles Stuart, who had arrived at Njuyu in the previous year, was going through a period of uncertainty in his own relations with the Ngoni, gave Steele an unusual amount of authority in the period immediately after his arrival.

7. Steele to Laws, 11 August 1890, Ms.7893, N.L.S.
8. Ibid., various letters from Stuart to Laws, July - August 1890.
Like many of the early Livingstonia missionaries, Steele was a self-made man, who had gone through a period of struggle to obtain an education. An orphan at two years old, and the youngest of seven children, he had been brought up by his older brothers and sisters, and had attended the Buchanan Institution in Glasgow. Leaving school at thirteen he had worked for a draper, and then helped his brother in a boot and shoe business he was running. After attending night school for four years he entered Glasgow University, from which he graduated in 1889 with degrees in medicine and surgery. Again, like many of his Livingstonia colleagues, he had spent some time during his university career working in the poorer districts of Glasgow.

Steele's frail physical appearance — he was only 5 ft. 1½ ins. tall, and weighed just 113 lbs. — disguised a determination which soon showed itself in his attitude to itineration. In August 1890, just two weeks after his arrival, he wrote to Scotland that he had completed the strenuous 15 mile walk from Njuyu to Ekwendeni in six hours. This was to be the beginning of a widespread use of itineration which lasted right up until his death. In 1893 he undertook a major tour of exploration with Dr. Henry, as well as a short evangelistic tour; in 1894 he made two further evangelistic tours, and in 1895 he had just completed a tour of the district when he took ill and died.

In his 1893 report Steele described one such short tour:

10. Medical report on George Steele, Ms. 7877, N.L.S.
11. Ibid., Steele to Laws, 23 August 1890, Ms. 7893.
13. 'Additional information with umgoni Schedule'. (no date, Steele's writing), Ms. 7877, N.L.S.
14. Ibid., Elsmie to Smith, 1 July 1895, Ms. 7878.
This year I was enabled to take an evangelistic tour among the villages lasting ten days. Eighteen villages were visited; meetings held in all. The magic lantern at night was very useful in impressing upon the minds of the natives the Gospel scenes. This is a new departure here so far as I am aware, but I think it ought to be developed. Regular work on one's station is very important and very engrossing, but something ought to be done, if possible, by means of preaching, the lantern, and medicine for the outlying population; and in ten days or so a good lot of work can be got through.15

Elmslie was later to criticise these tours by Steele, saying that, 'I am not of the opinion that such visits as Dr. Steele paid to villages on his journey are fitted to do much good unless there is a steady influence such as we find our village kraal-gate schools exert'.16

Yet in making such a criticism Elmslie was to some extent misunderstanding Steele's purpose in such tours. It was not primarily to impart Christian teaching, but rather to arouse interest in areas previously untouched by the work of the mission. He saw it as closely allied to the school system of the mission, and to the work of local Ngoni teachers. This is made clear in a note he encloses with the Ugoni schedule for 1894, when he says 'Some of the Senior teachers at Njuyu are going out in the beginning of the year to commence evangelistic and school work in two new districts. They will live among the people and in a very real sense become missionaries to their own countrymen'.17

He had earlier commented, in January 1892, 'I think now, more than ever, that our school system is, far above all else, the best evangelistic

16. Elmslie to Laws, 7 September 1896, Elmslie File, C.S.A. This file of material, containing between 150 and 200 letters from Elmslie to Laws, written between 1894 and 1907, was found by the present author in Church of Scotland Offices, 121 George Street, Edinburgh. It did not appear on any catalogue list there and does not seem to have been quoted in any previously published work. It is now in process of transfer to the National Library of Scotland.
17. 'Additional information with Ugoni Schedule', Ms.7877, N.L.S.
method.' In actual fact the differences between Elmslie and Steele - as later between Elmslie and Fraser - were not so much a difference of method as a difference of speed of implementation.

During the earlier pioneering period the steady determined work of Elmslie had been vital. Now, as Elmslie himself admitted, a new stage of development had been entered. It was a stage in which imagination more than organisation was to be important, a stage above all, where the spread of the church was to be vitally linked with the work of the small but growing number of Ngoni Christian teachers.

The Expansion of the School System and the Work of Ngoni Christians

In 1890 when Steele arrived there were 4 schools in uNgoni, at Njuyu, Chinyera, Mlma and Kwendeni, with a total enrollment of somewhere around 300 pupils. During the next five years a steady expansion of the system took place, so that by the time of Steele's death the number of schools had reached 20 with an enrollment of 1241. Of the 71 teachers employed by the mission in uNgoni in 1895, 42 were baptised, out of a total church membership of around 60. At this point in the church's development, in other words, 70% of all baptised adults were employed as teachers. This was a state of affairs which could not long survive, as the church began to expand, but it does illustrate three points very clearly: the very close connection at this stage between education and evangelism, the link between education, baptism and wage employment, and the almost complete failure of Christianity up to this

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18. Ibid., Steele to Laws, 13 January 1892, Ms.7896.
21. Ibid.
point to make any impact on the older members of the tribe.

Parallel with this expansion of the school system over these years, was the growth of the Ngoni church. The increasingly rigid system of hearers' and catechumens' classes, begun by Laws in the late 1880s at Bandawe, meant that the growth of the church in terms of baptisms lagged several years behind the expansion of schools, though to some extent this would have happened anyway, given that the commitment to the new way of life was more specific and definite in baptism than it was in school attendance.

By 1895 the number of church members had increased to around 60 - 41 of these having been baptised during the year. The unusually high number of baptisms in that period perhaps depleted the ranks of the catechumens, which stood at only 23, though 200 adults were in the various hearers' classes. Of more importance than the mere statistical growth of the church, however, was the fact that increasingly the instruction and encouragement of the prospective converts was in the hands of men like Mawelera and Makara Tembo - the former of whom was to serve the church as a teacher and evangelist for more than forty years, before finally retiring in 1934, just three years before his death.

By the end of 1890 permanent school buildings had been established at Chinyera and Mlima, both out-stations a few miles from Njuyu. Here Mawelera and his brother were in charge, with several other teachers to assist them. Steele in 1891 and Stuart the following year, both reported that they were doing good work - Stuart adding that at Chinyera

22. Elmslie to Laws, 10 October 1899, Ms.7892, N.L.S.
23. Report for Ngoniland, 1895, Ms.7879, N.L.S.
24. Livingstonia Presbytery Minutes, 13 July 1934 and 4 August 1937, N.A.M.
the daily attendance was usually over one hundred, and at Mlma sometimes as many as eighty. The attendance at Njuyu, on the other hand was declining, possibly due to a shifting population.\footnote{26}

The opening of Hora in 1893 greatly extended the geographical area of the mission's influence. The new station, 15 miles south-west of Njuyu, was at first in charge of Peter McCallum, who was joined in August 1894 by David Malawantu,\footnote{27} returning after several years education at Lovedale. When McCallum and his wife were later transferred to Mwenzo in 1896, Malawantu took over at Hora.

During most of this period (1890-95) Elmslie was absent from uNgoni. When he returned from furlough he was posted to Bandawe\footnote{28} during Laws absence on a tour of Old Calabar. He paid a visit to uNgoni around April 1893 to choose a new site for Ekwendeni station\footnote{29} — opened only in 1889, but forced to move following the migration of most of Mtwalo's people to a new site on the eastern side of the Lunyangwa river. It was not until February 1894 that Elmslie finally settled in uNgoni once again.\footnote{30} By then, it was almost four years since he had last worked there. In the year in which he had left to go on furlough he had written of the incompatibility of the Ngoni position as a powerful tribe whose way of life was based on raiding, with the acceptance of Christianity;\footnote{31} in the year in which he returned Steele was writing of the possibility of uNgoni being 'nominaly Christian in this generation'.\footnote{32} If the divergence of the two views partly reflected the difference of outlook of their authors, to a much greater extent it illustrated the

\footnotesize{26. Ibid., and August 1891, p.241.}  
\footnotesize{27. 'Additional information with Ugoni Schedule', Ms.7877, N.I.S.}  
\footnotesize{28. Livingstonia Reports 1893-1903. Bandawe Report 1893-4.}  
\footnotesize{29. F.C.S.E., December 1893, p.277.}  
\footnotesize{30. Livingstonia Reports 1893-1903. Bandawe Report 1894.}  
\footnotesize{31. F.C.S.E., October 1890, p.305.}  
\footnotesize{32. Ibid., August 1895, p.184.}
change in circumstances which had occurred between 1890 and 1894. Steele attributed the success of the work to 'real apostolic methods. Those who have been saved and taught go out to proclaim the way of salvation to others.'\textsuperscript{33} Before his letter could be published he was dead.

Yet if the views he expressed appear to be somewhat naive and idealistic, they in fact contain a simple but accurate assessment of one element in the comparative success of Christianity during these years. That was the central part played by Ngoni Christians themselves in the spread of their new faith. For a short time the conflicting attractions of raiding and education co-existed - some Ngoni youths trying their hand at both. School was interrupted while the pupils took part in a raid, before returning to their books.\textsuperscript{34} Elmslie objected that such a thing had been allowed,\textsuperscript{35} but when raiding eventually gave way to education as the more popular pursuit of Ngoni youth, it was not missionary disapproval but more subtle pressures which had caused its decline, as Fraser was later to admit.\textsuperscript{36}

The Death of Steele and its Effect

By the middle of 1895 Steele’s five year tour was drawing to an end, and he undertook a tour of the district before leaving UGoni. He had visited the areas around Njuyu and Ekwendeni and was planning a similar trip to the Hora district when he became ill, and died of fever at Ekwendeni on 26 June 1895. Elmslie contrasted his funeral with those of Sutherland and Koyi ten years earlier when the Ngoni would not come to help. Now, he reported, Steele’s coffin was carried

\textsuperscript{33} Ibid.
\textsuperscript{34} Fraser, Autobiography, pp.60-4.
\textsuperscript{35} Elmslie to Laws, 30 June 1896, Elmslie File, C.S.A.
\textsuperscript{36} Donald Fraser, _Winning a Primitive People_, London 1914, p.301.
by the Ngoni to the grave.  

Laws, who by this time had returned from an extended furlough, and had settled at the new station of Khondowe, heard of his death with dismay:

Dr. Steele's removal is a great blow to the work in Ngoniland, and a loss to us all. By his earnestness in his own work, his considerate regard of the work of others, his kindly helpfulness to all whom he could assist, and his general humour, he had endeared himself to one and all his colleagues, as well as to the natives, whose highest welfare he constantly sought.

In one sense, of course, Laws' assessment of Steele's death as 'a great blow to the work in Ngoniland' was entirely accurate. His contribution had been important and distinctive. There was another sense, however, in which his death was a blessing in disguise, for it left uNgoni without a single ordained minister and thus allowed the growing band of Ngoni teachers an unprecedented amount of freedom and responsibility in the period between Steele's death and the arrival of Fraser eighteen months later.

Neither Elmslie (who was not ordained until December 1897), Stuart nor McCallum was able to dispense the sacraments, so in November 1895 A. G. MacAlpine travelled to uNgoni from Bandawe to baptise and administer Communion. MacAlpine, renowned as a stickler for detail, insisted that since only he was qualified to administer the sacraments, and he didn't speak any chiNgoni, the services would have to take place in chiTonga. This so incensed Elmslie, who was suspicious of anything
he thought savoured of sacerdotalism, that he refused to have MacAlpine back in uNgoni to baptise or dispense Communion. When Yohane Jere put away six wives and requested baptism in February 1896, Elmslie preferred to delay admitting him, rather than have MacAlpine administer the sacrament. In any case MacAlpine's departure on furlough soon afterwards removed the only ordained minister in either uNgoni or uTonga, and meant that by the time Fraser arrived in January 1897, no sacraments had been administered in uNgoni for more than a year.

Had this situation gone on for much longer, it might well have produced a disillusionment and impatience on the part of those waiting for baptism, as happened on the lakeshore in 1908, contributing powerfully to the growth of Elliot Kamwana's Watchtower movement. As it was, however, the comparatively small number of those actually in the catechumens' class when Steele died, (due to his baptismal tour just before his death), and the energetic work of the Ngoni teachers in the next eighteen months, combined to produce a pool of young Christians eager but not yet impatient for baptism.

A new station had been opened at Elangeni in 1895, with Nakara Tembo in charge. Following Steele's death, Kawelera Tembo was left in charge of Njuyu, and by 1896, (following the McCallums' move to Mwenzo, and the apparent replacement of David Malawantu at Hora subsequent to a quarrel in which he accused Elmslie of being a racialist),

42. Ibid., 9 December 1895.
43. Ibid., 29 February 1896.
44. Report for Ngoniland 1895, Ms.7879, N.L.S.
45. Ibid.
46. Elmslie to Laws, 19 September 1896, Elmslie File, C.S.A. Malawantu's house was burnt down; he accused some of Ng'onomo's people and Elmslie referred the case to Mzukuzuku. Malawantu wrote to Elmslie in chiNgoni complaining: 'because we are black people therefore ye cannot bother yourselves with this indaba, showing that you do not cont'd.
Jonathan Chirwa took over Hora station. 47 In addition out-stations in the Mzimba district were under the control of Elijah Chavula and John Mtafu. 48

By the end of 1896 Elmslie was reporting that 'The work has been carried on without interruption, and although the sacraments have not been dispensed for over a year now there have been additions to the catechumen's classes of many whom we believe are earnest followers of Jesus Christ'. 49

He was particularly warm in his praise of the work of the Tembo brothers. Writing of Mawelera's work at Njuyu just after he had left uNgoni on furlough in 1897, Elmslie commented, 'It is an honour to be associated with him in the same work. Gentle and unassuming, he has won for himself a unique position among his fellow natives.' 50 A few months earlier Elmslie had confided to Laws that at Njuyu 'some whom neither Dr. Steele or myself could gain at all are coming forward'. 51 Of Makara's work at the new station of Elangeni Elmslie wrote, 'It is gratifying to know that in six months Makara has produced over a dozen readers of the gospel who were young warriors before'. 52

The net result of such work was that by the end of 1896 there was a total of 154 catechumens awaiting baptism. More than 130 of them had been admitted during that year 53 - the vast majority in areas under direct African control.

At the beginning of 1896 Elmslie had reported that 'We cannot
report any awakening of an unusual nature such as has been experienced elsewhere, but rather the increasing interest in and intelligent reception of truth as the result of patient sowing of the seed in former years. By the end of the year the same could still have been said; yet it was nevertheless true that a deep and genuine interest in Christianity was beginning to take hold of many of the Ngoni - an interest which was to become increasingly apparent in the next few years.

Donald Fraser - Background and Early Life

It was into this situation that Donald Fraser arrived in January 1897. Unlike most young missionaries arriving for their first tour, he was already a well-known figure in church circles, not only in Britain, but in America and several parts of Europe. His reputation rested on his work for the Student Volunteer Missionary Union, and this period of his life is so seminal that no adequate understanding of his work, attitudes and methods during his early years in Ngoni is possible without first attempting an analysis of his life up to 1896.

He was born on 1st June 1870, the fourth of eight children of William Fraser, the Free Church minister at Lochgilphead in Argyllshire. While he therefore belongs to that minority of Livingstonia missionaries who came from clerical or middle-class backgrounds, the background of his father William is in many ways typical of the Livingstonia type. William Fraser's family came from the Black Isle, in the North-East

54. Report for Ngoniland 1895, Ms.7879, N.L.S.
55. Ibid., Fraser to Smith, Ekwendeni, 16 January 1897, Ms.7880.
Highlands. His father was a crofter and weaver, who later moved to Inverness, where both he and his wife died while William was still young. He became an apprentice in a painter's shop, and after a conversion experience at around the time of the Disruption, decided to become a Free Church minister and began attending night school. He moved to Glasgow where he attended the University and later the Free Church Theological Hall, finishing his course there in 1860 at the age of thirty-six; he then became assistant to Rev. Mackenzie of Lochgilphead, where he remained until his death in June 1892.  

Donald Fraser's interest in his ancestors and their background was considerable, and he made several attempts to trace his forebearers, including one during a family holiday on the Black Isle the year before he died. His father's experience, tempered by his own, undoubtedly had a deep effect on his outlook and views.

After a period at Glasgow High School, Donald entered Glasgow University in 1886 at the age of sixteen. Four years later he left without completing his M.A. and went immediately to the Free Church Hall. His wife explains in her biography of him that his failure to complete his M.A. course was due to his inability to sit for his exam in Mental Philosophy - since both his time and money were limited, and he was busy preparing for his entrance exam to the Free Church Hall.  

It is quite likely however, that the real reason was deeper. Fraser was going through a period of religious uncertainty which may have begun when he attended Edward Caird's lectures in moral philosophy,
and stretched into the middle of 1891. His religious background, while not narrow, was comparatively sheltered, and he went up to university at an early and impressionable age. He may have been shocked by some of Caird’s views on the philosophy of religion, and begun to doubt the reality of his religious faith. This period of uncertainty came to an end in 1891 while attending the Keswick Convention for the first time; there he underwent a deep religious experience about which he was reluctant to talk, but which he later described as ‘the wonder of forgiveness’. Keswick at that time was looked upon with some suspicion by many Presbyterians in Scotland, particularly because of its alleged teaching of the doctrine of perfectionism, but Fraser seemed able then, as later, to use the experience as one which widened, rather than narrowed his religious beliefs.

Three years later, at a student conference at Keswick, Fraser had a second, and perhaps more important religious experience. A speech by the American student Robert Speer on the watchword of the American Student Volunteer Missionary Union, 'The Evangelization of the World in this Generation', is said to have had a powerful effect, not only on Fraser, but on several of the other students present, such as J. H. Oldham, Temple Cairdner and Douglas Thornton, all of whom were to become leading missionaries or mission experts in the next thirty years.

59. Ibid.
61. See, for example, F.C.S.M., September 1893, p. 197.
For Fraser, however, the speech was only the beginning of the experience. He spent the night in prayer and meditation at the nearby Castlerigg Stone Circle, (often mistakenly called the 'Druid Circle'), lying about 1.5 miles east of Keswick. One of his companions at the conference later recalled that 'after that we all felt the prophetic touch of leadership was upon Donald Fraser'. This experience was to stay with him for the rest of his life, and a picture of the Castlerigg Circle by moonlight hung above his desk until he died.

Impossible though it is to define the nature of the experience, an estimate of its significance can be at least attempted. In the short term it obviously confirmed and strengthened his views about the British Student Volunteer Missionary Union, then in its infancy, and fired him with enthusiasm for its future development. It also had a more long term significance. Together with his earlier experience of 1891, it is likely that this encounter instilled in him a belief in the value of large religious gatherings such as later characterised his work in uNgoni. But it would be wrong to think of Fraser's approach to these gatherings as too rigidly following the Keswick pattern. His feeling for the out-of-doors and for nature, and his interest in Celtic prehistory may well have been a factor in his attitude towards Ngoni culture and its interaction with Christianity. That Fraser's linking of religious experience and the world of nature was not just a passing fancy, is indicated by the fact that more than thirty years later when he was confronted by the dilemma of whether to remain in Africa, or answer a call to return to Scotland as Foreign Mission

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63. Ibid.
64. Agnes R. Fraser, Fraser, p.27.
65. Mrs. V. MacLauchlin, personal interview, 28 August 1978.
Secretary, he spent a day alone in the African bush meditating and praying, much as he had done in 1894 at the Castlerigg Stone Circle.

The Origin and Development of the Student Volunteer Missionary Union

Fraser became widely known during these years primarily through his connection with the Student Volunteer Missionary Union of Great Britain and Ireland which he had helped to found, and whose Travelling Secretary he became in 1893. The origins of the movement have been traced back to the D. L. Moody evangelistic campaign of 1873 (which certainly had its effect on an earlier generation of Livingstonia missionaries); but Fraser's connections with the movement go back to the mid-1880s when he met C. T. Studd and Stanley Smith, two of the original 'Cambridge Seven', during one of their visits to Scotland. Another outcome of these visits was the beginning of Henry Drummond's Sunday evening meetings for Edinburgh students, which were to affect the whole climate of Scottish student opinion in the late 1880s and early 1890s.

It was not until 1891, however, and Fraser's first visit to the Keswick Convention, that the impetus towards the creation of the Student Volunteer Missionary Union began to crystallize. On the Saturday morning one of the speakers was Robert P. Wilder, a founder of the American Student movement, and Fraser was so impressed by what he said that he approached Wilder and asked him to speak in Glasgow. Early

66. Sermon by Dr. R. W. Stewart, 27 August 1933. Privately held by his daughter Miss Evelyn Stewart, to whom I am grateful for permission to consult it. Dr. Stewart mentions that Fraser referred to his day of meditation in the bush in 'a long, kind, intimate letter' to him.


in 1892 Wilder visited Scotland and spoke at Edinburgh, Glasgow and Aberdeen. In the following months he spoke at Cambridge, Oxford and London. One result of these meetings was a conference in Edinburgh on 2nd and 3rd April 1892 attended by representatives of eight English, Scottish and Irish universities at which the Student Volunteer Missionary Union of Great Britain and Ireland was formed.69

The movement was designed specifically to encourage students to consider the possibility of becoming foreign missionaries, and anyone wishing to join had to sign a declaration which read, 'I am willing and desirous, God permitting, to become a foreign missionary'. (Later changed to 'It is my purpose, if God permit, to become a foreign missionary' to correspond with the declaration of the American movement).70 By the summer of 1893 Fraser had become Travelling Secretary of the Student Volunteer Missionary Union, and spent most of his time traveling around universities and colleges, encouraging support for the foreign missionary movement. His experiences there, especially in colleges with no Volunteer Union, led him to suggest the formation of a more general Student Christian organization, the Inter-University Christian Union (later the British Colleges Christian Union),71 whose Travelling Secretary Fraser became in 1894.

Earlier in the year, however, Fraser had visited Detroit, as a delegate to the American Student Volunteer Convention. Here he discussed with John Mott the possibility of a world student movement. During the Keswick Student Conference of 1895, when Mott and Luther Wishard, another leader of the American body, were present, the topic

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69. Ibid., and p.29.
70. Ibid., pp.30 and 34.
71. Ruth Rouse, World Federation, p.56.
was discussed again with a group of British students which included Fraser. A tentative constitution was drawn up, and in August 1895 the World's Student Christian Federation was formed at a meeting at Vadstena in Sweden.\textsuperscript{72}

By the end of 1895 the Student Volunteer Missionary Union in Britain had grown to the extent that more than one thousand students had pledged themselves as missionaries, though only two hundred and twelve had actually sailed.\textsuperscript{73} This was due not to second thoughts on the part of many students, (only twenty-two had renounced their pledge), but to the fact that many of those pledged were still at university, and that the main churches had been financially overwhelmed by the large number of applications.

The Executive of the Volunteer movement decided that a conference should be held 'to issue a challenge to the Church, by a demonstration of our strength'.\textsuperscript{74} (That is to encourage the churches to provide more financial backing for Student Volunteers who wished to serve them abroad). A second aim of the conference was to encourage the movement among continental colleges.

The conference met at Liverpool in January 1896, with Fraser as chairman. The extent to which the Student Volunteer movement had succeeded in gaining the respect of the missionary establishment in Britain may be gauged by the fact that forty-two British missionary societies sent official representatives to Liverpool. Six hundred and thirty-eight British students, and seventy-seven foreign students attended representing twenty-four nationalities.\textsuperscript{75}

\textsuperscript{72} Ibid., pp.52, 57 and 62.
\textsuperscript{73} Hake Jesus King, p.111.
\textsuperscript{74} Ibid., p.3.
\textsuperscript{75} Ibid., pp.17 and 18.
Fraser's position as chairman of such a conference was unusual because of his youth. (He was twenty-five at the time). Commenting on this, and upon Fraser's impact in the post, Tissington Tatlow later remarked

by common consent of all the manner in which he chaired the conference added very greatly to its spiritual effectiveness. It was a time when chairmen were always senior men, and the sight of a youthful chairman was a great novelty. His chairing was a great triumph for Fraser in the eyes of the missionary leaders present.  

One such missionary leader from Fraser's own church was Dr. George Smith, Secretary of the Free Church of Scotland Foreign Mission Committee who gave an address at the Liverpool Conference. Another was Dr. George Robson (Fraser's future father-in-law), a leading United Presbyterian minister, who after the union with the Free Church in 1900, was to become editor of the United Free Church Missionary Record. The importance of such contacts was not that Fraser gained any personal prestige, but that he went out to Malawi as a young man already well-known and respected by the leaders of his church, with the result that his views and policies carried more weight than those of perhaps any other first-term Livingstonia missionary since Robert Laws in 1875.

Probably the most important single decision of the Liverpool Conference was the adoption of the watchword of the American Student Volunteer movement, 'The Evangelization of the World in this Generation'. Both in America and in Britain this watchword had called forth criticism from some quarters as being totally unrealistic and impracticable. Fraser found it necessary in presenting the report of the executive to point out that 'by evangelization we do not mean conversion, nor do we mean to disparage, but to emphasize the value of

76. Tissington Tatlow, Student Christian Movement, p. 78.
educational missions'. John Mott, the General Secretary of the World's Student Christian Federation, (and later chairman of the Edinburgh Missionary Conference of 1910), thought it wise to make much the same point at more length in his book, *The Evangelization of the World in this Generation*, published in 1900.

Regardless of its practicality the adoption of 'the Watchword' by the British Student Volunteer Missionary Union is of considerable importance for the psychological sense of urgency which it engendered in the movement, (and to a lesser extent in the churches which it influenced). Of even more importance are the theological assumptions which 'the Watchword' implied, and which were clearly recognised and accepted by most of the Student Volunteers. Central amongst these assumptions was the belief that the Second Coming of Christ could be helped forward in time by a quicker evangelization of the world. This was based on a literal interpretation of Biblical passages such as Matthew Ch.24 v.14, ("And this gospel of the Kingdom shall be preached in all the world for a witness unto all nations; and then shall the end come.').

In speeches to the conference both C. T. Studd, (on furlough from China), and Donald Fraser, emphasized this interpretation. Studd in particular stressed the need for increased urgency. "I want the Lord Jesus back to this earth again, and if we are to have this soon, we must do this very thing, preach the Gospel to every creature."

Fraser, in introducing and explaining 'the Watchword', commented, "As those that look for this appearing, let us press forward with deeper

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77. *Make Jesus King*, p.114.
Donald Fraser as a young man
fervency of prayer and effort, that before another generation shall have passed away, the Gospel may be preached as a witness to all nations'.

In general terms such a view encouraged a sense of urgency among its adherents, and a fervent belief that they were part of a great crusade which was nearing its climax. In particular terms Fraser's adherence to this doctrine, at least at this stage of his career, goes far towards explaining the great emphasis which he placed upon the need for extension in Malawi at the turn of the century - a view which brought him into conflict with some of his colleagues, notably Elmslie.

Fraser spent the first few months of 1896 on an extensive tour of western Europe, to encourage the Student Volunteer Movement there. In the course of his travels he visited France, Switzerland, Holland, Denmark, Sweden, and Germany. Regardless of Fraser's influence on the Student Volunteer movements of those countries, which was said to be considerable, the journey was important for the ecumenical contacts and insights which it afforded Fraser.

His ordination at the Wynd Church in Glasgow on 21st June 1896 falls into much the same category. Fraser had never completed his theological studies. He had left the Free Church Hall to take up the position of Travelling Secretary of the Student Volunteer Missionary Union, and the question of whether or not he might be ordained was consequently in some doubt. He had applied to the Livingstonea Committee in June 1895 to go to Malawi as a missionary, and, after

79. Ibid., p.117.
80. Tissington Tatlow, Student Christian Movement, pp.80-1.
81. George Smith to Fraser, 1 July 1895, Ms.7776, N.I.S.
an initial problem when he failed his first medical examination, he was appointed in February 1896. Now he volunteered to go to Malawi as a layman, but in view of the theology he had done and his experience with the Student Volunteer Missionary Union it was decided to petition the General Assembly to allow his ordination, to which they agreed.

At the time there was a Pan-Presbyterian Conference in progress in Glasgow and the Free Church of Scotland Monthly reported that 'representatives of the Protestant Churches of Switzerland, France, Belgium, Holland and the U.S.A. joined in laying hands on the head of the young missionary'. Less than a week later, on 27th June 1896, Fraser sailed for Africa.

Tissington Tatlow, in his history of the Student Christian Movement (formed by the amalgamation in 1898 of the Student Volunteer Missionary Union and the British Colleges' Christian Union) says that Donald Fraser 'left his mark permanently on the Movement'. What is beyond dispute is that the Movement left its mark permanently on Fraser, and helped to shape his views for many years to come. It is worthwhile, therefore, to attempt to summarise the nature of that influence on Fraser, on the eve of his departure for Africa.

In the first place his contacts undoubtedly broadened his theological outlook. In the late 1880s he had been startled by some of the views he heard at an early student conference in Scotland, but by

82. Elmslie to Laws, 30 January 1897, Elmslie File, C.S.A.
83. Smith to Fraser, 26 February 1896, Ms.7776, N.L.S.
84. Sermon by Dr. R. W. Stewart, 27th August 1933.
86. Tissington Tatlow, Student Christian Movement, p.63.
87. Agnes R. Fraser, Fraser, p.215.
1900 he was approving of the Student Christian Movement move towards critical Bible study, to the surprise of some of the younger leaders. At the same time he developed then, and never lost, an extreme pietism almost mystical in its emphasis, which was grounded in experience rather than doctrine. This combination of theological tolerance and personal devotion led in Malawi to a greater flexibility than that displayed by some of his other colleagues on such questions as polygamy and rate of baptisms.

Then again, the whole emotional background of the adoption of 'the Watchword', (it began to go out of favour after about ten years), encouraged an urgency of approach to the question of evangelization which, as already pointed out, may well have affected Fraser's attitude towards extension in the Livingstonia Mission. His own theology of 'hastening the Coming' was probably less mechanical and more humanitarian than that of some other Volunteers. His concern was not simply with the saving of souls, but with people.

'Only a nigger,' the world sneers. Not so, he is a man, who can become a Son of God .... This is what is wrong with the church. It does not recognise that all over the world God's masterpieces are being lost - for ever lost - to the world, and no one is caring.

Thirdly, his many contacts within the British Student Volunteer Missionary Union, his visits to Europe and America, and the nature of his ordination all encouraged a streak of ecumenism in Fraser's nature which was borne out not only in his continuing contacts with what became the Student Christian Movement, but by his desire in Malawi for a single 'Church of Central Africa'.

88. Ibid.
Fourthly, the nature of the series of conferences which Fraser attended and then led between 1891 and 1896, as well as his own visit to Europe, during which he 'did the work of an evangelist before all else', developed in him an ability for leading and a belief in the value of the large evangelistic conference as a valid missionary method. Such conferences were to characterise his work among the Ngoni, and even Elmslie, who was somewhat sceptical about their value when unaccompanied by 'solid teaching' recognised Fraser's talent in this respect, and even proposed to Laws that he should be set free for special evangelistic work at Bandawe and in uNgoni, after his return from furlough in 1901.

Two final points are of particular importance for the first years of Fraser's work in uNgoni. He rose to leadership in the Student Volunteer Missionary Union at a time of unprecedented interest in and enthusiasm for foreign missions. The whole tone of the movement was one of buoyant expectancy. After the Liverpool Conference and his visit to Europe, Fraser set out on a tour of South African colleges where he met with the same optimism and ready response. He was accustomed to success, and he approached the Ngoni in the same frame of mind. Laws worried that the move from the excitement of his work in South Africa to the 'plodding' of uNgoni might produce a mental and physical shock in Fraser, but Fraser arrived expecting success, and that very expectation became an important factor in the Ngoni approach to Christianity in the years which followed.

Finally, as mentioned above, Fraser arrived in Malawi not as a

90. Ruth Rouse, World Federation, p.83.
91. Elmslie to Laws, Livingstonia, 28 May 1900, Elmslie File, C.S.A.
92. Laws to Smith, Livingstonia, 19 September 1896, Ms.7879*, N.L.S.
raw recruit to be moulded and shaped by the existing policies of the mission, but as an experienced and respected leader of the Student Missionary movement. He had the ear of many prominent members, clerical and lay, of his own church, and a ready outlet for his views in the columns of the *Free Church Monthly*. 93

**Fraser’s South African Tour**

Before Fraser left Scotland, the Livingstonia Committee had already agreed that he should spend six weeks visiting the schools and colleges of South Africa in order to forward the work of the Student Volunteer Movement there. 94 His arrival coincided with the first South African Student Conference, held at Stellenbosch, the main speaker at which was Luther Wishard from America. 95

Within a week or two of his arrival Fraser was writing to Dr. George Smith in Scotland explaining that the need among South African students was so great that he felt called to remain among them for three months. 96 The fact that he could write back to Scotland in these terms at all, given that he was a young missionary who had not yet reached his allocated field of work, is an indication both of his own spiritual self-assurance, and of the friendly relationship he had already established with Smith.

Fraser spent the next three months touring in the Western and Eastern Cape. In that time he visited Wellington, Cape Town, Paarl,

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93. Between leaving Scotland in June 1896 and July 1911, when Robson resigned as Editor of what had become the *United Free Church Missionary Record*, Fraser contributed more than fifty articles and letters to the magazine.
95. Agnes R. Fraser, *Fraser*, p.39.
96. Fraser to Smith, 28 July 1896, Ms.7879, N.L.S.
Lovedale, Grahamstown and Somerset East, as well as Bloemfontein in the Orange Free State. Although the stated object of his visit was 'to rouse the students to see the great need of starting some form of Christian work in the Colleges of South Africa, and to awaken a new interest in Foreign Missions', many of the meetings took the form of a conventional evangelistic campaign with Fraser reporting that 'at some of the meetings the audience was completely broken down, and uncontrolled sobs told of hearts weary for Christ'. Although Fraser did visit some centres of African church work, such as Lovedale, his main concern seems to have been with the Europeans of South Africa, and primarily with the Dutch Reformed Church. Though he himself remained on good terms with Dutch Reformed churchmen and missionaries throughout his career, and admired certain aspects of their work, he does not appear to have made any significant impact on Boer/British relations, or on the racial views of Dutch Reformed Christians. It is not unlikely that in the euphoric mood of evangelistic success he underestimated the seriousness of both problems. Certainly when John Mott and Ruth Rouse visited South Africa ten years later they found both the enmity of Boer and Briton, (obviously increased in the wake of the Second Boer War), and the hostility between black and white, to be major issues with which the South African Student Movement needed to come to grips. Ruth Rouse later commented that 'the mass of Dutch students needed conversion to missions, as well as to a more liberal attitude on the Native question'.

97. Ibid.
From Stellenbosch at the beginning of his tour Fraser, as well as writing to Smith in Scotland, had written a note to Laws at Khondowe explaining that he proposed to remain over the rainy season in South Africa. Whether this meant the South African or the Malawian rainy season is not clear; judging by his letter to Smith the former would seem more likely, though Laws seems to have assumed the latter. At any rate Laws sent a telegram to James Stewart at Lovedale asking him to advise Fraser to come on before the rains. He was careful to point out in a letter to Smith explaining his action, that he was reluctant 'to break in upon what seems useful work in South Africa', but gave two main reasons for summonsing Fraser. The first was the impending departure on furlough of both MacAlpine, from Bandawe, and Elmslie, from Ekwendeni; the second was his desire to see Fraser safely over his first bout of fever while Elmslie was there to supervise him. A subsequent meeting of the Mission Council formally approved Laws’ action, pointing out that any undue extension of Fraser’s time in South Africa 'would throw into entire confusion ... the work at Bandawe and uMgoni ... leaving both these districts without the services of an ordained missionary'. In passing such a minute they failed to acknowledge either the valuable work of African Christians and European laymen in the areas concerned, or the fact that uMgoni had survived without an ordained missionary since the death of Steele. There is also more than a hint of annoyance that a new missionary should take such a decision upon himself without the approval of either the Livingstonia Committee or the Mission Council.

102. Laws to Smith, Livingstonia, 19th September 1896, Ms.7879, N.L.S.
103. Ibid.
104. Ibid., Minutes of Livingstonia Mission Council, 12 Nov. 1896, enclosed with Laws to Smith, 18 November 1896.
Nevertheless, insofar as the administration of baptism and communion depended on the presence of an ordained minister, their attitude had some justification. In view of this pressure Fraser gave up his plans to spend several more months in South Africa, and after his visit to Bloemfontein at the end of October began the final leg of his journey to Malawi - arriving at Ekwendeni early in January 1897.  

Fraser - Arrival and Early Impressions

Fraser's experiences in the S.V.M.U., and during his South African tour meant that he reached Malawi fired by an enthusiasm which would soon have been whittled away in the pioneering days of the seventies and eighties, but which found fuel in the large number of African Christians waiting for baptism since the death of Steele in 1895, and the departure of MacAlpine on furlough in 1896. These two factors, (Fraser's enthusiasm and the growth of a genuine and deep interest in Christianity on the part of many of the Ngoni), combined in the next few years to produce a growth in the size of the Church previously unparalleled in uNgoni. This growth was certainly not produced by Fraser, as he himself acknowledged.  

105 It was the product in the first instance of the work of African teachers, interacting with a more positive response on the part of the Ngoni brought about by a series of factors such as the decline in raiding after about 1895, and the looming possibility of colonial control. 107 The late Rev. Mbalo Mtonga of Butini, who started school in the same year that Fraser arrived in uNgoni, insisted that 'although white people would preach, we understood

105. Elmslie to Lawes, Ekwendeni, 9 January 1897, Elmslie File, C.S.A.
106. F.C.S.M., Sept. 1897, 'The Multitude of them that Believed' by D. Fraser, p.212.
107. The Ngoni and the coming of colonial government is discussed in detail in the next chapter.
the Word of God from Africans. Europeans were good preachers too, but from fellow Africans we could understand it better; just ordinary people talking together'. 108

Yet while interest and instruction could be and was passed on in this way, the entrance into the Church through baptism was still dependent on the presence of an ordained minister. Fraser's arrival provided this possibility for the first time in almost two years in uNgoni. In 1895, the year of Steele's death, forty-one adults had been baptised in uNgoni. 109 That in itself had represented an increase of 200% in church membership in the area. 110 Now, within a few weeks of Fraser's arrival, a similar process was to take place.

Beginning on 20 February at Ekwendeni, when he baptised twenty adults, Fraser proceeded in the next six weeks to baptise catechumens at Elangeni, Njuyu, Hora and Bandawe. In uNgoni in little over a month he baptised a total of eighty adults and fifty children, including Yohane Jere, (son of the late chief Mtswalo), together with his mother and daughter, at Ekwendeni. 111 All these stations, with the exception of Ekwendeni, had been under the control of Ngoni Christians, (Nawelera Tembo at Njuyu, Makara Tembo at Elangeni, and Jonathan Chirwa at Hora), and the instruction and encouragement of the new converts had been in their hands. So great was the number seeking admission to the catechumenate at Njuyu, that the visiting European missionaries had not time to examine them all. 112

109. Report for Ngoniland 1895, Ms.7879, N.L.S.
110. Ibid.
111. Accounts of the baptisms can be found in F.C.S.M., July 1897, pp.169-70 & September 1897, p.212, and Aurora, April 1897, p.15 & June 1897, p.22.
112. Ibid.
Including Bandawe, (which he visited at the end of March, because MacAlpine’s furlough had left the area without an ordained minister), Fraser baptised a total of 159 adults in a period of six weeks - more, as he himself pointed out, than had been baptised in the first twenty years of the mission’s existence.  

That the main agency of this growth had been the work of the Ngoni teachers, Fraser himself freely acknowledged when he wrote, 'The in-gathering has come largely through God’s blessing on the native teachers'. Yet the structure of the Presbyterian mission obviously set limits to the scope of such work. One such limit was removed, and the potential, at least, created for more meaningful African participation in the decision-making processes of the Church, by the election early in 1897 of the first Ngoni Kirk Session. The first Kirk Session of the Livingstonia Mission had been elected at Bandawe in 1895. Since a group of elders could not meet together as a Kirk Session without the presence of an ordained minister, there was no impetus towards the election of elders in Ngoni between the death of Steele and the arrival of Fraser. In January 1897, however, Elmslie wrote to Laws asking whether it was necessary to have the permission of Mission Council in order to form a Kirk Session and saying that he had ‘advised Fraser to have a Session as a help and also that through such a body the members may be held to their duty of giving’. Since the next meeting of Mission Council was not due until October, Laws advised Elmslie to go ahead and the first Ngoni Kirk Session was elected soon.

114. Ibid.
115. F.C.S.M., February 1895, p.28.
116. Elmslie to Laws, 30 January, 1897, Elmslie File, C.S.A.
afterwards. The four elders elected for the Njuyu area included both Havelera and Makara Tembo. In accordance with instructions from the Livingstonia Committee in Scotland, the African elders of the Church in Malawi were elected, not for life, as were their counterparts in Scotland, but for a limited period – in this case two years.

Elmslie was preparing to go on furlough when Fraser arrived in January 1897, but in the period of three months before he left, the older man had the opportunity of weighing up his new colleague, and of passing on his impressions to Laws, to whom he wrote extremely regularly. To begin with his reactions were entirely favourable. In his first letter to Laws after Fraser's arrival he wrote of Fraser in the following terms:

You will like him I am sure. It is no loss to us that he has been so long in the Colony as he is very clear on many points of Mission policy which will make him a most valuable helper in Livingstonia .... I cannot say how pleased I am to find him settled here, and I believe his fresh zeal and devotion will lead to a rich in-gathering when he gets on his feet .... I think we will have, in short, a thoroughly evangelistic missionary without narrow views of what is that work.

At the end of January, he wrote, 'I think we have got a really good man in Fraser', and even after his return to Scotland he continued to write of Fraser in terms which were generally very favourable. Yet even before Elmslie left Ungoni at the end of March 1897, there had begun to appear certain differences of approach and emphasis between the two men, and though these will be developed at more length below, it will be useful to look at some of them briefly here, as an indication

117. Mission Council Minutes, 12 October 1897, Ms.7880, N.I.S.
118. Elmslie, Wild Ngoni, p.301.
119. Elmslie to Laws, 5 February 1897, Elmslie File, C.S.A.
120. Ibid., 9 January 1897.
121. Ibid., 30 January 1897.
122. See Chapter 4, sections on 'Extension' and 'The Continued Use of Conventions'.
of some of the developing tensions in the missionary approach to the Ngoni.

The first recorded difference of opinion occurred within a month of Fraser's arrival, over a complicated marital case involving both polygamy and adultery. The case involved a prospective convert who had put away his first and retained his second wife. The first wife had previously been guilty of adultery, though the case had been settled by the payment of a fine. Elmslie and Stuart argued that the man must keep his first wife and put away his second. (Laws, on hearing of the case, apparently agreed with them). Fraser, on the other hand, was quite prepared in the circumstances of the first wife's adultery to accept the second as the man's legal spouse. Though it is more than possible that in the complicated details of this particular case, Elmslie's view was indeed the wiser, the difference of opinion illustrates what was to be a continuing divergency of emphasis, in which Fraser's view was consistently the more liberal.

Within a couple of weeks, and on the question of electing a Kirk Session, Elmslie was writing that 'Mr. Fraser is not very ecclesiastic and that has made me anxious to have everything right so that he may not outrage any who are otherwise minded'. This was not at this stage a question of disagreement - indeed Elmslie seemed to be on Fraser's side; but it illustrates a lack of concern on Fraser's part for the small print of ecclesiastical organization, which was to characterise some of his later work, and bring him into occasional conflict with MacAlpine, (who is possibly the person Elmslie had in mind here), and Elmslie himself.

123. Elmslie to Laws, 30 January 1897, Elmslie File, C.S.A.
124. Ibid., 15 February 1897.
One other cause of slight disagreement occurred before Elmalie left Ekwendeni in March, and this was to be a more direct pointer to the future. It concerned the suspension, and possible restoration of a teacher Yakobe, who had been found guilty of a sexual offence with a girl. Fraser was in favour of a quick restoration, within one year; Elmalie disagreed, and complained that 'perhaps Fraser sees only the best side of native character and if anything he would be too easily led away by fine words'. This was not simply the naivety or idealism of a new missionary. It was to be one of the features of Fraser's career that restorations occurred more regularly, and after a shorter suspension at stations where he was in charge. His report for 1899, for example, mentioned five cases of discipline in the course of the year - four of whom were restored before the year ended. Right at the very end of his career, in 1924, he joined forces with the overwhelming African opinion of the Livingstonia Presbytery in insisting on the restoration of Jonathan Chirwa to the Christian ministry, against the determined opposition of Laws and MacAlpine.

In the course of Fraser's first year at Ekwendeni, candidates for baptism increased from 164 to 609. In order to supervise and examine such candidates Fraser undertook an extensive programme of itineration. By the end of 1897 he was writing to Dr. and Mrs. Loudon of Hamilton, 'In the past two months I have walked over four hundred miles in this work of visitation without a machila'. In 1898 he spent one hundred

125. Ibid., 9 March 1897.
127. See below, Chapter 6, 'The Jonathan Chirwa Case'.
128. The Aurora, Vol.2, February 1898, p.3.
129. F.C.S.M., April 1898.
and ninety days on tour, and another seventy in bed recovering.\textsuperscript{130}

Dr. Steele had been renowned for his touring, and it is obvious that Fraser greatly admired this,\textsuperscript{131} as well as other aspects of his work. Itineration, or 'going on ulendo' was a necessary part of every missionary's life, but Fraser turned what had been a necessity into an instrument of policy. In these early days Fraser sometimes set out on ulendo alone - with only a bicycle or a donkey for transport. He notes that this sometimes caused a good deal if inconvenience,\textsuperscript{132} but it undoubtedly established for Fraser a reputation as a missionary who was genuinely interested in meeting people in their own homes. Even to-day, he is remembered in northern Malawi for his visits to outlying villages, and some older people still remember a song sung by his porters as , having graduated from foot, to bicycle, to motor-cycle and then eventually to machila, he was carried through the bush on tours of inspection.

\textit{Wafika Kalibango he! Wafika Kalibango, chenjera!}
\textit{Hey! Kalibango is coming! Be careful, Kalibango is coming!}\textsuperscript{133}

To some extent, of course, the whole business of itineration was based on the missionary fear of leaving the African teacher unsupervised, and Fraser, as much as most of his colleagues, believed in the advisability of close European supervision. In one of two ways, however the emphasis of his itineration was different. In the first place he did far more travelling than most of his colleagues - to such an extent, indeed, that Dr. George Smith felt obliged to write him a

\begin{itemize}
  \item \textsuperscript{130} Church of Scotland Archives, Elmslie File, Elmslie to Laws, 7 June 1899.
  \item \textsuperscript{131} Fraser, \textit{Livingstonia}, p.28.
  \item \textsuperscript{132} Fraser, \textit{Primitive People}, p.57.
  \item \textsuperscript{133} For the derivation of Kalibango, see Appendix B.
\end{itemize}
friendly letter in November 1898 advising him not to overdo it on account of his health. This frequent itineration did, however, enable Fraser to get to know most of the Ngoni teachers and elders in his area much better than would otherwise have been the case. Secondly, he saw itineration, not simply as a means of supervision, but of extension and of encouragement.

Finally itineration also served as a means of examining candidates for baptism at their own villages, and with their own elders in attendance, and facilitated the preparations for what became most distinctively a hallmark of Fraser's style - the large Sacramental Convention.

The Sacramental Conventions and their Significance

The first of these conventions was held at Ekwendeni in May 1898, when people travelled from many parts of uNgoni to be present. Fraser based his idea on the old Highland tradition of the Communion season. This was a tradition with which he was very familiar, for his father was well known as a leader of such services all over Argyllshire, and even beyond. It is very likely that Fraser had attended many such gatherings as a youth, and that this experience undoubtedly helped to produce the sacramental conventions of uNgoni.

Yet there were many differences, too, between the gatherings held by Fraser, and those of the Scottish Highlands. In the first place Fraser included baptism, as well as communion as an integral part of

134. Smith to Fraser, 24 November 1898, Ms.7777, N.L.S.
135. Fraser, Primitive People, p.226.
136. See, for example, Aurora, Vol.1, June 1897, p.22.
137. Fraser to Smith, 16 May 1898, Ms.7881, N.L.S.
his conventions, a tradition which was practically unknown in the Highlands. Secondly, though the Highland sessions, lasting as they did for about five days, obviously included a good deal of teaching, this was mainly designed as a preparation for the Sacrament of Communion. In Fraser’s gatherings the teaching was based much more on the Keswick Convention pattern and aimed at ‘the deepening of Christian life’. Finally there was a very significant theological difference in the approach of church members to the Sacrament of Communion. In the Highland tradition the sacrament was preceded by sermon known as ‘fencing the Table’ which warned possible communicants of the dangers of the unworthy partaking. Often only a small percentage of those eligible, actually took part in the sacrament. In the conventions of uNgoni the emphasis was much more on the joy of the occasion, with every possible church member eager to take part.

The 1898 convention attracted a total of 4000 people - at least one thousand of them having come from some distance away. The first group of these visitors, about seventy, from Mpherembe’s district, began arriving on the Monday, bringing with them a sheep and a goat to help provide food. To accommodate such groups, temporary huts, (misasa), made from grass and leaves, were thrown up all around Ekwendeni. A special open-air platform, surrounded by a large grass enclosure, was also constructed, in which to hold the main services. These began on Wednesday, with meetings several times a day. In the afternoons the Ngoni teachers held meetings in six of the surrounding villages. In

1892 Convention at Ekwendeni - baptism of converts
the evenings the teachers held informal services around Ekwendeni, and Fraser, Stuart and Henderson (on a visit from Khondowe), held further meetings for prayer and study with the Ngoni church leaders. The week drew towards a climax with the baptism of 195 adults and 89 children, and the communion service in which 365 Christians took part, but at which the congregation is said to have numbered nearly 4000. A final service on Sunday was held, during which an appeal was made for volunteers to go and teach the Senga in the Marambo region of what is now eastern Zambia. According to Fraser many responded. 143

The following year the convention was even bigger. An estimated 6600 were present at some of the services, and 2000-3000 were said to have come from a distance. 309 adults and 149 children were baptised and 672 took part in Communion. 144 Most of the leading missionaries were present for this second convention. Dr. & Mrs. Laws had travelled from Khondowe with Miss McCallum; so too had Dr. & Mrs. Elmslie, just back from furlough. Rev. MacAlpine came up from Bandawe. Laws and others wrote home to Scotland in glowing terms of what had taken place, and, on the surface, nothing may have seemed to epitomise more clearly the new way of life which appeared to be replacing traditional Ngoni society. There is evidence to suggest, however, that far from being an

143. The main accounts of the convention are in Elmslie, Wild Ngoni, pp. 306-16, Fraser, Autobiography, pp. 140-145, Fraser, Primitive People, pp. 92-93, and F.C.S.M., September 1898.
144. Fraser to Smith, 7 June 1899, Ms. 7882, N.L.S.
145. F.C.S.M., September 1899 and Aurora, Vol. 3, June 1899, 'Impressions of a visitor.' Laws, renowned for his dour common sense, minute attention to detail and extreme thriftiness, sent back to Scotland a telegram giving news of the convention and the great religious awakening among the Ngoni, which read 'Three hundred nine adults one hundred forty eight children baptised Ekwenedi send four hundred iron sheets eight feet six'. Laws to Free, Edinburgh, May 1899, Ms. 7882, N.L.S.
alien importation, the sacramental convention initiated by Fraser was successful for precisely the opposite reason — that it reminded the Ngoni of one of the most important of traditional African festivals — the Nguni Feast of the First Fruits (inowala).  

That the northern Ngoni were at some time in their past familiar with and involved in a first fruits feast is beyond question. Margaret Read has collected several inowala songs from Mzimba district and Yesaya Chibambo quotes various traditions connected with the ceremony.

It is also clear that the ceremony died out among M'mbelwa's Ngoni some time around their settlement in Malawi. Margaret Read claims that the inowala had, in fact, died out before they came to settle in Malawi, but there is some evidence to suggest that its demise may have been a little later than that. First, Elmslie, writing in the 1880s, was aware of the ceremony, though he appears never to have seen it. Secondly the legend that M'mbelwa's accession to the chieftainship in Ng'onga in 1855 was accompanied by the placing of the young chief on the back of a captured leopard bears more than a passing resemblance to Hilda Kuper's description of the simenq, a simplified form of the Swazi inowala. Thirdly the inowala was celebrated among Mpeseni's Ngoni until well into the 1890s. Since this group broke


147. Read, 'Songs', pp. 20-22

148. Quoted in Read, Ngoni, p.60

149. Ibid., p. 22.

150. Elmslie to Laws, 17 May 1889, Ms. 7892, N.L.S.


away from M’mbelwa’s followers in the early 1850s it is logical to
assume that the ceremony was still being celebrated then.

Why the incwala should die out at all is a matter of some
uncertainty. One can do no more than speculate on a few possible
reasons. It is possible that the long migration, and the continued
infusion of large numbers of non-Zansi captives, may have weakened the
mystical and religious, (as opposed to the political), power of the
chief,\(^ {153}\) and thus undermined the nature of the ceremony itself. Then
again the close coincidence of the ripening of the first crops with the
longest day of the year, (on which the Swazi ritual was theoretically
said to begin), which was perfectly appropriate for South Africa, no
longer occurred in northern Malawi where the agricultural cycle was
several months behind. Since it was unusual to hold the full ceremony
when there was no recognised chief,\(^ {154}\) it could also be that the long
period of disputed leadership and regency, following the death of
Zwangendaba, dealt a deathblow to a ceremony whose natural roots had
already seriously been weakened. The continuation of the ceremony among
Mpezeni’s Ngoni associated as it was with the power of kingship, may
have been due to a specific desire to bolster up his claim to the chief¬
tainship of all the northern Ngoni.

It seems logical to assume that while the ceremony had certainly
died out among M’mbelwa’s Ngoni by the 1880s, it would still be clearly
remembered by the Zansi-Ngoni, and other trans-Zambesian clans, while
more recent elements of the Ngoni nation would have a more sketchy
idea of what the ritual entailed, based on related accounts, and the

\(^ {153}\) Barnes, Politics, p.58-9, makes a similar point, though not in
relation to the incwala.

\(^ {154}\) Kuper, Aristocracy, p.197.
continued use of incwala songs.

Having said that, what is the evidence that the Ngoni saw in Fraser's sacramental convention enough similarities to the feast they had until recently celebrated to make a meaningful connection between the two?

First of all it is clear that for as long as fourteen years before the arrival of Fraser in uNgoni, and indeed, well before the first Ngoni converts were baptised, some Ngoni villages attracted by Christianity were already making use of Christian worship to fill a need in their own religious observances, apparently left by the disappearance of the incwala. As early as December 1882 M'mbelwa had asked William Koyi to hold a special service to pray for good crops. Though mission work amongst the Ngoni was still in its infancy, and the first Ngoni converts were not to seek baptism for another six and a half years, 1500 people attended the service which Koyi held - a clear indication of its importance in the eyes of the Ngoni.\(^{155}\) By the late 1880s services of Thanksgiving before harvesting the crops were being held regularly in some villages. In May 1888 the people of Chinyera asked George Williams to hold such a service. The attendance was around 400, as opposed to an average of around 50 at the weekly services in the period immediately preceding.\(^ {156}\) In May 1889 Elmslie wrote to Laws that Thanksgiving services were 'taking the place of the first-fruits feasts in the villages'.\(^ {157}\) The practice obviously was meaningful to

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\(^{155}\) Koyi to Laws, 19 January 1883, Shepperson Collection.

\(^{156}\) Charles Williams, 'Report on Tshinyera', n.d., 26 October 1888, Ms. 7891, N.L.S.

\(^{157}\) Ibid., Elmslie to Laws, 17 May 1889, Ms. 7892. Elmslie elaborated in Among the Wild Ngoni, stating that the initiative had come from the Ngoni themselves, who wanted to hold a Thanksgiving service before they began to reap. 'Thus, for the first time in Ngoniland, on the people's initiative, a heathen custom, - the Feast of First-fruits, - was replaced by a service of praise to Almighty God.' (Elmslie, Wild Ngoni, p.165).
the Ngoni, for the following year, while Elmslie was on furlough, several villages in the Njuyu area approached Charles Stuart and asked him to hold a thanksgiving service. There is a further reference to the practice in 1891. The missionaries interpreted these requests as a rejection of the old ways in favour of the new. In fact, a more accurate interpretation would seem to be that the Ngoni were adapting Christianity to their own religious needs. Thus, while the sacramental conventions were to a large extent new in their scope and content, they were to some extent the continuation not only of an existing mission practice, but also of an established Ngoni initiative.

They were, however, much more than this. Fraser's conventions involved the assembling together at the mission headquarters of large companies of people from all over uNgoni, just as in the old days they would have come to the chief's kraal. The length of the ceremonies was approximately the same, and in the same way whole families came, carrying their cooking utensils and their food. Nor was Fraser unaware of the comparison. It is doubtful whether he had anything more than the vaguest outline of what was involved in the incwala, but he did know about the national gatherings of the Ngoni which welded together the

159. Compare the very similar descriptions in Bryant, Zulu People p.515, and Elmslie, Wild Ngoni, p.309: 'Every man, every young bride, every carrier-boy, and every girl, wended their way together to the regimental headquarters of their particular male folk, the boys carrying the sleeping-mats and karosses of their fathers and elder brothers, the girls a food supply sufficient for at least a week.' (Bryant). 'By Tuesday evening the footpaths were full. Whole families were coming, the mothers and daughters carrying cooking-pots on their heads and bags of flour, the men with strings of maize cobs on their shoulders and other produce of their gardens for the collection, and often a tired child on their backs.' (Henderson in Wild Ngoni).
nation and often preceded war raids, and in one of his accounts of the early conventions he made the connection clear. 'In the olden days the unity of the tribe used to be expressed in the national gatherings for raiding. Such meetings could no longer be held. Now the unity of the tribe was to be expressed in the national Christian Conventions,' Although these words were written in 1925, they were not merely an afterthought, for Henderson, writing soon after the event, expressed much the same feeling when he wrote of the 1898 convention, 'It would be a gathering of the whole Christian Church of the tribe, and the missionaries trusted that the Church as a body might be led to make a further forward step in spiritual experience.' If Fraser and Henderson were aware of a national significance in the event, it is hardly unlikely that many of the Ngoni would have noticed it also.

A further similarity between the incwala and the conventions was seen in the practice of constructing grass huts (misasa). The construction of such temporary dwellings is extremely common in Africa. They are often built near gardens, for example, to guard growing crops from monkeys. It might be felt, therefore, that their construction for the conventions was nothing out of the ordinary. Two points might be made here. The first is that it was precisely because it was nothing out of the ordinary that the construction was important. Most buildings and ceremonies connected with a mission were out of the ordinary from an African point of view. They were strange and foreign. The building of misasa, and indeed many of the other details of the conventions, were important for their very "Africanness"; they allowed

people to feel at home.

The second point is much more specific. The *misasa* of an *incwala* ceremony had two quite distinct functions. They served as temporary huts for the visiting regiments, and the most sacred part of the ceremony - the taking of medicine by the King to strengthen not only him but the whole tribe - took place inside a specially constructed *grass shelter*. At the sacramental convention, *grass shelters* were used both as houses, and as a large open-air enclosure in which the congregation gathered for the sacraments.*

It might be added that two of the main elements of the traditional ceremony were the taking of medicine to strengthen the tribe, and the washing to get rid of bad medicine. The linking of the eucharistic and baptismal sacraments in one common festival may have been looked upon by the Ngoni as something similar. Certainly Fraser, (probably quoting Daniel Nhlane), spoke of the Ngoni as referring to 'the magic water of baptism', and amongst the Ngoni of Ncheu district the expression *‘mankwala a charichi’* (the medicine of the church) was sometimes used for the elements in communion.

Although the first two sacramental conventions in 1898 and 1899 took place in May, rather than in late December or early January as with the Zulu and Swazi first fruit feasts, they undoubtedly had a distinctly agricultural element. It has already been pointed out that the first Ngoni initiatives towards holding Christian worship just before harvest took place in May, and in northern Malawi the maize harvest does not usually begin until May or early June. Furthermore, Fraser specifically asked those attending the Convention in 1898 to bring a thank-offering

162. See, for example Kuper, *Aristocracy*, p.215 and Bryant, *Zulu People* p.516.
164. I am grateful to Dr. A. C. Ross for this reference.
with them, and Henderson reports that 'a heap of Indian corn nearly breast-high all but blocked the side entrances'. In addition, Laws, writing of his visit to the 1899 convention, called it 'the sacramental feast of tabernacles'. He may have connected it with the Jewish Feast of Tabernacles, (or Booths), simply because of the presence of temporary grass shelters, which was common to both — as to the incwala; but the Jewish feast, though held at the end of the harvest season, was undoubtedly an agricultural festival, and Laws' linking of the two together almost certainly implies a strong agricultural element in the sacramental conventions.

One final point of common reference is worth noting. The second and main parts of both the Zulu and Swazi first fruits feasts always took place at full moon. The first sacramental convention at Ekwedeni in May 1898 was held when the moon was full. Even if this was a coincidence the presence of the full moon during the convention may well have struck a note of responsiveness in those Ngoni who remembered the incwala. It was not however the only recent occasion on which the Ngoni celebration of the harvest had taken place at full moon. When at the end of May 1890, the villagers around Njuyu approached Charles Stuart with a request to hold a thanksgiving service on the following Sunday, 1st June, they chose a Sunday within 36 hours of the full moon. It is at least possible that the choice was not accidental, and that the Ngoni approached Stuart when they did in order

165. Fraser, *Primitive People*, p.92.  
167. F.O.S.H., September 1899.  
170. Stuart to Elmslie, 7 June 1890, Ms.7893, N.I.S., and Whitaker's Almanack, 1890, p.33.
to ensure a service at a time particularly meaningful to them.

It is not being argued here that the sacramental convention was a christianized inowala - far less that Fraser had any such intention in mind. What is likely, and extremely relevant, is that there were enough similarities in the traditional and the Christian celebrations to strike a note of responsiveness in the Ngoni who attended the latter. Fraser himself, writing of the first convention, said that he was 'amazed at the fervour and response which that convention called forth'. 171 Another indication of the response and enthusiasm are the numbers attending the conventions in relation to those directly involved in the sacraments. In 1898 the attendance was 4000, though only 365 of those present were church members who could partake of communion. The following year the relevant numbers were 6000 and 672. It is obvious that the gatherings had a genuine attraction for the Ngoni, and it is possible that that attraction was based as much on the 'Africanness' of the occasion, as it was on Fraser's powerful preaching. What is certainly evident is that the various factors which helped to give the conventions their distinctive character, together contributed powerfully to the growth of Christianity among the Ngoni.

Fraser himself believed that the conventions had a beneficial effect in at least two directions. First they deepened the commitment to Christianity of those already church members and catechumens. 172 Secondly they had a powerful influence on the majority of the Ngoni who still owed no allegiance to the mission. 173 It was amongst this latter group, and, in particular, amongst the small group of ruling

171. Fraser, Primitive People, p.93.
172. Ibid., p.94.
173. Fraser, Autobiography, pp.142-3.
chiefs, that the nature of the relationship between the Ngoni and Christianity would be decided.

One event in particular, was of importance in helping to decide the nature of that relationship. This was the election in early 1897 of M'baelekelwa, (later known as Chintunga), as successor to his father M'mbelwa. The period between the death of M'mbelwa, in August 1891, and the election of his successor almost six years later, had been a very unsettled one in many ways, as McCracken has pointed out. Uncertainty about the succession, a temporary increase in sporadic raiding due to lack of political authority, the effects of the rinderpest epidemic of 1893-4, tribal migrations, British attacks on Mlozi, Mwaase Kasungu and Gomani, and the continued encroachment of the Livingstonia Mission itself, all served to undermine the normal cohesion of the Ngoni state.

Attempts by some Ngoni to get the mission to intervene and name a chief met with little sympathy from Elmslie, who proposed that they elect Queen Victoria - a suggestion, which he reports, was met by a shrug of the shoulders. By the middle of 1896 Elmslie had at least come to see the desirability of a strong chief to control the tribe. From the mission's point of view, however, the election itself was fraught with difficulties, not only because the election of a chief unsympathetic to Christianity could have had serious repercussions on their work, but also because the event was usually followed by a bout of widespread raiding, which might well have involved many of the

175. Ibid., Though this seems to have declined considerably after 1895.
176. Elmslie to Laws, 30 June 1896, Elmslie File, C.S.A.
177. Ibid.
Christian converts.

In the event, the election of Mbalekelwa around April 1897 passed off peacefully. The gathering took place at Echigodhlweni, and, according to Charles Stuart, most people favoured peace, though Ng'onomo called for war and did a war dance. Again according to Stuart, Mawela Tembo had a great influence on the election, having been consulted by the indunas beforehand, and counselling peace and an acceptance of Christianity during the meeting. If this were indeed the case, it marks the beginning of a process by which, especially at village level, the mission teachers were to become a new elite of achievement in Ngoni society, (somewhat akin to the war indunas of earlier days), culminating in the extensive influence of men like Levi Mumba and Charles Chimula over M'mbelwa's council in the 1930s.

The nature of the election, which also confirmed the position of the mission teacher Amon Jere as chief of the Ekwendeni section of the tribe, was an indication of the growing influence of Christianity on the Ngoni. Yet Fraser's estimation of the situation in claiming that 'this victory has been won not by the rattle of Maxim guns, not even by the wisdom of diplomacy, but by the daily teaching of the Gospel of Peace', is somewhat simplistic, as he himself was later to realise, in that there were many other factors which led the Ngoni to give up raiding. Nonetheless, Fraser was quick to take advantage of the situation, and had soon visited Chintunga, Mpherembe and Ng'onomo in an effort to persuade them to open schools at their

178. Fraser to Smith, 20 October 1897, Ms.7880, N.L.S.
179. F.C.S.M., January 1898, p.11.
181. Fraser, 'Zulu', p.63.
Only the old war induna Ng'onomo refused, and within a few months Daniel Nhlane and Andrew Mkochi had opened a school at Chintunga's village, where, for a time at least, the new paramount became one of the pupils.

It was in this expansion of the school system, perhaps even more than in the number of baptisms during these years, that the real foundation of the Ngoni church was to be laid. Between Fraser's arrival in uNgoni at the beginning of 1897, and his departure on furlough three years later the number of schools more than doubled. Yet this gives no adequate indication of the process which was taking place. Fraser, like Steele before him, regarded the schools mainly as a means of evangelistic outreach. He was not primarily concerned, at least at this stage of his career, with academic standards. Such a view implied several things in the uNgoni of the 1890s. It meant, to begin with, that schools had to be made available at all major centres of population. This, in its turn, demanded that the church follow the people, taking part in the widespread migrations which were common during these years. Finally, such widespread migration necessitated the extensive use of African teachers as catechists and pastors, allied to a strenuous programme of missionary itineration.

The gradual expansion of uNgoni, from the area of old Hohe, near Njuyu mountain, had been going on for several years - mostly in a southerly direction towards the Mzimba river. In 1892 Drs. Steele and Henry had been instructed to survey the whole area and had reported

182. Fraser to Smith, 20 October 1897, Ms.7880, N.L.S.
183. Fraser, Autobiography, p.129.
185. Ibid., 1897 and 1900, pp.32 and 23.
extensively on population movements, recommending the building of a new principal station in the area between modern Mzimba and what is now Loudon Mission Station (Embangweni). 187

Elmslie had at the time approved of the plan and urged the Livingstonia Committee to send out two additional men. Instead a station had been opened at Hora still leaving the Mzimba area largely neglected, though two schools had been opened there in 1896. 188

The period between then and 1900 saw a massive growth in the popularity of education among the Ngoni and a consequent leap in the number of scholars. In 1896 uNgoni's 22 schools had had a total attendance of 1647 pupils. 189 By 1898 the number of schools had grown only to 28, but the highest attendance on one day had reached an amazing 4040. 190 In the following year, while the number of schools climbed to 45, the highest attendance figure again shot up - almost doubling at 7696. 191

To meet this vast increase Fraser increased his teaching staff from 61 in 1896, to 100 in 1898 and 200 in 1899. 192 Such a rapid expansion called forth criticism from Elmslie, who, perhaps not unnaturally, thought it would lead to a drop in academic standards, due mainly to the employment of what he considered ill-qualified teachers. From Loudon he wrote to Dr. George Smith complaining that:

Fraser is too roving geographically and as to schemes... My view is that developments must come through native workers setting the present Europeans free for such extensions, but too much thrown on native workers

187. Ibid., March 1893, p.65.
188. Elmslie to Smith 30 November 1896, Ms.7879, N.L.S.
190. Report by Fraser on 1898's work, p.13.
192. Ibid.
before they are strong enough would be ruinous. The material we have requires more attention than Fraser seems to realize. Zeal without knowledge would weaken the native church for all time coming.\footnote{193}

Smith was quick to respond, warning Fraser, (in an otherwise friendly letter), 'You must not become a geographical rover even with the very best motive'.\footnote{194}

The argument over the nature and rate of expansion was to continue for many years, and will be dealt with in more detail in Chapter 4.

What is of interest here is the widespread and popular interest in education in the late 1890s and Fraser's response to it. As early as October 1897, Fraser had pointed out to Smith that he was unable to meet all the requests for schools which had been received, due to lack of teachers.\footnote{195} He was, in other words, merely trying to respond to a genuine and widespread interest, and his response had more to do with theological outlook than with educational theories.

For large periods of 1899 Fraser was the only European missionary in uNgoni. (Both Elmslie and Stuart were at Khondowe, while Laws was on furlough). This fact had two quite separate consequences. The first was that Fraser overworked himself to such an extent that his health, which had never been very good, broke down, and he was directed by the Mission Council to take an early furlough at the beginning of 1900.\footnote{196}

The second was that by necessity, as in the period following the death of Steele, the growth of the church was, to an even greater extent than normal, dependent on the work of African teachers and elders. The election of a new Kirk Session for uNgoni, which included

\begin{footnotes}
\footnote{193}{Elmslie to Smith, 1 November 1898, Ms.7881, N.L.S.}
\footnote{194}{Ibid., Smith to Fraser, 24 November 1898, Ms.777.}
\footnote{195}{Ibid., Fraser to Smith, 20 October 1897, Ms.7880.}
\footnote{196}{Ibid., Fraser to Smith, 26 November 1899, Ms.7882.}
\end{footnotes}
three sons of Chiputula Nhlane, and was made up of 16 elders,\textsuperscript{197} ensured the possibility of more effective supervision of the life of the growing church, which doubled its membership in 1899, with the baptism of 425 adults and 224 children.\textsuperscript{198}

This period also saw the beginning of a response to Christianity on the part of many of the older Ngoni, who had held out against it for so long. Writing in October 1899, Fraser commented, "The old people have at last begun to yield. To-morrow I hope to receive two dozen old, bent grandfathers and grandmothers into the catechumen's class. Some of these are nearly eighty years of age."\textsuperscript{199}

This development, as much as the actual statistical increase in the size of the church, indicated that Christianity among the Ngoni, for all its many weaknesses and faults, was beginning to take root as a genuine component part of the life of the nation.

\textsuperscript{197} Aurora, Vol.3, April 1899, p.15.
\textsuperscript{198} Livingstonia Reports, 1899-1900, p.11.
\textsuperscript{199} F.C.S.M., February 1900, p.39.
Ngoni Chiefs

Probably taken around the turn of the century, (perhaps 1904). The chiefs included are Chinde, Mtwalo and Chimtunga (probably left to right).
CHAPTER THREE

THE NGONI, THE MISSION AND THE COLONIAL GOVERNMENT

1891 - 1904

Introduction

The Ngoni reaction to Christianity in the 1890s is not something that can be looked at in isolation from Ngoni contacts with other groups. While it may be true to say that during this period the mission provided the most influential of the external factors with which the Ngoni had to come to terms, it was by no means the only such factor. Ngoni attitudes towards the Arabs, European traders, and the British administration all influenced, to some extent or other, their reaction to the Livingstonia Mission.

In the same way, when Alfred Sharpe met in *indaba* with the leading Ngoni chiefs on 2 September 1904 at Ekwendeni, to discuss the terms of British annexation of uNgoni, the matter was not simply one of contact between Ngoni and British government. Though the Livingstonia missionaries protested their neutrality in the affair, and were present merely as spectators they had played a vital and formative role in shaping the agreement which eventually emerged.

Nor were they the only other group involved. Ngoni reactions to the possibility of British rule were influenced by their impressions of British treatment of other related groups - primarily but not solely other Ngoni groups in the area. Though the delay in British annexation of uNgoni has sometimes been attributed to the isolation of the northern

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Ngoni, this should not be taken to indicate a lack of knowledge on their part of similar developments elsewhere. They were aware of and informed about not merely the details of British contacts with Gomani and Mpeseni, but contemporary events involving both the Ndebele in Zimbabwe and the Ngwato in Botswana.²

Neither was the 1904 meeting a matter of sudden contact between the British and the Ngoni. There had been sporadic contact between them over many years—beginning with the visit of Acting Consul Goodrich to M'mbelwa in 1885, and continuing throughout the 1890s with official or semi-official contacts through Johnston, Sharpe, Crawshay and Swann. In addition non-governmental contacts with visiting Europeans such as Money and Smith in 1895, and Ziehl in 1899 helped to mould Ngoni attitudes towards intruding Europeans.³

Both missionary and government accounts of the 1904 meeting tended to oversimplify the process of annexation⁴ and to hail it as a huge success, with which not only the British, but the Ngoni were highly pleased. The situation was, in fact, much more complex than that, particularly on the Ngoni side, and involved a deep-seated Ngoni apprehension of the process of annexation, of which the Livingstonia missionaries were by no means fully aware.

**Early Government Contacts with the Ngoni**

Direct contact between M'mbelwa's Ngoni and the British administration began in April 1885 with the visit of Acting Consul Lawrence

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2. Barnes, Politics, p.72, 79 & 100 and Pachai, 'Ngoni Politics' p.205.
3. The Ziehl case is dealt with in detail below, pp.160-175.
Goodrich to M’mbelwa. He was accompanied by the Livingstonia missionaries Koyi, Sutherland and Elmslie, and thus began the triangular relationship of Ngoni/mission/government which was to survive until the rise of the Mbera Native Association in the 1920s.

Earlier in 1885 the Foreign Office in its instructions to the newly appointed Consul A. G. S. Hawes, had made it clear that ‘the primary object of your appointment is the suppression of the Slave Trade’. Early government contact with the Ngoni was largely aimed therefore, at discovering possible Ngoni attitudes towards the slave trade, and Goodrich in reporting on his first meeting with M’mbelwa, commented that while the Ngoni themselves claimed never to sell people, the Tumbuka did carry on a trade with the Arabs, which resulted in the import of guns into the area — a trend which M’mbelwa tried to discourage by levying a toll on Arab caravans passing through his district.

Goodrich stressed to M’mbelwa the advantages of opening his country to white traders — a judgement which the Ngoni in retrospect, may well have regarded as at least questionable. He concluded his report with the assessment, ‘It will take long, I fear, to wean them from their love of war, but the Free Church Mission are showing admirable patience in staying on amongst them in the hope of being allowed to open a school’.

During the late 1880s British interest in M’mbelwa’s Ngoni was largely peripheral to the more pressing problems of the Swahili-Arabs in the north and the Portuguese in the south, and only became apparent

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5. Ibid., Goodrich to Secretary of State for Foreign Affairs, 24 April 1885, F.O.84/1702.
6. Ibid., Foreign Office to Hawes, 16 January 1885.
8. Goodrich to Secretary of State for Foreign Affairs, 24 April 1885, F.O.84/1702, F.R.O.
9. Ibid.
when the Ngoni involved themselves in one of the more direct areas of British concern. One such occasion was the campaign by the African Lakes Corporation against the north-end Arabs led by Mozi, which followed Mozi's attack on Karonga in November 1887. Mozi had apparently planned a more comprehensive campaign, involving an alliance with the Bemba. Together they hoped to drive out not only the British but also the Ngoni from what is now the north of Malawi. Just how definite the Bemba commitment to this alliance was, is open to question, but at any rate the scheme was pre-empted by an Ngoni attack on the Bemba in October 1887. The Ngoni, allied with the Sena and Bisa, defeated the Bemba at Kabondwe and killed their leader Ndakala. Hawes thought the information sufficiently important to report it to the Foreign Office, but by and large British interests lay elsewhere at this period, and the Ngoni were rarely involved. The arrival of H. H. Johnston in Malawi in 1889 did much to change that.

**H. H. Johnston and the Ngoni**

As with several writers of the period, Johnston's early views of M'mbelwa's Ngoni are somewhat confused by a tendency to lump all the Ngoni together - sometimes even including as Ngoni, such leaders as the Chewa chief Mwase Kasungu, (as he did in what appears to be his first official mention of them in March 1890). In that report, which

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10. Ibid., Hawes to Secretary of State for Foreign Affairs, 16 January 1888, F.0.84/1883, and Fotheringham, Adventures, p.44.
12. Ibid., pp.374-5.
13. Hawes to Secretary of State for Foreign Affairs, 16 January 1888, F.0.84/1883, F.R.O.
detailed his treaty-making expedition of 1889, Johnston stressed several points about his potential relations with the Ngoni in general which not only throw light on his general administration during the next six years, but also give some indication of his attitude towards M'mbelwa's Ngoni. He wrote:

The Angoni are a nation of haughty, warlike robbers like the Masai. They have a perfect passion for the possession of cattle, which they would deny to the unwarlike peoples, who inhabit the lakeshore and who are either subject more or less to the Angoni or to the Swahili Arabs. The Angoni however discourage the slave trade and are not very partial to the Swahili traders, with whom and with the Swahili chieftains of the lake they are constantly fighting. They are up to the present very well disposed towards the English, but if we are eventually to occupy and administer the country and maintain security and peace among the native population under our protection I am afraid it will not be long before the Angoni will have to be taught very sharply to desist from their periodic cattle raids.15

In an appendix to the same report Johnston pointed out that the Swahili Arabs of Central Africa were not nearly as bad as they were painted. The same theme was developed at some length in an address delivered to the Chamber of Commerce at Liverpool, after his return to Britain in the summer of 1890, and published in the Fortnightly Review in November of that year:

The real way to combat the slave trade - to extirpate its cause - is not to quarrel with the Arabs if you can help it, but to get the Arabs to join you, which they are not unwilling to do, in subduing and taming irrational, blood-thirsty wild beasts like the Angoni-Zulus, the Wa-wemba, the Wa-rugaruga, the Masai, and all the hundred-and-one races of Negro robbers who, as soon as they obtain a little prosperity and power, rise up, harry and destroy their fellow negroes.16

This article, which was strongly criticised by Elmslie,17 and cemented his deep-seated distrust of Johnston, must be seen against the

15. Ibid.
17. See below, p. 158.
background of Johnston's recently concluded treaty with Mlozi, Kopakopa, Msalemu and other Swahili Arabs near Karonga. The apparent ease with which Johnston concluded the treaty after several years of sporadic warfare, as well as his good relations with the Jumbe of Nkhotakota, caused him to overestimate the Arab willingness to compromise. Besides, it was the existence of alternative state-systems alongside the British administration that Johnston seemed to object to, rather than the slave trade itself, and it was his inability to come to terms with these systems by peaceful methods which led him to crush them by force, as he eventually did with Mlozi in 1895, and as he threatened to do with M'mbelwa's Ngoni in 1896.

One of the administration's problems with regard to formulating a policy towards the Ngoni in the early years of the Protectorate was that their sources of information were often second-hand. As early as 1886, Hawes had complained that the missionaries and A.L.C. were not giving him as much information as he desired, and Johnston himself admitted that he got most of his information about Mpezeni's Ngoni from the Jumbe of Nkhotakota.

It was no doubt partly in an effort to make good this ignorance with regard to M'mbelwa's Ngoni that Richard Crawshay, newly appointed Collector at Deep Bay (Chilumba), visited uNgoni around July 1894. He listed the three main objects of the journey as opening up friendly intercourse with the Ngoni, persuading them to stop raiding their neighbours, and recruiting labour to work at Deep Bay. After visiting

19. See below pp.147-149 and 157-159.
20. Hawes to Secretary of State for Foreign Affairs, 9 January 1886, F.0.84/1751, P.R.O.
21. Ibid., Johnston to Sir Percy Anderson, 23 March 1893, F.0.2/54.
Mpherembe and Mtwalvo he reported that the journey had been successful in achieving these three objectives.22

While it is true that by the following year many Ngoni were working at Deep Bay, it is also the case that some of their compatriots were continuing small-scale raids in the same area. A. J. Swann, the new Collector at Deep Bay reported in August 1894 that he had captured nine Ngoni 'who were lifting tribute on the quiet from my people at a distance'.23 In the same letter to Sharpe he explained that he had many Ngoni working for him and hoped soon to introduce them to work at Karonga. The gradual spread of wage labouring among the Ngoni overlapped by several years the slow extinction of raiding as a way of life. Thus the administration were confronted with a problem which had for several years been taxing the mission.

Johnston's preference would have been to attack and crush by force those elements which were directly responsible for raiding. Speaking specifically of M'mbelwa's Ngoni in 1896, he wrote:

Our action in regard to these people is much embarrassed by the fact that the Livingstonia Free Church Mission has many stations in their territory. Were it not for this, I should have been disposed after the conclusion of the Arab war, to have dealt decisively with one of the Northern Angoni Chiefs, and have requested at his hands a complete cessation of any further slave raiding. But fearing lest the Mission work might suffer temporarily by any resort to force to compel the Angoni Chiefs to discontinue their raids on the adjacent populations, I decided to deal first of all with Mwasi Kazungu [sic], and to stay further proceedings against the Northern Angoni in the hope that the example of Mwasi's defeat might bring them to their senses.24

22. 'Despatch from Richard Crawshay on visit to Angoni country', 8 August 1893, F.O.2/55, P.R.O.
As it happened recurrent bouts of fever forced Johnston to return to England in May 1896 and though the administration used military force against both Comani's and Mpeseni's Ngoni, the nearest they came to direct military intervention against the northern Ngoni was during the Chibisa affair, just before Johnston's departure.

The Chibisa Affair

Early in 1896, following the defeat by the British of Mwase Kasungu and his ally Saidi Mwazingu, Chibisa, (a headman of Mwase Kasungu), fled north to uNgoni with some of his followers and sought refuge with Ng'onomo at his village a couple of miles from Hora. A. J. Swann, now Collector at Mzibakota, and one of the officers commanding the British force against which Chibisa had fought, sent a contingent of police to Bandawe with a letter calling on the Ngoni chiefs to hand over Chibisa. Rev. A. G. MacAlpine, in charge at Bandawe, forwarded the letter to Peter McCallum, the missionary at Hora, who showed it to Ng'onomo, before it eventually reached Elmslie.

Elmslie, who had no great liking for either MacAlpine or McCallum, was furious that he had not seen the letter first, and feared that McCallum's showing it to Ng'onomo would put him on his guard and make the whole affair harder to resolve peacefully. Towards the end of March Ng'onomo refused to give Chibisa up, though Elmslie warned him that harbouring him might lead to war with the government. A couple of days later Ng'onomo seemed to change his mind and agreed to apprehend Chibisa,

26. The main details of the account which follows are taken from: Elmslie to Smith, 9 April 1896, Ms. 7879, N.L.S., and Elmslie to Laws, various letters between 29 February and 9 June 1896, Elmslie File, C.S.A.
but by the beginning of April he was still in uNgoni.

A further meeting of the Ngoni to discuss the affair took place at Elangeni on 2 April, but though five hundred people, including Mpherembe and Mabulabo were present, Ng'onomo did not appear. Charles Stuart urged Elmslie to advise the Ngoni to fight Ng'onomo and Chibisa, but Elmslie refused to be drawn, arguing 'I am not here to urge war'. He did however urge the Ngoni chiefs Mpherembe, Mabulabo and Yohane to write letters to Swann protesting their loyalty and proclaiming their desire for friendship with the British. This they did, and shortly after Elmslie had forwarded the letters in April 1896, Chibisa withdrew from the area, and eventually settled in Mpezeni's territory.

The Chibisa affair, then, eventually passed off peacefully, though more than once during the couple of months it lasted it threatened to erupt into violence of one sort or another. British intervention, Ngoni civil war and a rumoured attack by Ng'onomo on Hora mission station were all in the end avoided. The illness of Johnston, (forcing him to leave the country), and the preoccupation of the colonial government with Mpezeni gave the northern Ngoni some breathing space. Yet while the Chibisa affair itself may be regarded as comparatively unimportant, it illustrates in microcosm many of the essential elements in the attitudes of both the Ngoni and Elmslie to the colonial administration.

**Ngoni Attitudes towards Colonial Government in the 1890s**

The Chibisa affair shows first the importance of outside events and influences in shaping Ngoni attitudes; secondly, the struggle going on within the state between those wishing to retain the old way of life
based on raiding and those wishing to come to terms with a new and changing situation; and thirdly the willingness of many of the Ngoni to profess friendship towards the British, as a way out of a difficult situation, while at the same time dreading the possibility of a British takeover of umNgoni.

First of all, then, the Chibisa affair clearly establishes the Ngoni connection with other tribes, and with other events in the Protectorate which did not seem directly to concern them. Missionary correspondence of this period makes it abundantly clear that the Ngoni were well aware of what was going on around them partly through information supplied by the missionaries themselves, and partly through social intercourse with other surrounding groups. This knowledge profoundly influenced Ngoni attitudes towards the colonial administration.

The eventual defeat and execution of Mlozi, for example, was reported by Elmslie to have had 'a good effect on the Ngoni who heard of it and to whom I told it in every detail'. Elmslie's attitudes will be examined below, but it is worth noting here that he used accounts of British military power both in the case of Mlozi, and later of Mpezeni, as a lever to persuade the Ngoni to adopt a more peaceful way of life.

It may be asked why Chibisa came to the Ngoni at all in 1896, and why they accepted him? The most obvious answer seems to be that he had submitted to M'mbelwa and paid tax to him. Elmslie in urging the people of Echigodhlweni, (the go go village of M'mbelwa), to take some action in the Chibisa affair, reminded them that 'Tshibisa was under and tera'd to Nombenza and they must look after it'. This fact in itself is a

27. Ibid., Elmslie to Laws, 25 January 1896.
28. From the Zulu 'ukutele' - 'to pay tax to', 'to submit to'.
29. Elmslie to Laws, 3 April 1896, Elmslie File, C.S.A.
reminder of the extent of Ngoni political and economic ties in Malawi and helps to explain their interest in and knowledge of events outside their immediate area.

If the Chibisa affair reminded the Ngoni of the possibility and immanence of British military intervention, the war between the British and Mpezeni did so to a much greater extent. M'mbelwa's Ngoni did not take any part in the Mpezeni war, (although first reports to the Foreign Office mistakenly indicated that they did). Nonetheless, its effect on them was considerable.

To begin with, there had been some contacts between Mpezeni's and M'mbelwa's Ngoni in 1896, a few months after the Chibisa affair, about the possibility of a joint attack on Fort Alston, near Kasungu. The northern Ngoni had even sent out a few exploratory raiding parties in that direction, though no big raids had taken place. Even in 1897 Ng'onomo was carrying out small-scale raids south into the country near Mwase's, so that the possibility of a northern Ngoni contribution to Mpezeni's army, while it never in the end materialised, was not entirely without substance.

The northern Ngoni had seen all the other Ngoni groups around them picked off one by one by the British, and subjugated by force. By 1897 the administration had Bomas at both Mvera and Donwe, among Chiwere's and Gomani's Ngoni, and when in January 1898 Mpezeni's armies were crushed by a British force under Captain Brake which included artillery

30. Acting Governor Manning to Secretary of State for Foreign Affairs, 13 January 1898, F.0.2/147, F.R.O.  
32. Elmslie to Laws, 20 July 1896, Elmslie File, C.S.A.  
33. Ibid., 9 March 1897.  
and Maxim guns, the newly elected paramount Chimtunga Jere found himself the only remaining Ngoni chief not under direct colonial control.

News of the defeat was not long in reaching M'mbelwa's Ngoni. Mpezeni sent messengers north, and their reports produced great uneasiness in uNgoni of the possibility of British intervention there. Describing this reaction about a year later Fraser wrote, (with perhaps more insight than most of his missionary colleagues):

Ever since the Mpezeni war the chiefs here have been in dread that the Administration would come here next. This was increased by the account which messengers, whom Mpezeni sent to his brothers here, gave of the cause of the war, of the seizing of cattle, of the killing of Singu and some indunas, and of the conduct of the North Charterland Police. It is clear from Fraser's description above, that it was not simply the defeat itself, but what the Ngoni perceived to be the nature of that defeat, which produced their dread of British intervention. They believed with Mpezeni that the administration had provoked the war; they regarded the confiscation of thousands of Mpezeni's cattle and the execution of Singu as acts of extremism and sacrilege, and they were soon to have firsthand knowledge of the conduct of the North Charterland police.

It is probably true, as McCracken points out, that after the Mpezeni war the will to resist by force had deserted M'mbelwa's Ngoni. Elmslie several times makes the same point around this period. What

35. Barnes, Politics, p.91. The Northern Ngoni were not entirely ignorant of the Maxim gun. The expedition of Money and Smith which visited uNgoni in 1895 included a force of askari and at least one Maxim gun. R. I. Money & S. K. Smith, 'Explorations in the Country West of Lake Nyasa' in the Geographical Journal, Vol.X, 1897, pp.146-72.
37. See below pp.160-9, 'The Ziehl Case'.
38. McCracken, Politics, p.111.
39. Elmslie to Smith, 9 April 1896 Ms.7879 and 4 March 1898 Ms.7681, N.L.S.; Elmslie to Laws, 11 November 1902, Elmslie File, C.S.A.
is not always appreciated is the genuine apprehension and dread with which many of the northern Ngoni viewed the possible arrival of the administration.

If the Chibisa affair illustrates the influence of extra-Ngoni events on Ngoni attitudes, it also shows clearly the split in the nation between those upholding the old way of life based on raiding, and those wanting to follow a way of life which took more account of the new external forces of wage labour, colonial presence and mission influence. The former group was epitomised by Ng'onomo, and, to a lesser extent, by Mpherembe; the latter by the younger chiefs Yohane and Amon Jere, and the Nhlane brothers of Hoho.

Ng'onomo's reluctance to hand over Chibisa was not simply the stubbornness of an old man; it was a reluctance to give way to a new way of life in which he had no stake — a new set of values to which he owed no allegiance. The raiding to which he stubbornly clung must be seen not merely as a military, but also as an economic activity. In 1889 Elmslie had written of the Ngoni, 'They are mad for war just now as no trade has been here since the Karonga war began'. However, the possibility of acquiring wealth by raiding became more and more remote as the 1890s wore on. The effective occupation of the northern region of Malawi, with the opening of Bomas at Deep Bay and Nkhata Bay in 1893 and 1897, greatly restricted the area into which the Ngoni could freely raid. In 1896 Johnston made 'no raiding' a provision of his offer to the Ngoni that as long as they did not cause the administration any

40. Elmslie to Laws, 10 October 1889, Ms.7892, N.L.S.
expense they would be left in peace and not taxed.\textsuperscript{42}

Alternative forms of economic activity such as education and then employment by the mission, or wage labour at Deep Bay or further afield, were beginning to attract growing numbers of Ngoni youths from the early 1890s onwards.

Finally, though it was by no means the only factor which led to the gradual decline of raiding, (as pointed out above),\textsuperscript{43} the presence and influence of the mission, and of the youthful band of Ngoni Christians, was, by the mid-1890s exerting a powerful influence against any continuation of large-scale raiding.

Both the influence of outside events, and the gradual decline of raiding as a viable way of life, were forcing the Ngoni into some sort of accommodation with the administration. The outworking of this process can be seen both in the Chibisa affair, and more widely. During the Chibisa affair, (partly on Elmslie’s prompting, and partly in an effort to avoid confrontation), Mpherembe, Mabulabo and Yohane, as well as several headmen, sent letters to Swann indicating their willingness to be friendly with the British.\textsuperscript{44} Yet this action was not so much an indication of their desire for British friendship, as of their fear of British enmity. Once the crisis had passed, and the risk of direct British intervention had receded, several of those who had signed the letters of friendship agreed to join Mpezeni in a joint army to oust the British from Fort Alston.\textsuperscript{45}

\textsuperscript{42} Elmslie to Laws, 9 June 1896, Elmslie File, C.S.A. Pachai, 'Ngoni Politics', p.203, mentions a similar agreement in 1891, but gives no reference.

\textsuperscript{43} See above, Chapter 2, p.97.

\textsuperscript{44} Elmslie to Laws, 11 April 1896, Elmslie File, C.S.A.

\textsuperscript{45} Elmslie to Laws, 20 July 1896, Elmslie File, C.S.A.
To some extent this was the same pattern which emerged in 1904 and immediately afterwards,\textsuperscript{46} when acceptance of annexation was too easily equated, by missionaries and government officials alike, with enthusiasm for British rule.

**Missionary Attitudes towards Colonial Government in the 1890s**

McCracken has pointed out the differing attitudes of Livingstonia missionaries towards the Ngoni,\textsuperscript{47} emphasizing that those working in marginal areas were much less sympathetic to the Ngoni than those working in uNgoni itself. Of those working in uNgoni Elmslie was by far the most active and involved politically, (at least until the arrival of Fraser and his own departure on furlough in 1897), and it is from a study of his attitudes that the nature of the mission's impact in the 1890s will be most apparent.

Throughout the 1890s three elements are clear in Elmslie's thinking on the relationship of Ngoni, mission and colonial government. These are (1) the general desirability of British rule for the Ngoni, but the advisability of the mission remaining as far as possible neutral in any negotiations; (2) the protection of the Ngoni against what he saw as unjust British interference in specific circumstances, e.g. during the Chibisa affair; and (3) a deep-seated suspicion of H. H. Johnston, and a belief that Johnston was scheming to overcome M'mbelwa's Ngoni by force.

Elmslie's uneasiness about the mission becoming an arm of the government in its relations with the Ngoni is apparent as early as

\textsuperscript{46} See below, pp. 181-4.

\textsuperscript{47} McCracken, *Politics*, pp. 171-3.
1889, when he requested Laws' views on whether or not the mission should introduce H. H. Johnston to the Ngoni.\(^{48}\) (In the event, Johnston appears not to have visited them). After initial misgivings at this period about the Ngoni signing a treaty with the British, which he told Laws he would advise them against doing,\(^ {49}\) Elmslie by the mid-1890s was firmly convinced of the desirability of British control. His views are neatly summed up in a letter he wrote to Laws in August 1895.

As for Ngoniland and the Government I believe it would be for the good of the people and good for us in view of changes inevitably coming if the country were under the Government rather than under the B.S.A. Co. As to helping the Government further than neutrality, that may or may not be wise for us. There are dangers in taking part even by countenancing arrangements, and there might be worse dangers in holding aloof. I should like to see the treaty before committing myself, and I should also want to know how far, if assistance were given, our opinion would rule the modus operandi. \(\ldots\) But I do not like the idea of being mixed up with Government business.\(^ {50}\)

By 1897 he was writing that 'the sooner the country is under the British the better for all',\(^ {51}\) but a few months earlier, when asked by Johnston to call a meeting of the Ngoni, he had complained to Smith in Scotland that he had no wish to do the government's work for them.\(^ {52}\)

This unwillingness to interfere on behalf of the British administration arose partly from his fear that if the mission encouraged the Ngoni to sign a treaty which later turned out to be unpopular, then the Ngoni would blame them, and their popularity and influence would consequently suffer.\(^ {53}\) On the other hand, a strong element in his desire

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48. Elmslie to Laws, 21 October 1889, Ms. 7892, N.L.S.
49. Ibid., 23 September 1889.
50. Elmslie to Laws, 13 August 1895, Elmslie File, C.S.A.
51. Ibid., 9 March 1897.
52. Elmslie to Smith, 24 June 1896, Ms. 7879, N.L.S.
53. Ibid., 9 April 1896.
for neutrality was undoubtedly his eagerness to protect the Ngoni from what he regarded as specific incidents of unjust British treatment; his determination not to allow the Ngoni to be badgered.

This attitude is particularly noticeable during the Chibisa affair, and brought him into temporary disagreement with Dr. Laws who wanted him to take a more pro-British line with the Ngoni; but Elmslie stood firm, refusing to advise the Ngoni to request British protection.

Dr. Laws urges our getting the Ngoni to take time by the forelock and voluntarily hand over their country to the British. I agree it will come to British rule very soon but I am not anxious to negotiate that, as when taxes are put on there may be dissatisfaction and we would be blamed; besides the Ngoni ought not to make themselves too cheap. I am as anxious as he \(\text{?}\) to see the Ngoni under his rule and it may be accomplished without bloodshed (except the settling of Ng'onomo which I see entails war) provided he is patient, and I will render him all the assistance I can, but I will not agree to countenance anything in him of a terrifying nature. \(54\)

He was particularly annoyed with what he considered the high-handed attitude of A. J. Swann, in his demands that the Ngoni should give up Chibisa.

Swann in his last letter was rather filibustering and speaks as if all the Ngoni chiefs will be held responsible for Chibisa. If that is so I will not do anything for him as it is nonsense. He has no right to demand Chibisa at their hands. They are an independent people and his first approach should be to get treaties with them. They have a perfect right to ignore his commands to give up Chibisa. I have no objection to their being taxed but I would object to Swann or any other official carrying things with a high hand. Right is right. First make treaties of friendship and alliance and then talk about Chibisa. \(55\)

Underlying all Elmslie's attitudes, however, was a deep-seated...
distrust of H. H. Johnston, which can be traced as far back as 1889, but which became more distinct and vociferous during late 1890 and early 1891 when both Johnston and Elmslie were on leave in Britain. Elmslie took particular objection to Johnston's scheme for an Anglo-Arab alliance against the Ngoni, outlined in his article in the Fortnightly Review, and prepared a written statement for the Livingstonia Committee in which he criticised Johnston's conclusion of the Arab war and his treaty with the Jumbe of Nkhotakota.

Elmslie was convinced that Johnston was looking for an excuse to make war on the northern Ngoni, and this view seems to have been shared, at least partly, by Laws, who reported that after the defeat of Mozi Johnston deliberately ordered those taking the cattle and spoils to Blantyre to go through the Ngoni in the hope of provoking the Ngoni to steal them - thus providing a cause for war. According to Laws the bearers, (perhaps fearful for their own safety), had taken the lakeshore route instead. Though the accuracy of this story is open to doubt, it was eagerly believed by Elmslie, and provided in his view, a further justification for his beliefs about Johnston's intentions.

During the Chibisa affair Elmslie was convinced that Swann was acting on instructions from Johnston to foment trouble and claimed that his advice to the chiefs to send letters to Swann proclaiming their desire for friendship with the British, had pre-empted any military action on Johnston's part.

In 1897, even after Johnston had finally left Malawi, Elmslie

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57. Elmslie to Laws, 12 April 1891, Ms.7895, N.L.S.
58. Ibid., Elmslie to Smith, 9 April 1896, Ms.7879.
59. Elmslie to Laws, 9 March 1897, Elmslie File, C.S.A.
believed that 'Sharpe has distinct instructions not to touch the Ngoni in any way. It is the next card that Sir Harry wants to play himself', ⁶⁰ At the time it was thought possible that Johnston might return to Malawi, though according to Baker ⁶¹ he had hinted in private correspondence that he did not want to come back. If this is the case then Elmslie's views must be regarded as somewhat neurotic, though his judgement that 'it will be to the credit of the Mission if they voluntarily submit, but to his fame if he subdues them by war', ⁶² may not only be accurate, but may well provide an important clue to the motivation of both Johnston and himself in their relations with the Ngoni.

In any case, the departure of both Johnston and Elmslie on leave in 1897, their replacement by Sharpe and Fraser, and the election of a new Ngoni paramount chief, meant that control of the situation was passing into new hands.

Fraser's attitudes towards the Ngoni and the colonial government, once they had become clear, did not differ essentially from those of Elmslie. He had no direct experience of Sir Harry Johnston, and the Livingstonia missionaries in general got on much better with Alfred Sharpe; nevertheless, like Elmslie, he believed both that the Ngoni would be better off under British administration, and that the missionaries should help to protect them against unwarranted outside interference.

In his first three year tour of duty, while his views were still somewhat fluid, there were some apparent contradictions in his actions.

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60. Ibid., 19 April 1897.
62. Elmslie to Smith, 9 April 1896, Ms.7879, N.L.S.
In some respects he seemed to be more pro-British than Elmslie - in 1898 encouraging the Ngoni chiefs to invite Britain to come in; in other respects more pro-Ngoni - possibly encouraging Mtwalo to collect his own taxes and set up his own police force. What is clear, is that though he tried to avoid assuming the position of a civil magistrate, he nevertheless involved himself in a very direct way in several affairs where Ngoni interests were at stake. Foremost amongst these was the Ziehl case of 1899.

The Ziehl Case

In January 1899 an employee of the North Charterland Exploration Company, William Robert Ziehl, entered uNgoni with a group of African employees in order to buy cattle. When he left hurriedly a few weeks later the area was in uproar, with the Ngoni accusing Ziehl and his followers of murder, rape, theft and various other offences. These events, and the trial which followed four months later had a profound effect on Ngoni, mission and government in their relationships with one another, and did much to prepare the way for the eventual annexation of uNgoni by the British in 1904.

The affair had its origins in the rinderpest epidemic of 1893 which swept through Malawi from the north and on down into Zimbabwe. Although Ngoni herds were badly affected they seem to have made a quick recovery, and by 1894 Europeans were already coming into the district

64. Fraser, 'Zulu', p.74; Elmslie to Laws, 17 November 1902, Elmslie File, C.S.A.; *The Aurora*, April 1901, p.4.
from outside to buy cattle. Early in 1895 Elmslie warned Laws that 'now is our time to lay in stock because the people are poor and from Blantyre we may expect white men up for cattle this dry season, and if so prices will be at least troubled, judging from what some have already paid last season'. At the beginning of 1895 a bull could be bought in uNgoni for around £1, (or its equivalent in cloth); by the end of the year some Europeans were paying £2.10s.0d. and by January 1896 as much as £4.

By the end of 1896 prices seemed to have dropped off a little, but the next couple of years saw the beginning of an influx of Europeans into Malawi - many of them from Mashonaland. The growing trouble from this immigration was indicated by the fact that by the end of 1896 the administration was for the first time forced to employ a European warder at Blantyre prison - a development which Sharpe linked directly with the influx of Europeans from Mashonaland. The Central African Times of 26 November 1898 reported that European cattle buyers from outside the country had caused trouble in Chiwere's district by taking 120 head of cattle for which they paid only £25 in goods. The widespread nature of the problem and its effect on Africans in general can be seen in the fact that the bearers of a European visitor to Mpezeni's early in 1899 were told by local police near Blangeni 'Oh we know where your Msangu is going, he is a dog going to steal cattle'. The northern Ngoni were not immune from this trouble either, and on several occasions the missionaries had been called in to deal with

66. Elmslie to Laws, 21 January 1895, Elmslie File, C.S.A.
67. Ibid.
68. Ibid., 27 November 1895 and 14 January 1896.
69. Sharpe to P.O., 14 February 1899, P.O.2/208, P.R.O.
71. Ibid., 8 April 1899. p.5.
minor disputes involving cattle buyers or gold prospectors in the area. 72

The impact of Ziehl, who arrived in Ulugoni in January 1899 was far from minor. He was originally from Natal, and was employed by the North Charterland Exploration Company, with its headquarters near Mpezeni's head village of Mlangeni. This in itself was enough to arouse suspicion against Ziehl and his band of local followers some of whom were armed, for, following the defeat of Mpezeni, the northern Ngoni were intensely suspicious of any European who had been in Mpezeni's area at the time of the war. 73

Ziehl's account of the events which followed his arrival in Ulugoni may be summarised as follows. He arrived in the country in January 1899, with a group of African employees and five guns, two of which belonged to the North Charterland Company Police. His followers later brought him ten guns they had found hidden in a hole and he confiscated others from Africans with no permits. He was at first well received, bought a number of cattle and exchanged presents with numerous chiefs. When he came to Julizga's village he sent some of his followers to the village for grass. They were beaten and Julizga later apologised and said his villagers were drunk; he sold two head of cattle to Ziehl.

On 18 January some mission teachers, led by Daniel Nhlane arrived at Julizga's. They had no guns or spears, but were carrying knobkerries and umbrellas. According to Ziehl Daniel Nhlane asked him why he was buying cattle in mission territory and told him to go away. Ziehl said he had a licence to buy cattle. Daniel replied 'This is Mission country. It does not belong to the Administration. You must go.' Ziehl told

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72. Ibid., 15 April 1899, p.5., and Fraser, Primitive People, p.102.
him to go back to his employer and report what he had said. Daniel replied that he was not going to be told to go by any white man in his own country. Ziehl was then struck several times by Daniel and some others, in the course of which he sustained a fractured skull and fell down semi-conscious. He fired five shots but hit no one. After that he left the country. 74

The Ngoni account of what had happened differed substantially from Ziehl's in several important respects. First of all the trouble did not start at Julizga's, but much earlier. They accused Ziehl and his followers of forcing the sale of cattle against the will of their owners, seizing cattle without payment, whipping villagers with the chikoti, and raping several women. 75 It was as a result of hearing reports of these earlier events that Donald Fraser sent a letter to Daniel Nhlane, asking him to find out what was going on.

A second major difference of emphasis was in what took place during Nhlane's interview with Ziehl. According to the Ngoni account eleven mission employees went to see Ziehl. They treated him with courtesy and respect, but he lost his temper and began to beat Daniel with his chikoti. Daniel hit him on the arm and then ran away; David (possibly Zinyoka) then hit him hard on the head and one or two others hit him. Ziehl pulled out his revolver and fired repeatedly at them. Two of the Ngoni were slightly wounded. 76

In further disturbances on his way out of the area, Ziehl's

74. The above account is based on Ziehl's evidence at his trial as found in Sharpe to F.O. (No.145) Minutes of Ziehl Case, 26 June 1899, F.O.2/209, F.R.O., and Central African Times, 24 June 1899, pp.6-7 "The Ziehl Case". (sic). N.B. Throughout the case the Central African Times spells the name incorrectly as ZICHL.
76. Minutes of Ziehl Case, F.O.2/209, F.R.O.
followers shot at and killed two men and wounded an old woman, though Ziehl claimed 'he told them not to fire on the natives'.

The particular interest and importance of the Ziehl case lies not only in the way the Ngoni reacted to the extreme provocations of Ziehl's stay in uMgoni, but to the way in which both the mission and the administration became involved in the case, and in the Ngoni reaction to that involvement.

Mission involvement was centred almost entirely in the person of Fraser, who at the time was the only European missionary in uMgoni. Fraser was at Ekwendeni and the main events in the drama took place near Engalaweni - around 20 miles away, so that his first contacts with the affair were by messenger and letter.

Having heard several reports of violence, rape and theft Fraser sent a letter to Daniel Mhlane, asking him to find out if they were true. This led to Daniel's confrontation with Ziehl on 18th January. As soon as Fraser heard about this on Thursday 19th he sent a message to C. A. Cardew, the Collector at the Lake, asking him to arrest the white man, and to Mbaelekelwa and the local teachers, urging them to do nothing until Cardew arrived. On Friday and Saturday further messages arrived telling of the recovery of fifty or sixty cattle by a party which had set out in pursuit, and the killing of two men by Ziehl's followers when they returned to try to recover the cattle left behind.

Up to this point Fraser seems to have been uncertain about his

78. Fraser wrote four main accounts of the Ziehl case; Central African Times, 15 April 1899, p.5 & 6; The U.F.C.S. Missionary Record, April 1901, pp.156-58; Winning a Primitive People, pp.101-109; and Autobiography of an African, pp.146-153. The fullest of these is his letter in the Central African Times, and the account below is based on that, unless otherwise footnoted.
own involvement in the affair. He claims that this was because he was the lone European at Ekwendeni, and didn't want to leave the station, but it was probably also because he was reluctant to break too sharply with the mission tradition of non-interference in civil affairs.

It was probably the arrival of messengers from Mbagekela and Mzukuzuku on Saturday 21 January, saying that unless he came immediately they could no longer restrain their armies from going in pursuit of Ziehl, that finally convinced Fraser of the full seriousness of the affair. The arrival of William Murray from Khondowe freed Fraser to leave Ekwendeni, but it wasn't until 3 p.m. the following Tuesday that he finally arrived at Engalaweni, (accompanied by Dr. Scott who had come up from Bandawe on hearing of the trouble).

There Fraser heard many of the complaints against Ziehl in detail for the first time, and also the Ngoni complaint that 'we [the mission] would not allow them to punish the evil-doers'. The fact that they made this complaint shows just how high Ngoni feelings on the matter were running; the fact that they did not send out an army in spite of these feelings, indicates both the considerable restraint shown by the Ngoni, and the extensive influence of the mission.

Fraser reacted by suggesting that an impi of specially chosen warriors should be sent out in pursuit of Ziehl. He suggested that he and Scott should accompany the army and laid down four conditions, which the Ngoni accepted. These were: 'that we ourselves should pick the men, that no beer should be touched on the road, that we should be absolutely obeyed, and that no one but ourselves should have any contact with the white man'. As final preparations for the pursuit were being made on

Tuesday night, news arrived that Cardew was finally on his way from the lakeshore. He arrived the following evening, and thus averted by a few hours what would have been the unprecedented sight of a missionary leading out an Ngoni army.

Though Cardew and his police, accompanied by a special detachment of Mzukusuku’s men, gave chase, Ziehl was already out of the country—having returned to Mpezeni’s.

In assessing Fraser’s part in the affair up to this point, several points could be made. First he found himself, as he was to do again in 1915,80 the victim of a conflict of loyalties. His allegiance to the British judicial system made him unwilling to let the Ngoni take the law into their own hands;81 at the same time it did not prevent him from becoming directly involved in the affair, to an extent with which Elmslie, on leave at the time, was not entirely happy.82 Again, his concern to protect the Ngoni from possible criticism led him, in his two accounts of the affair which were published more or less contemporaneously with the event, to play down considerably the amount of violence which the Ngoni had inflicted on Ziehl.83 His later accounts, particularly the chapter 'A Filibuster' in Autobiography of an African, relate the events in some detail—even, one suspects, with a trace of relish.84

The escape of Ziehl to Mpezeni’s was by no means the end of the

80. See below, Chapter 5, 'the Chimbunga Affair'.
81. Fraser was also concerned in this connection with the fact that Ziehl was probably a British subject, and any unilateral action by the Ngoni against him might well have serious consequences for the whole Ngoni people.
82. Elmslie to Lews, 20 May 1899, Elmslie File, C.S.A.
84. Fraser, Autobiography, pp.146-153.
affair: indeed in terms of the involvement of the administration it was only the beginning. Cardew's report on the events, prepared and sent off to Sharpe within a week of the escape of Ziehl, recommended the placing of a government official in uNgoni to prevent similar trouble in the future. 85 Two more immediate results, however, were the introduction by Sharpe in February 1899 of the 'Purchase of Cattle from Natives Ordinance' and his taking up of Ziehl's case with Codrington, Deputy Administrator of North-Eastern Rhodesia.

'The Purchase of Cattle from Natives Ordinance,' which was gazetted as an urgent measure on 24 February 1899, 86 is almost certainly directly connected with Ziehl's behaviour in uNgoni. Though too late to be of any immediate value to the Ngoni, it sought to protect Africans from unscrupulous dealers such as Ziehl, by laying down that in certain districts, including West Nyasa, (of which uNgoni was then technically a part), no cattle could be purchased without a permit issued by the Collector. In applying for a permit a prospective cattle buyer had to state the number of cattle he intended to buy, the minimum price he expected to pay for them, and the chiefs from whose areas he hoped to purchase them. Before leaving the district he had to appear before the Collector with the cattle to satisfy him that the purchases had been above board. Though possibly under preparation for some time, the introduction of these regulations on an urgent basis, less than a month after Sharpe received Cardew's report, at least indicates the seriousness with which the administration viewed the Ziehl case.

So too does the fact that Sharpe took up the matter with

85. Report from C. A. Cardew to Sharpe, January 1899, F.0.2/208, F.R.O.
86. Ibid., British Central Africa Gazette, 24 February 1899, C.0.541/1.
Codrington during a subsequent visit to Fort Jameson, in the course of which he presented Codrington with a warrant for Ziehl’s arrest to answer charges in connection with his behaviour in uNgoni in January.\(^{87}\)

As a result of Sharpe’s discussions with Codrington, however, Ziehl had first of all to appear at Fort Jameson, charged with illegally raising a police force. The manager of the North Charterland Company had been on leave in Europe since October 1898,\(^{88}\) and Sharpe commented that the acting manager Hayes ‘appears to be a weak man and in poor health and to have allowed Ziehl to obtain entire control of the local affairs of the North Charterland Company’.\(^{89}\) As a result Ziehl had raised, uniformed and armed a force of company police when in fact he had no legal right to do so. The outcome was that the entire police force was imprisoned for a short time at Fort Jameson, while Ziehl was fined £5 by Codrington\(^{90}\) — in itself a comment on the state of race relations in the area at the time.

One other action of Sharpe at this time is perhaps worth noting, (if only in contrast to Codrington’s action above). Having appointed Captain F. E. Pearce, the Assistant Deputy Commissioner, to hear the case against Ziehl at Ekwendeni, Sharpe instructed him that ‘should the evidence justify a conviction, a heavy fine or a term of imprisonment should be inflicted’. ‘It is absolutely necessary,’ he added, in his report to the Foreign Office, ‘to put a stop to lawless proceedings on the part of Europeans in these districts lying west of Lake Nyasa.'\(^{91}\)

He himself had earlier noted the connection between a large influx of

\(^{87}\) Sharpe to F.O., 8 May 1899, F.O.2/208, P.R.O.
\(^{88}\) Central African Times, 8 October 1898, P.1.
\(^{89}\) Sharpe to F.O., 8 May 1899, F.O.2/208, P.R.O.
\(^{90}\) Ibid.
\(^{91}\) Ibid.
The Ngoni Paramount on his Way to the Trial of Ziehl
Ekwendeni 1899
Europeans, and the outbreak of trouble at Mpezeni's. He seemed determined to prevent the same thing happening again.

The trial of Ziehl took place at Ekwendeni between 25 and 27 May 1899, Pearce sat as judge, together with two assessors, Andrew Forbes, a trader from Bandawe, and William Murray the Livingstonia missionary. Ziehl was charged with nine offences, including several involving assault on various Ngoni (one of whom was Daniel Nhlane) and one involving the theft of cattle and goats. The most serious charges were that he levied war against the Ngoni, and that he illegally armed the Africans travelling with him. It is interesting to note that in the very full account it gave of the trial, the Central African Times made no mention of either of these latter two charges.

Much of the evidence at the trial hinged on the nature of the meeting of 18 January between Ziehl and Daniel Nhlane. Ziehl tried to argue that he had told Daniel clearly that he had a licence to trade, and that Daniel had told him in return that he had no right to trade in mission territory — even with a government permit. All the Ngoni witnesses denied both these allegations, and, indeed, one outstanding feature of the trial was the consistency of the Ngoni evidence. In spite of detailed cross-examination by Ziehl they all stuck doggedly to their account, which agreed on almost every point.

Another facet of the trial turned on the African's approach to the European, and concerned the question of whether or not Daniel and his group had taken off their hats when they approached Ziehl. It was

93. The main account of Ziehl's trial is in Sharpe to F.O. (No.145), Minutes of Ziehl Case, 16 June 1899, F.O.2/209, P.R.O. Only references to sources other than this will be footnoted in this section.
on such trifles that Ziehl pinned his hopes of acquittal, but once again, the Ngoni witnesses were insistent that they had approached Ziehl in a respectful and deferential manner.

Among those giving evidence were the paramount chief of the Ngoni, Chimtunga (Mmalekelwa), and the veteran missionary Elmslie, who although not in Ulgoni during the disturbances, was asked to comment on the general state the country. Their evidence was remarkably similar. Chimtunga remarked that 'The angoni had never previously attacked a white man, and would not wish to attack a white man if he had not done much wrong to the people'. Elmslie had earlier given it as his opinion that 'He believed they would have to receive very great provocation before attacking a white man'. Both the Ngoni and the missionaries carefully avoided mention of the fact that Daniel Nhlane had, on one occasion several years earlier, attacked the missionary Charles Stuart with a shield and spear, after he had been dismissed as a mission foreman.95

In his summing-up Pearce made two criticisms of what may be termed the Ngoni side. First of all he criticised Fraser for sending Daniel Nhlane to Ziehl on the grounds that 'it was injudicious to send a native to enquire into a white man's doings'. Secondly he claimed that though Ziehl had been wrong to assault Daniel 'yet he had some degree of provocation'. Both these opinions were soon to be subjected

95. Fraser, Autobiography, p. 73
96. Fraser's evidence on this point is somewhat contradictory. In the Missionary Record, April 1901, p. 156, he claims that he did not send Daniel Nhlane to Ziehl, but only to find out from the local Ngoni if the rumours of outrages were true. This version seems to agree with his accounts in Central African Times, 15 April 1899, p. 5, Autobiography of an African, p. 148, and Winning a Primitive People, p. 103. Giving evidence at the trial, however, he stated that he had given Daniel a letter for Ziehl, which Daniel had failed to deliver. (Central African Times, 24 June 1899, p. 6).
to criticism.

Nevertheless, he came down overwhelmingly against Ziehl, finding him guilty on eight out of the nine charges, and sentencing him to six months imprisonment or a fine of £50. He was also ordered to pay a total of £9.10s.0d. to those he had wronged. (This included compensation of £1.10s.0d. for each of the two men killed by his followers).

Ziehl paid his fine and compensation, had those cattle returned to him which no one had claimed, and left the area the next day. He was eventually expelled from the country for a repetition of the offence. Difficult though it is to make comparisons, there is little doubt that Ziehl escaped very lightly. He had certainly cause to be grateful that it was the British and not the Ngoni before whom he was brought to trial.

Reactions to the verdict and sentence were understandably varied in detail, though almost universally anti-Ziehl. The Aurora was critical of the verdict on some counts - thinking that it was the Ngoni who were provoked rather than Ziehl. It supported Fraser, saying that but for him Ziehl would not have escaped alive. It thought the verdict was lenient but on the whole praised the government for upholding justice.

Fraser himself thought that Ziehl had made a profit out of the affair - so many cattle had been returned to him - but also thought Daniel Msiane and his friends were wrong to get involved in the way they did.

Elmslie, while having reservations about Fraser's involvement, was
more down-to-earth than perhaps any other European in his concern for
the many Ngoni who had suffered loss through Ziehl's actions, and had
not been compensated. He pressed Laws to speak to Sharpe about this
matter, and also about the return of the forty guns confiscated by
Ziehl and handed to the collector at Port Alston. 102

The Central African Times took what was perhaps a surprising line,
not only expressing satisfaction that the case had got a fair hearing,
but strongly supporting Fraser against Pearce's criticisms. 'Mr. Fraser
only did what any right thinking man would have done in his place.' 103

More interesting than any of these, of course, is the Ngoni view
of the proceedings. Their initial reaction had been one of fear: the
fear that 'Daniel has ruined our country', 104 i.e. that British justice
would inevitably be pro-European, and that the affair would be used as
an excuse to crush them, as their brothers at Mlangeni had been crushed.
That the trial took place at all was probably something of a surprise
to them; it certainly aroused widespread interest, and thousands of
Ngoni arrived at Ekwendeni to hear the proceedings. 105

Though it may seem surprising, they were even impressed by the
outcome, and forty years later, inkosi M'mbelwa II in his evidence to
the Bledisloe Commission cited the Ziehl case as one of the reasons why
Chimtunga had eventually accepted British rule: 'this is one of the
reasons that my father willingly placed himself under the Imperial
Government Rule because the Deputy Commissioner, Mr. Pearce, had
displayed justice and shewed great protection by fining that European

102. Elmslie to Laws, 20 June 1899, Elmslie File, C.S.A.
105. Pearce to Sharpe, 15 June 1899, F.O.2/209, P.R.O.
and making him to pay all damages made to people'.

This is not to say that it made the Ngoni enthusiastic for British rule. It did not.

What it did, however, was to remove some of the dread which had previously characterised their attitude to the British administration.

Besides, the Ngoni probably believed that in some measure they themselves had punished Ziehl. The name they gave to him, *Xanjechi*, which is still vaguely remembered in parts of ulungoni to-day, might possibly be translated 'the one who was really beaten into shape'.

And what of the government's attitude? Pearce, like many other Europeans—missionaries, planters and civil servants—believed that the trial provided the perfect opportunity for bringing ulungoni peacefully under British rule. 'There will be few opportunities more suitable than the present for opening out this large and thickly populated district, while the memories of the white man's trial and the event at Ekwendeni are impressed in their minds.' Sharpe thought the case would hasten the time of the coming of the administration, but did not want to rush things, and preferred to leave the initiative to the Ngoni.

In the event, it was Sharpe's view rather than Pearce's which prevailed, and though it may be said that the Ziehl case brought the annexation of ulungoni nearer, it was certainly not its immediate cause.

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107. See, for example Elmslie to Laws, 30 August 1900: 'The Ngoni in many places have come and thanked us for keeping out the Administration'. Elmslie File, C.S.A.

108. Note, for example, the remark made by one Ngoni witness when asked why he thought Ziehl was an agent of the government: 'Because Ziehl and his men took things without paying for them.' Pearce to Sharpe, 18 June 1899, F.0.2/209, P.R.O.


110. See Rev. J. L. Döhne, A Zulu-Kafir Dictionary, Cape Town, 1857, p.156. This dictionary has consistently proved useful in tracing old chiulungoni words. The actual copy used belonged first to George Steele and then to W. A. Elmslie. It contains a few hand-written additions. It is at present in the library of St. Colm's College, Edinburgh.

111. Pearce to Sharpe, 15 June 1899, F.0.2/209, P.R.O.
The Coming of the Administration

Sharpe's decision not to annex uNgoni after the Ziehl case, was based, not on any ultimate reluctance to take the step, but on the assessment that it would be more prudent 'to leave it to be proposed by the Angoni themselves, as I feel sure that they will do so before long'.\(^{112}\) As it turned out, Sharpe's judgement was wrong. More than five years were to separate the Ziehl case and British annexation of uNgoni, and when the latter event took place in September 1904, the initiative was to come not from the Ngoni, but from the administration, and, to a lesser extent the mission.

Elmslie regretted the delay, feeling that Sharpe had made a mistake in not annexing the area before he left on leave in 1900.\(^{113}\) He realised that Ngoni support for such a move was minimal, and probably decreasing.\(^{114}\) The Ngoni valued their independence more highly than perhaps the administration realised, and while the Ziehl case had undoubtedly reduced Ngoni fears about government intentions, it had also reinforced their belief that they could look after themselves. So too had the attitude of Fraser in 1899 and early 1900.

Some time in 1899, probably as a result of the Ziehl case, Fraser encouraged Mtwalo at Mwendeni to establish his own hut tax and raise his own police force.\(^{115}\) This move was strongly opposed by Elmslie who later wrote to Laws, 'I cannot but regret Mr. Fraser's ill-considered attempt to bolster up their independence and it will react on our work as we shall see'.\(^{116}\) Nevertheless, Fraser carried a letter from the

\(^{112}\) Ibid., Sharpe to F.O., 16 June 1899.
\(^{113}\) Elmslie to Laws, 30 August 1900, Elmslie File, P.R.O.
\(^{114}\) Ibid., 11 November 1902.
\(^{115}\) Fraser, 'Zulu', p. 74.
\(^{116}\) Elmslie to Laws, 11 November 1902, Elmslie File, C.S.A.
Ngoni chiefs to Sharpe,\(^{117}\) (probably on his way home early in 1900), in which they claimed the right, not only to collect taxes but also to pursue runaway slaves into territory administered by the British.\(^{118}\) The administration seem to have denied this right,\(^{119}\) but this attitude only caused resentment among the Ngoni chiefs, without effectively reducing their power.\(^{120}\)

The Ngoni, in effect, were trying to play the mission off against the administration, claiming in their letter to Sharpe, 'We are for the Mission and not the Boma'.\(^{121}\) They probably realised by this stage that their continued existence as a powerful people depended on coming to terms with one of the outside groups who were influencing the area, and judged that alliance with the mission would allow them greater scope than submission to the administration. Certainly the relationship which they built up with the mission in this period was looked upon with envy by other Ngoni groups elsewhere in Malawi.\(^{122}\)

After a period of relative quiet, however, a series of disputes broke out between the Ngoni and the administration in late 1902 and early 1903. These disputes highlighted both the conflicting claims to authority in the areas surrounding uNgoni itself, and the continuing ambiguity of the missionary position. At least three incidents took place - two of them described by Elmslie as raids\(^{123}\) - one to the foothills of the Nyika and another to Kaning'ina on the borders between uNgoni and uTonga. In fact they were not raids in the old sense, but

\(^{117}\) Ibid., 5 January 1902/5 January 1903.
\(^{118}\) The Aurora, April 1901, p.4.
\(^{119}\) Ibid.
\(^{120}\) Elmslie to Laws, 5 January 1903, Elmslie File, C.S.A.
\(^{121}\) Ibid.
\(^{122}\) Read, Ngoni, p.43.
\(^{123}\) Elmslie to Laws, 11 November 1902, and 8 December 1902, Elmslie File, C.S.A.
something more akin to family feuds, as was the third disturbance — a case of revenge murder in which the murderer's whole family were killed.

Though Knipe, (the prosecutor in the Ziehl case, and now Collector at Nkhata Bay), left the murder case in MtwalO's hands, Chimtunga was held responsible for the raids and reported to Zomba. Some months later Chimtunga and the other chiefs were fined six cows each and ordered to deliver the raiders up at Nkhata Bay to be punished by Knipe. Elmslie reacted vigorously. Though he himself thought the Ngoni were wrong, he objected to the lack of a proper judicial procedure.

Chimtunga could not understand the case and I informed Mr. Knipe of that and proposed that he should in the first instant make a charge and refrain from fining and punishing until there was a trial, as obviously, they had heard only one side .... I then protested in strong and plain terms that the infliction of a fine on the chiefs while as yet no one for whom they were responsible had been lawfully tried and convicted of an offence was subversive of justice, and contrary to all law .... Knipe then wrote saying he would take the responsibility of leaving over the fine till after the trial.125

It was at this point that the government began to think seriously of annexing uNgoni; with Knipe making plans to choose a site for a Boma,126 and Sharpe explaining that the inability of the Ngoni chiefs to control their own subjects, and the increase in quarrels between the Ngoni and other tribes had made it 'evident during the past year 1903-04 that the time had come for the Protectorate Administration to finally place Nomba's Angoniland in the same position as all other districts in the Protectorate.127 Before that happened, however,

124. Ibid.
125. Ibid., 18 April 1903.
126. Ibid.
127. Sharpe to C.O. 14 October 1904 'Visit to Lake Nyasa Districts', paragraph 9, C.O.525/3, F.R.O.
there was to be one final serious dispute between the Ngoni and the administration – this time involving intrusion by the administration into uNgoni.

In 1904 a group of policemen entered uNgoni from the east, began collecting hut tax, giving inadequate receipts to those who paid, and burning the huts of those who didn't.\(^{128}\) This was not a case of straying a few miles across the boundary, (generally accepted as the line of the Vipya hills which forms the watershed between the Kasitu/South Rukuru, and the lake),\(^ {129}\) but of penetrating about thirty miles, right across uNgoni. Fraser was touring with his wife in the area at the time, and he intervened with the police and sent them back to Nkhata Bay with a letter for Pickford, the new Collector there. He explained that he had assured the Ngoni that the Boma would make good any damage caused by the police.

Pickford apparently resented Fraser's interference, and after the matter had been reported to Zomba an enquiry was ordered. Fraser attended this, together with \(\text{inkosi}\) Mzukuzuku. The police accused Fraser of inciting the people to murder them, defying the government, and trying to rouse the Ngoni to rebel. From Fraser's point of view the enquiry was inconclusive and unsatisfactory. Though it produced a government apology for the unauthorised raid,\(^ {130}\) it also resulted in a letter from Sharpe to Laws expressing criticism of Fraser's attitude to the government. From the Ngoni point of view, however, the outcome was much more serious; it provided the final excuse for the annexation of

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128. The following account is based on Agnes R. Fraser, *Fraser*, pp. 105-108, unless otherwise stated.
129. See detailed map of administrative boundaries of uNgoni, in Acting Governor Pearce to Secretary of State for Colonies, 22 May 1913, O.0.525/49, P.R.O.
130. Fraser, *Primitive People*, p. 240.
uNgoni by the administration.

In outlining the events which led to annexation Sharpe pointed out that Johnston had promised the Ngoni chiefs that as long as they were able to administer their internal affairs without causing trouble to outsiders, and also kept their people under such control as would prevent raids on tax-paying natives in the protectorate, they would be subject neither to taxation nor would British Officials be sent to administer their internal affairs. 131

Sharpe went on to point out that as the power of the Ngoni chiefs had been decreasing over the past few years, and they were no longer able to comply with these conditions, the time had come to annex uNgoni. 132

Both Elmslie and Fraser wrote articles describing the annexation, and explaining the background to it. Elmslie stressed that uNgoni had become a refuge for evil-doers from outside, fleeing from government justice. He pointed out that for several years the mission had been urging the government to annex the area, but that even up until 1903, Sharpe was unwilling to do so, 'without an armed force able to cope with eventualities'. 133

Fraser stressed the unity of the tribe, which he claimed was beginning to break down with the death of the old chiefs, and the scattering of the tribe into new areas. Villagers were raiding those against whom they had a grievance, and others, dissatisfied with a chief's judgement, were taking their cases to the nearest Boma. The confusion thus arising made the time ripe for annexation. 134

131. Sharpe to C.O. 14 October 1904, paragraph 9, C.O.525/3, F.R.O.
132. Ibid.
134. Ibid., January 1905, pp.25-6.
While all these opinions doubtless contain aspects of the truth, it is ironical that the two major incidents which awakened Europeans to the need for British control in uNgoni were both cases of outsiders intruding into the area in a violent and illegal manner.

The summons to meet Sharpe in indaba at Ekwendeni was not greeted by the Ngoni with any great enthusiasm. Indeed the way in which it was issued greatly disturbed Chimtunga. The missionaries, on the other hand, were unanimous in thinking that the annexation was desirable, though they had two concerns about the way in which it should be carried out. The first, with which Laws was principally concerned, was that the mission should not be directly involved in the negotiations - that they should be seen to be separate from the administration; the second, which concerned the uNgoni missionaries, was, as Fraser put it, 'to get as good terms of annexation as possible'. That the two should be, to some extent, contradictory, was the inevitable outcome of the position of intermediaries which the missionaries had adopted over the years. The result was that the missionaries carried out informal talks with Sharpe before the indaba, but were mere spectators during the actual negotiations with the Ngoni.

These took place near Ekwendeni, on the afternoon of Friday 2 September 1904. Sharpe explained to the Ngoni that as they had spread out well beyond the limits of what had been the area of their jurisdiction when H. H. Johnston had made his promises of non-interference,

135. The Ziehl case of 1899, and the hut tax intrusion of 1904.
136. Agnes Fraser, Fraser, p.108.
138. Agnes Fraser, Fraser, p.108.
139. Livingstone, Laws, p.315 and Agnes Fraser, Fraser, p.108-9.
140. The following account is based on Sharpe to C.O., 14 October 1904, C.0.525/3, F.R.O., unless otherwise stated.
they must either return to that restricted area, or come under British jurisdiction.

The Ngoni chiefs accepted the inevitability of annexation. Their recent migrations had been made mainly for agricultural reasons and could not easily be reversed. Nevertheless, they had several problems which they wanted discussed. One was the possibility of further migration as land became exhausted, another was the problem of how to prevent dissatisfied litigants playing off one chief against another, a third was the assurance that they would have the right to hunt game in particular areas. Sharpe’s assurance that the government had no intention of taking their cattle from them was obviously a response to a deep-seated Ngoni fear, which had been particularly strong since the Mpezeni war.

In his report on the indaba Sharpe listed nine terms which were agreed between the Ngoni and himself. These were that a government official should be placed in uNgoni; that the Ngoni should be subject to the administration; that hut tax should not begin until January 1906; that the government would wipe the slate clean, as far as previous disputes involving the Ngoni were concerned; that as far as possible the local police force would be made up of the Ngoni themselves; that six Ngoni chiefs would receive annual subsidies; that the Ngoni could hunt within the bend of the Bukuru river; that new country would be found for those who needed to migrate, and that the people would be kept as far as possible with their old chiefs.

The occasion ended with the giving of thanks and war-dancing, and

142. Ibid.
both the missionaries and the colonial administrators expressed themselves highly satisfied with the outcome. But what of the Ngoni attitude to the settlement? Did they regard it with the same enthusiasm?

**Ngoni Reactions to Annexation**

European accounts of the annexation would indicate that the Ngoni reaction was one of willing acceptance, if not, indeed, enthusiasm. Sharpe wrote that the chiefs 'without hesitation accepted the new condition of affairs', while Fraser commented that Sharpe's proposals 'were almost immediately accepted, and with much heartiness'. A more accurate understanding of Ngoni attitudes may be arrived at, by considering why the Ngoni accepted the proposals at all, and examining briefly their actions in the period immediately following annexation.

Pachai suggests four factors which led the Ngoni to accept colonial rule. These were the Ziehl case, the rinderpest epidemic of 1893, the incompetent rule of Chimtunga, and the 1904 tax-collecting incident. It has already been pointed out that the main impact of the Ziehl case was in reducing Ngoni fears of a colonial take-over, and to this extent it was of considerable importance as a factor making annexation more likely in the long run. While the rinderpest epidemic undoubtedly had a serious impact at the time, the Ngoni herds had recovered long before 1904, and it may be doubted whether it had any direct impact on the coming of colonial government. The disillusionment of other Ngoni chiefs with Chimtunga may have been a factor which made

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143. Ibid., and comments by C.O. officials on Sharpe's despatch of 14 October 1904, C.O.525/3, P.R.O.
144. Ibid., Sharpe to C.O., 14 October 1904, para. 11.
146. Pachai, 'Ngoni Politics', p. 205.
them more willing to accept colonial rule - or rather, to seek colonial backing for their own positions,\(^{147}\) while the 1904 tax-collecting incident had more effect on the attitudes of the administration than on those of the Ngoni.

To Pachai's points may be added the following. First, the Ngoni had no real alternative. Sharpe's proposals of 2 September, though open to amendment, were not open to rejection. It was for this reason that he had presented the Ngoni with the choice of accepting colonial rule or returning to their former boundaries: there was, in effect, no choice at all. The only real alternative would have been military revolt, and that had ceased to be a likely option several years previously.

Secondly, the Ngoni may have accepted annexation without complaint on the mistaken assumption that they were being offered much more than they actually were. Inkosi M'mbelwa II in his evidence to the Bledisloe Commission argued that Chimtunga agreed to annexation because the government had on several earlier occasions promised him that his Kingdom will be as that of Khama and the Prince of Zanzibar, and that no European will have power over his country and over him, also that Her Majesty Queen Victoria will send a Consul to help him and to strengthen his power and that his people will pay taxes to him and not to Her Majesty the Queen.\(^{148}\)

Whether this was in fact the case is now very difficult to establish,\(^{149}\)

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147. Chimtunga's position will be discussed in more detail in Chapter 5.
148. The reference to Kgama is interesting, in that he possessed several powers which the Ngoni paramount may have wished for, notably the power to hear all legal cases involving his own people, and the power to collect hut tax before handing it over to the administration. See A. Sillery, *Founding a Protectorate*, the Hague, 1965, p.229, and Monica Wilson & Leonard Thompson (eds.), *The Oxford History of South Africa*, Oxford, 1969, Vol.2, p.275.
though Fraser reports Sharpe as telling the Ngoni on 2 September of his proposal 'to put a government official among them, who would strengthen their hands to govern the people'. The most likely explanation is that the Ngoni read into Sharpe's remark more than he had intended, and were later disillusioned with the reality of colonial government.

Thirdly, the continuous influence of the mission, which while attempting to protect Ngoni interests against outside interference, nevertheless encouraged the Ngoni in the belief that colonial government would be to their ultimate advantage, must have had some influence, not only on Ngoni teachers like Daniel Mhlane, but also on the chiefs themselves all of whom were in regular contact with the uNgoni missionaries.

Finally, the gradual intrusion of a wage economy into the life of the Ngoni helped to undermine the traditional structures of the state and to ensure, even before 1904, their de facto inclusion in the economic orbit of the protectorate. This very weakening of traditional power structures may, paradoxically, have persuaded the chiefs that the acceptance of, and alliance with, colonial government would be one way of preserving their own chiefly authority.

Whatever the precise importance of each of these points, it seems clear that the initial Ngoni reaction to colonial rule was one of reluctant acceptance of the inevitable, rather than enthusiastic support for the desirable. This was especially true at village level, where some people sent their cattle to other parts of the country, fearing the government intended to rob them, and others refused to supply H. C. Macdonald, whom Sharpe had appointed as Resident, with labourers,

carriers, or food for sale.\textsuperscript{151} Chimtunga at first refused even to see Macdonald, or to send carriers or men for police work,\textsuperscript{152} and though the situation improved significantly in the next few years, the seeds of discontent remained - ready to sprout forth again in 1915.


\textsuperscript{152} Ibid.
CHAPTER FOUR

FRASER'S POLICIES AND THE GROWTH OF THE NGONI CHURCH,

1900-1914

Introduction

The period 1900-14 saw the consolidation of Christianity as a major cultural factor amongst the Ngoni. Within the context of the Presbyterian form of Christianity brought by the Scottish missionaries, two parallel developments were taking place at this time.

The first was the institutionalization of the church: the development of the organs of administration such as Presbytery and Kirk Sessions, which, while they gave some experience of church government to African Christians, essentially retained most of the administrative power in missionary hands. This is especially so when viewed alongside the existence of the Mission Council, on which African Christians had no representation whatsoever.¹

The second development was the indigenization of the church. By this is meant the cultural process through which a sizeable section of the Ngoni people came to terms with Christianity, accepted it, (if not as a personal faith at least as an existent factor in Ngoni life), tried to mould it to suit their own needs and customs, and helped to spread

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¹ The Mission Council, which at this time was made up of the male graduate missionaries, plus a few selected non-graduates, had, together with the Livingstonia Committee in Scotland, control over such things as the disposal of all finance coming from Scotland, the placing of all European personnel, the ownership and control of all major buildings on mission stations, and major policy decisions such as the rate and direction of expansion into new areas. In addition, they had a good deal of indirect control over the decisions of Presbytery.
it, both within Ngoni and beyond. Inherent in this development was the need to come to terms with the whole framework of mission administration, with its restrictions and rules. Inevitably, this sometimes led to resentment and conflict.

Fraser’s position during this period is both interesting and important. While accepting the basic presuppositions of missionary control, he adopted what was, on the whole, a much more sympathetic attitude towards Ngoni culture and aspirations than that of most of his colleagues. This sometimes involved him in conflict with his fellow missionaries at both Mission Council and Presbytery level. It was during this period also that most of the distinctive hallmarks of Fraser’s policies were developed. These included the continued use of large conventions, the encouragement of African church music, the widespread use of sub-sessions and women elders. In some cases Fraser was merely responding to African initiatives, in others, his policies succeeded to the extent to which they were in tune with Ngoni thinking.

The Growth of the Church

By February 1900, when Fraser left Ekwendeni for his first furlough, there were just over 800 church members in Ngoni. By 1914 the number had grown to over 4000, with a claimed Christian community of 18,000 – around 15% of the total population. Alongside this steady growth in the size of the church there took place a demographical change

3. Donald Fraser, *Livingstonia*, p.85. By ‘Christian community’ was meant all communicants, plus catechumens, hearers and baptised children.
of considerable proportions, which, both in terms of Ngoni population and church growth, saw a switch of focus from the Kasitu to the area south of the Mzimba, brought about by a massive shift of Ngoni population looking for fresh agricultural land. There was nothing particularly strange about such an Ngoni migration. Movements of population had been going on in uNgoni since the arrival of the Ngoni around 1855, and as far back as the 1880s, M'mbelwa had been talking of moving to the Mzimba district. What made this migration of particular significance was that it was the last such major demographical change in uNgoni, due to the closing in of colonial government — and, indeed, was one of the factors which brought about the political annexation of uNgoni.

Migration south had been going on for some years prior to 1900, but it reached a peak in 1902 — brought to a head by the combined scourge of drought and locusts. The two traditional Ngoni responses to such set-backs were an increase in raiding and large-scale migration. By 1902 raiding was no longer a practical possibility, and large numbers of Ngoni youths adopted the expanding alternative of migrant labour. Migration was still a viable option and in May 1902 Mzukuzuku held a great meeting at his village of Embangweni, (at that time close by Hora mountain), to discuss the possibility.

As a result of that meeting the Ngoni asked Fraser, who, on his return from furlough in 1901 had been posted to Hora, to move south with them. He agreed, on two conditions: that the Mission Council would

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6. See previous chapter, pp. 179-80.
7. The Aurora, Vol. 6, 1 April 1902, p. 70.
8. Ibid.
9. Ibid.
agree, and that the Ngoni would provide free labour for the erection of public buildings. Though there was some missionary opposition to the move, notably from Elmslie, Fraser believed that it was necessary, both to hold the Ngoni together as a people and to keep the mission at the centre of population. The initiative for migration had come, not from the mission, not even from the Ndwandwe-Ngoni themselves, but from the Tumbuka-Ngoni — more primarily dependent on good agricultural land.

Fraser's response to that initiative, (by agreeing to move south), and the policies he followed once he had moved, helped to alter the whole distribution of Christianity in uNgoni. In 1900 most Ngoni Christians were situated in the Njuyu/Ekwendeni area, by 1903 the church at Loudon had become the biggest in the mission with over 1,000 members, and by 1914 nearly 30% of all Livingstonia Christians, and over 60% of Ngoni Christians lived in the Mzimba area and were members of Loudon congregation.

Up until 1901 uNgoni had been regarded by the mission as one administrative unit, so that differences of approach amongst its missionaries were not immediately obvious. In that year, however, the uNgoni Kirk Session petitioned Livingstonia Presbytery for permission to form three separate congregations at Njuyu, Ekwendeni and Mora. Permission was granted and three separate Kirk Sessions were established in January 1902. Though undertaken for basically administrative

11. Elmslie to Laws, 2 February 1906, Elmslie File, C.S.A.
13. The new station opened by Fraser in 1902 at Kakoma was named after Dr. James Loudon of Hamilton, whose widow provided £1,000 (originally to build a hospital), which was used to help build the station. Dr. & Mrs. Loudon provided Fraser's salary for many years.
14. Based on statistics in Fraser, Livingstonia, p.85.
15. North Livingstonia Presbytery Minutes, 1 November 1901, N.A.N.
W. A. Elmslie and inkosi Mzukuzuku
reasons, the establishment of Hora, (and later Loudon), as a separate congregation gave Fraser a greater freedom of action, and his area of work a distinct identity. This remained true even after 1908 when Njuyu and Ekwendeni were re-united as one congregation.17

The move from Hora to Loudon also established the separate identity of the latter by greatly increasing the distance between it and Ekwendeni. In addition it maintained the mission at the political centre of ulgoni, since the site of the new mission station was only a few miles from Chimtunga's village of Edingeni.18 It was primarily with Mzukuzuku, however, that the new station was identified. The first site chosen at lwasoze in 1902 proved to be unsuitable due to lack of water, and soon afterwards Joseph Mnami, one of the first group baptised by George Steele at Hora in 1895, and now an elder, found a more suitable site a few miles away at Kakoma,19 near where Mzukuzuku was building his new village of Embangweni. He gave Fraser a square mile of land on which to build, and it was largely with labour from his people that the main buildings were erected.20 Though Fraser called the station Loudon, it was known to the Ngoni as 'Mzukuzuku's mission'.21

In spite of this, it was Fraser's personality and policies which established the distinctive style of the church in the Nzimba area, and in terms of church growth the most relevant of these in this context was the rate at which he was willing to baptise new converts. Two factors are of relevance here; first the number of candidates for

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17. North Livingstonia Presbytery Minutes, 15 September 1908, N.A.M.
18. Pachai claims that Chimtunga had moved even before his father died in 1891, (Pachai, 'Ngoni Politics' p.205), but he was still near Hora at the time of the Ziehl Case, (Central African Times, 15 April, 1899, p.5), and probably moved to the Nzimba area at much the same time as Mzukuzuku.
19. Fraser, Primitve People, p.205
20. Ibid., p.206 and 220.
baptism, and secondly, the percentage of candidates examined who were actually baptised in any given year.

The number of candidates for baptism was closely tied up with Fraser's view of the schools as essentially evangelistic agencies. This had led him to abolish school fees for a time at Hora, as he couldn't reconcile the charging of fees with the preaching of the gospel. Though Fraser was soon forced to reintroduce fees, at this stage in his career he saw the schools primarily as a means of evangelistic outreach. One result was that he was much more willing to open village schools with teachers of limited training than were many of his colleagues. By 1905, only three years after Loudon was opened, he had already opened 142 schools, as against 66 at Ekwendeni, and 122 at Bandawe. Four years later the equivalent figures were Loudon 150, Ekwendeni 83, and Bandawe 138. These schools provided the basis for the hearers' and catechumens' classes, though the number of catechumens is not in itself indicative of missionary policies, since a large class might possibly indicate a reluctance to baptise, rather than the opposite.

The number of baptisms as a percentage of those examined is a much better guide to the missionary's views though even this varies greatly from year to year, and figures are not always available. Nevertheless, it can safely be said that Fraser baptised candidates at a

22. Elmslie to Laws, Saturday (Laws adds 'Aug. or Sept. 1901'), and 23 September 1901, Elmslie File, C.S.A.
23. See, for example, Elmslie's criticisms of Fraser on this count. Elmslie to Smith, 1 November 1900, Ms.7881 N.L.S. and Elmslie to Laws, 1 January 1906, Elmslie File, C.S.A.
24. Livingstonia Annual Reports, 1905 and 1909, statistical tables, pp. 45 and 54 respectively. Not all the Loudon schools were new, of course; those already opened around Hora now came under Loudon's control.
significantly faster rate than most of his colleagues. Where figures are available, they show that Fraser baptised between 50 and 75% of those he examined during these years. This was significantly higher than Elmslie whose average was between 27 and 35%, though Stuart, on the occasions when he was in charge at Ekwendeni, seems to have baptised candidates at approximately the same rate as Fraser. Nor can it be claimed that Fraser’s examinations of candidates were cursory. Each candidate was seen first by an elder before being submitted to Fraser, who asked him between twenty and thirty questions on doctrine and Christian life. If satisfied, he then passed the candidate back to the congregation and elders for final approval.

Over the period 1905 to 1909 twice as many adults were baptised at Loudon as at Ekwendeni. This included a lean patch in 1906, (when Elmslie was in charge at Loudon). During 1906 no adult baptisms at all took place at Loudon, and Elmslie deliberately purged the roll of those who had left or attended infrequently, reducing the catechumens’ class from 1435 to 666, and striking more than 200 names off the list of church members.

Comparison of the figures between Ekwendeni and Loudon, shows that church growth at the former was a much more controlled process, whereas

25. No comprehensive list of the numbers of candidates actually examined each year exists. Occasionally missionaries refer in passing to the number of candidates they have examined.


29. Livingstonia Annual Reports for 1905 and 1906, statistical tables pp.45 and 51 respectively, and Elmslie to Laws, 18 June 1906, Elmslie File, C.S.A.
at Loudon it seems to have been more spontaneous.

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It is also significant that more than twice as many children were baptised at Loudon between 1905 and 1909, compared to Ekwendeni—thus laying the foundations for future church growth.

Yet two factors must be kept in mind in attempting to assess the significance of Fraser's rate of baptisms. The first is the proportion of the Ngoni population in the Loudon congregation. Fraser in 1901 estimated it at at least half; later government censuses indicate that it may have been as much as two-thirds, (though this is partly off-set by the fact that the Ekwendeni congregation included the lake-shore districts of Ruarwe and Usisya). On the basis of population, therefore, Fraser's baptisms are perhaps not quite as significant as might otherwise appear.

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31. Ibid. The total figures for infant baptism between 1904 and 1909 were; Loudon 1455, Ekwendeni 666.
32. Livingstonia Annual Report for 1902, Report for Hora, p.34.
33. See for example the breakdown of population in Mzimba district by chiefs' areas in Malawi Population Census 1966, Zomba, 1968, p.2.
The second factor is that the biggest increase in baptisms, not only at Loudon, but throughout the mission, was brought about, not by Fraser's policies, but by the threat of Ethiopianism emanating from Kenan Kamwana's campaign on the lakeshore. Throughout the mission as a whole baptisms jumped by 128% in 1909, compared to 1908, whereas the average annual increase over the previous three years had been a mere 28%.

Over the next few years the level of baptisms fluctuated considerably - dropping off from their 1909 peak in 1910, but rising sharply again in 1911, following the dramatic evangelistic campaigns of Rev. Charles Inwood. After 1911 there was again a decline in 1912.

**Extension**

Alongside the issue of how fast the church should grow must be seen the parallel issue of how far it should spread. Here in particular Elmslie and Fraser came into conflict.

As has been seen Elmslie's disquiet at the rate and extent of Fraser's expansion began within two years of Fraser's arrival in Ugoni. By the end of 1898 he was writing to Laws,

> I am very glad of the progress being made, but I hope Mr. Fraser will not undertake more than he has the means of efficiently carrying out. I think you will agree with me that the present has not been attained without slow persistent and cautious action. My idea is that until the full fruits of the Institution are being reaped in well-equipped teachers and evangelists the planting of many schools far away from European

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34. Based on *Livingstonia Annual Reports 1904-09*, statistical tables. Figures for Loudon also jumped, though their annual rate of increase had been 56%: exactly twice the mission average.


supervision when there are only inferior boys to place over them may be hurtful eventually.\footnote{37}

By 1900 when he had returned from furlough to relieve Laws at Khondowe his criticisms were even more blunt:

Ngoniland work is in a sad state. Stuart will tell you all about it. Solid teaching and less ‘evangelistic’ work must be the rule here for a time. Extension has been out of all proportion to the supply of capable agents and we are now burdened with a hundred or more teachers who have neither ability for the work or interest in it while to supervise them has become an impossibility \ldots\ We must come to see that true extension can only come about through men trained here \(\text{i.e.} \) the Institution\footnote{38}

Here can be seen the crux of Elmslie’s criticisms of Fraser’s rate of extension, which continued well into the 1900s\footnote{39}. Elmslie believed that Fraser was extending too fast, without adequately trained staff, with the result that both the moral and academic standards of the work were suffering. He believed that such extension could not be adequately supervised by European missionaries, and that its results would be disappointing and temporary. Similar criticisms of Fraser’s work were also made by some later missionaries in the area, one of whom commented, ‘Fraser set no limit to his outreach; admittedly spreading the butter very thin on the bread’\footnote{40}.

To some extent Elmslie’s criticisms of Fraser were based on deep differences of temperament and outlook between the two men. Elmslie, like Laws, was precise and exact. He criticised Fraser on many points: that he was too gullible in his attitude towards Africans, that he was too generous with his workers, that his attitude to the editing of the

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\begin{itemize}
  \item \footnote{37}\ Elmslie to Laws, 30 November 1898, Elmslie File, C.S.A.
  \item \footnote{38}\ Elmslie to Laws, 28 May 1900, Elmslie File, C.S.A.
  \item \footnote{39}\ See, for example, Elmslie to Laws, 1 January 1906, 16 July 1906, and 25 February 1907, Elmslie File, C.S.A.
  \item \footnote{40}\ Rev. Dr. W. H. Watson, personal communication, 8 October 1974.
\end{itemize}
Aurora was too happy-go-lucky, that his accountancy methods with regard to the building of Loudon church were inaccurate and misleading, that his methods of carrying out marriages contained too many irregularities, etc. etc.41

That there may have been some justification in these criticisms is a question, not so much of fact, but of emphasis. Fraser painted on a large canvas; he was not the sort of man to be bothered by small details, and perhaps it might be said that for him there were more important attributes than efficiency in his relations with the Ngoni.

Fraser's philosophy of extension was based partly on theological grounds.42 Though the S.V.M.U. watchword, 'the Evangelization of the World in this Generation' was beginning to go out of favour in the years after 1900, it was still being enthusiastically advocated by Fraser as late as 1906.43 He believed in a rapid westward expansion from uNgoni into what is now the Eastern province of Zambia - and argued the case for what he called 'the Western Hinterland' before the Livingstonia Committee, during his furlough in 1900, and again in 1906.44

Fraser was just as insistent as Elmslie on the need for European supervision; indeed, in this context he was more insistent - claiming that 'it is impossible to use the opportunity there [in the Marambo] until we are able to send Europeans to superintend and develop the

41. Elmslie to Lawes, 9 March 1897, 17 October 1899, 24 September 1905, 23 November 1905, 22 January 1906, 2 February 1906, 21 May 1906, etc., Elmslie File, C.S.A.
42. See Chapter 2, p.112.
44. E.C.S.S.K., August 1900, p.188; Minutes of the Livingstonia Committee 21 June 1906, No. 58.
work.\textsuperscript{45} What he envisaged, however, was an extension into Zambia on a large scale, involving an immediate increase of at least 50% in the expenditure of the Livingstonia Mission, and the immediate opening of several new stations in Zambia, manned by European missionaries. It was not that he was less willing to trust African leadership than his colleagues, but rather that, agreeing with them on the need for European supervision, he wanted to increase the number of Europeans simply as a means of providing wider and faster extension by African teachers and evangelists.

Though the Livingstonia Committee gave him permission to extend his stay in Scotland in 1906–07 to promote his ideas,\textsuperscript{46} they were never fully implemented. There were at least four reasons for this. The first was opposition from some of his missionary colleagues; the second continued uncertainty about the financial future of the United Free Church following the legal dispute over church property with the Free Church after the union of 1900; the third, the financial uncertainty of the Livingstonia Mission itself, following the death of its biggest single contributor, Lord Overtoun, in February 1908; and the fourth, the conspicuous lack of missionary recruits for Livingstonia at this time.\textsuperscript{47}

That is not to say that the church did not extend into eastern Zambia. On the contrary the period saw the extension of the annual westward campaigns by Ngoni and Tonga teachers, and the establishment of permanent work by several outstanding African Christians - notably

\textsuperscript{45} U.F.C.S.M.R., October 1906, p.447.  
\textsuperscript{46} Minutes of the Livingstonia Committee, 21 June 1906, No. 58.  
\textsuperscript{47} In the five years between 1906 and 1912 only three new missionaries were appointed to Livingstonia. See Fraser, Livingstonia, p.88.
PLATE 11

Fraser with a sub-chief (unidentified)
John Afvenge Banda at Mwenzo, and David Kaunda at Chinsali. As McCracken has rightly pointed out, therefore, one of the practical out-workings of Fraser's extension policies during these years was a noted lack of European supervision — though this was due more to Fraser's failure to implement his ideas fully, than it was inherent in the ideas themselves.

Indeed, Fraser's attitude towards European supervision can best be seen in practice during these years in his continued and widespread use of itineration. He undertook tours lasting for anything up to three months at a time, and covering distances up to 600 miles.49 During these tours he not only visited and inspected schools, but tried to visit individual Christians in their homes — a custom sufficiently unusual at the time as to be still remembered to-day.50 His methods of transport varied on these tours. In 1909 he undertook a 600-mile tour entirely on foot, covering about 120 miles a week,51 on other occasions he used a bicycle, a motor-cycle, or a machila. Fraser undertook at least two such tours each year — spending nearly half his time away from Lodon station.52 A brief look at the statistics of one such tour may help to show just how much he packed in. During a three-month tour in early 1903 he travelled 600 miles, inspected 44 schools and 5,000 scholars, examined 200 candidates for the catechumenate, held communion 9 times, baptised 65 adults and 98 children, preached about 80 times, and visited over 400 church members in their homes.53

Though many of these functions were habitually undertaken by

48. McCracken, Politics and Christianity, p.128
52. Fraser describes one such tour in Primitive People, Chapter 22.
African teachers and evangelists, Fraser saw such tours as reinforcing what he regarded as the essentially episcopal role of the missionary.

She [Africa] needs ministers who shall go out, not as evangelists, but as superintendents; not as pastors, but as bishops ... I mean that Africa will not be evangelised and raised by the European, but by the African. And the efficient missionary is the one who will try to multiply himself, to restrain himself from activities which might be more fascinating, so that he may prepare Africans to do his work and give them something of that spirit which is in himself.\(^{54}\)

The idea itself was not new; indeed Failey Daly, secretary of the Livingstonia Committee in Scotland, was, at much the same time urging the episcopal role on Laws and Elmslie in apparent support for Fraser against their views:

Several leading members of the Committee believe strongly that much of the future development of the Livingstonia Mission is to be accomplished through itineration, that in fact the European Missionary as the years go on should become more and more a bishop with a wider and ever-growing sphere of supervision.\(^{55}\)

Nevertheless, it was with Fraser that the concept was particularly associated in the Livingstonia context, so much so that Hetherwick nicknamed him 'the Bishop', and addressed his mail to 'the Palace, Loudon'.\(^{56}\)

Later, as Foreign Mission Secretary, Fraser was to argue in similar vein in reference to Jamaica, claiming that:

our Presbyterian system worked in Scottish fashion does not make very efficiently for devolution .... Other Presbyterian Churches have evolved a system of episcopacy and superintendence superimposed on the Presbyterian system, and you will remember that John Knox under the same conditions as you have in Jamaica founded his superintendence of the ministry for

\(^{54}\) Donald Fraser, 'the Opportunity in Pagan Africa', in Students and the Modern Missionary Crusade, pp.108-9. During the Student Volunteer conference at Nashville Tennessee in February and March 1906, Fraser gave a total of five addresses to the delegates.

\(^{55}\) Daly to Laws, 11 May 1906, No.7865, N.L.S.

\(^{56}\) Agnes R. Fraser, Fraser, p.122. Dr. A. G. Ross confirms that many of Hetherwick's letters to Fraser, in the Hetherwick Papers, N.A.M., begin 'My Lord Bishop'.
certain districts. It seems to me that we are needing to think and experiment somewhat along these lines.\textsuperscript{57}

In the Livingstonia context in the early years of the century Fraser wanted a rapid geographic expansion of mission influence, with the establishment of several one-man European stations from which the missionary would itinerate widely in a supervisory role. Laws and Elmslie preferred a few large stations staffed with several Europeans each, where African teachers would be trained and sent out into the surrounding area. Put another way, the argument was whether the work of the mission should be carried on by a limited number of highly-trained African teachers, or a large number of less highly-trained personnel. Laws and Elmslie favoured the elitist approach, Fraser an approach which could almost be called populist. In the event, since both ideas required a large influx of European man-power and capital to get them started, neither side was able fully to implement its ideas at this time, and the argument was to be taken up once again in the 1920s.\textsuperscript{58}

The Continued Use of Conventions

Differences of approach between Fraser and Elmslie on the question of extension were not confined to its pace or extent. They also involved a difference of theological outlook, and the relationship of missionary teaching to Ngoni culture. These differences were apparent in lots of little ways, such as Fraser's dislike for the marriage certificates drawn up for uNgoni,\textsuperscript{59} and disagreement about the translation of certain

\textsuperscript{57}. Fraser to Rev. R. C. Young, 19 August 1929, Ms.7690, N.L.S. For Knox's explanation of the need for and function of Superintendents in the mid-sixteenth century, see 'Of the Superintendents' in the First Book of Discipline with introduction and commentary by James K. Cameron, Edinburgh 1972, pp.115-28.

\textsuperscript{58}. See below, Chapter 7, 'the Educational Debate'.

\textsuperscript{59}. Elmslie to Laws, 31 May 1906, Elmslie File, C.S.A. An example of an early marriage certificate for uNgoni is contained in Sharpe to Sec. State for Colonies, 15 February 1904, C.0.525/1, P.R.O.
terms in the Apostle's Creed, but they can be seen most clearly in Elmslie's attitudes towards the large sacramental conventions started by Fraser in 1898.

Elmslie was suspicious of such gatherings for several reasons. First of all he himself was very strongly anti-sacerdotalist, and was opposed to anything which gave what he considered undue prominence to the sacraments as against the preaching of the Word. Secondly, he considered that such large gatherings were too rowdy and hard to control; and thirdly he objected to the sexual licence, which, he alleged, took place, when large numbers of men and women gathered together.

From 1901 onwards, (when he returned to Ulugoni from Khondowe), Elmslie attempted to limit the conventions in several ways. First, he limited the attendance to church members and catechumens only. Secondly, he favoured the idea of several smaller conventions each year, instead of one or two big ones. For example, early in 1903, he held four separate Communion services at different venues in the Ekwendeni parish, rather than calling all the Christians to Ekwendeni. Stuart at Ekwendeni, and McMinn during his time at Loudon in 1906-7 both attempted to follow Elmslie's pattern of restricting attendance.

It is clear, however, that the pattern of convention started by

60. Elmslie to Laws, 8 December 1902, Elmslie File, C.S.A. Elmslie wanted to translate 'hell' in 'He descended into hell', as 'Hadesi' or 'male cha bakufwa' (the place of the dead). Fraser proposed 'to death', a less literalistic rendering.
61. This trend has already been noticed in Elmslie's relations with MacAlpine. (See above, Chapter 2, pp.98-9). It was also apparent in his attitude to D. C. Scott at Blantyre. (See, e.g. Elmslie to Laws, 9 April 1897, Elmslie File, C.S.A.).
64. Ibid., May 1904, p.214; December 1909, p.546, and October 1907, p.458.
Fraser in 1898 had a real significance and appeal for the Ngoni, and in several ways they attempted to circumvent the new more limited gatherings. In 1903, for example, after Elmslie had held four small separate communions, the elders approached him and requested a combined service, which was held at Mkweneni complete with temporary grass shelters, Ngoni hymns etc. 65

In addition, the Ngoni frequently ignored attempts to limit attendances, so that Stuart talks of trying to restrict attendance, but implies that the attempt was not altogether successful, 66 while McNinn at Loudon in 1907, (while Fraser was on furlough), states quite openly that while only members and catechumens were invited many others came. 67

In the Loudon district at least the conventions were not the prerogative of the European missionaries alone, for Ngoni teachers and evangelists such as Daniel Nhlane held their own, encouraged by Fraser. 68

Nevertheless, Fraser himself was not totally unaffected by the attitudes of his colleagues towards restricted conventions. Perhaps due to the pressure from them the convention at Hora in 1901, soon after his return from furlough, was limited to members, catechumens and hearers. 69 Whatever the reason, he soon reverted to his old pattern, and in November 1902 at Hora 'the invitation was an open one to all', to which two and a half thousand responded. 70 In one respect Fraser does seem to have modified his earlier attitudes, sometimes holding communion inside the church, and allowing only those partaking of the sacrament to enter; 71 but baptisms were usually held outdoors, so that as many as

65. Ibid., May 1904, p.214.
66. Ibid., December 1909, p.546.
67. Ibid., October 1907, p.458.
68. Fraser, Autobiography, p.181.
69. Elmslie to Laws, 18 November 1901, Elmslie File, C.S.A.
71. Ibid.
possible could see them.

When the new church at Loudon was completed in 1904, Fraser held a special convention to celebrate its opening. More than three thousand crowded into the church, but as the numbers increased over the years he built a special platform against the outside wall, so that preaching could be carried on outdoors if the crowds were too large to fit into the church.\(^72\)

Though Fraser appreciated that one of the functions of such conventions was the deepening of the spiritual life of those already Christians,\(^73\) he was also aware that they acted as a powerful attraction to those as yet only marginally associated with the new way of life. The contrast between this attitude and that of Elmslie can be seen clearly in the following quotations:

Cases have come to my notice where heathen have been aroused to realise that they lack something which the Christians possess by being asked to stay away.\(^74\) (Elmslie)

I have heard that many have been drawn to Christ by beholding that great number of their fellow-countrymen making profession of their faith in Christ.\(^75\) (Fraser)

While Elmslie and the Ekwendeni missionaries continued, therefore, with a pattern of restricted conventions, Fraser persisted with the large 'national' convention, though he also held smaller local gatherings in addition, during his many maulendo.\(^76\) In June 1908, less than a year after Fraser's return from Scotland, 7,000 attended the Loudon convention,\(^77\) and the following year, 1909, in spite of a last-minute imposition of sleeping-sickness regulations which prevented many of

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75. Ibid., October 1908, p.454.
76. Ibid., August 1908, p.352.
77. Ibid., October 1908, p.454.
Candidates baptised during the 1909 Convention at Loudon
the Senga Christians from attending, 8,000 were present. More than 2,000 candidates had been examined, and 454 adults were baptised and almost 1100 admitted to the catechumenate.78

The pattern of the services here throws interesting light on the development of the convention over the years. On the Sunday a Communion service was held inside the church, which only the 1176 communicants were allowed to attend, Fraser explaining that 'there was no room for others ..... in the wide seating necessary for an orderly and solemn observance of the Sacrament'.79 An hour later, however, a huge public gathering was held outside, during which more than 1,000 new catechumens were admitted.

The word which had become that commonly used for catechumens was akusonyezeka: literally, 'those who are shown forth'. Neither Laws nor Elmslie liked the word, and Elmslie confessed he would like to stamp it out.80 The public presentation of catechumens on their admission could be defended on historical grounds, but in terms of the African response to it, it may well have been seen as something in the nature of rite de passage, and Fraser seems to have made a definite effort to make it a ceremony of some importance.

Generally speaking, the Ngoni seem to have regarded the large convention not merely as a form of Christian worship, but as an expression of Ngoni solidarity, where people got together to enjoy themselves, to sing and even to play. In 1909, in preparing for the convention of that year, Loudon Kirk Session thought it necessary to include a rule that: 'boys should not play ball at the meetings'.81

78. Ibid., October 1909, p.450-1.
79. Ibid.
80. Elmslie to Laws, 12 January 1903, Elmslie File, C.S.A.
81. Loudon Kirk Session minute-book, 24 April 1909, N.A.M.
For Fraser and the Ngoni elders, however, one important aspect of the convention was its function as a means of evangelistic outreach, and there can be little doubt that such a function reached its climax in the work of Rev. Charles Inwood who visited Malawi in 1910 at the request of the Livingstonia Mission Council.

**Inwood's Campaign of 1910**

Rev. Charles Inwood was an English Methodist, who by 1910 had built up a world-wide reputation as an evangelistic preacher, having undertaken numerous evangelistic campaigns not only in Britain but in many countries throughout the world, including Canada, China, India, Egypt, Sweden, Switzerland, Germany, France, South America, South Africa, Australia and New Zealand. In 1909, in response to a request by Livingstonia Mission Council to the committee of the Keswick Convention, Inwood was asked to go to Central Africa to carry out a series of evangelistic campaigns there.

In his previous campaigns elsewhere, he had put much emphasis on the need for 'holiness', and made frequent references to Pentecostal themes such as the importance of being 'filled with the Spirit'. He does not, however, appear to have been a Pentecostalist in the modern sense of the term.

In preparation for his coming Fraser and the Ngoni elders had been preparing the church for months, and one month before his arrival had begun to hold daily prayer meetings. Inwood's meetings at Loudon began on Wednesday 17 August and were mostly held in the church. On

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this occasion tickets of admission had been issued to limit the attendance
in the church to around 2,500, and avoid 'unmanageable thousands'.
Nevertheless, the Ngoni love of the huge gathering was such that many
more thousands turned up, and at the final open-air service on the
Sunday, it was estimated that about 7,000 were present.

Throughout the week Inwood spoke twice a day - Fraser interpreting
for him. By the Friday evening some of the missionaries present seem
to have been disappointed with the results, feeling that little
impression had been made.

Saturday's meetings were on the topic 'the Baptism of the Spirit'.
Towards the end of the morning meeting, when Inwood had asked anyone
who wished to receive 'the fullness of the Spirit' to stand, an event
took place which took the Europeans entirely by surprise. Inwood
described the subsequent events as follows:

Slowly one after another rose, and some sad confessions
of sin were made. Then two prayed together, and then
three; then suddenly, as if a Divine breath passed over
us, everyone began to pray. The sound rose like a murmur
of the sea, deep, solemn, sacred, beyond description. I
buried my face in my hands, and, with joy unspeakable,
adored and praised the Lord. Pentecost had come. Then
the deep emotion overpowered some of the women. They
sprang to their feet, weeping, praying, and waving their
hands. Then a number rose and ran towards the door, and
Mr. Fraser feared a panic. We learned afterwards that
they were running not from panic, but to fetch other
women, that they might share the blessing which all felt
was descending so copiously upon us. In a few moments
quiet was restored, and the silence was sacred beyond
description during the closing prayer.

86. Ibid.
87. Inwood, African Pentecost, p.46.
89. Inwood, African Pentecost, p.44. Fraser's fear of a panic was
almost certainly due to an incident a year earlier, when a chance
remark by one woman about a leak in the church roof had been mis¬
interpreted by her neighbours as meaning that the church was falling
down. In the ensuing panic several people were trampled and others
escaped by diving through the glass windows. (Livingstonia News,
April 1909, pp.39-40).
Fraser's accounts of the same events are very similar. All the accounts reveal an interesting paradox. The Europeans were happy to accept a religious experience which they regarded as authentic, but were very uneasy about the form in which it appeared. In particular, Fraser's attitude to 'emotionalism' is both paradoxical and important. While McCracken's contention that 'it was not until the arrival of Fraser and his peers that revivalism was given free play' is basically accurate, it nonetheless remains true that Fraser, like all the other Livingstonia missionaries, shied away from anything smacking of mass emotionalism, and opposed what he called 'unwholesome physical excitement'. Explaining one of the great advantages of his having to interpret Inwood's message, Fraser had commented that with interpretation 'you cannot get up a purely physical emotion', and in the period following Inwood's visit he sent instructions to his evangelists and teachers 'to avoid studiously methods which excited the people, and to suppress sternly any noisy emotionalism'.

On the other hand Fraser was open enough to what was going on to realise that it could not be assessed in purely European terms. He later wrote, "what an emotional story!" some will say. I admit it is a tale of strong emotion. But why should we be so suspicious of the free expression of deep feeling? We do not want to super-impose on those sons of Africa our expressionless Scottish characters. The most likely explanation is that Fraser, and those of his colleagues,

91. McCracken, Politics, p.121.
92. Fraser, Primitive People, p.283.
93. Ibid., p.282.
94. Ibid., p.287.
such as Chisholm, who were basically favourable to the large evangelistic meeting, were aware that not all their colleagues shared such views. They feared lest a mass movement such as that set off by Inwood's campaign would prove merely temporary and 'shallow', and attempted at the time to hedge their bets, by accepting the basic phenomenon, while expressing doubts about some of its physical manifestations.

After the euphoria of his visit to Loudon, Inwood held further campaigns at Chinde's, Ekwendeni, Bandawe and Khondowe. At all these places some sort of physical manifestations accompanied his preaching though Inwood claimed that 'there was no attempt to stir the emotions'. Though there was a certain amount of similarity between the reactions, Inwood was convinced that there was no question of one congregation imitating another. At Khondowe, some people suffered a sort of emotional paralysis and had to be carried from the church. So powerful was the impression made, that to-day, nearly seventy years later, one old woman who attended the meetings at Khondowe as a child, still recalls the occasion vividly.

Throughout the Livingstonia sphere Inwood's campaigns struck a deep note of response in his hearers. The missionaries worried that the emotionalism might be unnatural or even feigned. What is more likely is that it was entirely natural: that Inwood's direct and emotional approach, with its appeal for confession of sins and promise of forgiveness, provided a therapy which had been lacking or only partially present in earlier Livingstonia methods. Traditional opportunities for emotional release, (as provided by such outlets as dancing and raiding), had been stifled or restricted by changing

96. Ibid., p.61.
circumstances, and in some cases by missionary attitudes. Opportunities for spiritual cleansing, and community renewal traditionally found in witch-finding movements, were, by 1910, similarly limited, though Fraser's sacramental conventions probably provide a partial exception to this rule. The Livingstonia appeal was almost always to the individual, and while, strictly speaking, Inwood's theological approach was similar, in practice its emotional and immediate nature gave opportunity for what amounted to a communal response. While he may not have been aware of the fact, his own concern with personal holiness became for his listeners a unique opportunity for community wholeness.

In the months which followed Inwood's campaign, Fraser continued to be worried by the possibility of a manufactured emotionalism. He held a series of short teaching conventions 'to produce permanent and ethical fruits.' The following year he took the precaution of once again issuing tickets for the large convention at Loudon, but in spite of this enormous crowds turned up - some no doubt attracted by the rumour 'that fire was to come down from heaven and burn up all who concealed their sins'. Fraser admitted that the convention of 1911 was particularly difficult, with some people attempting to imitate the emotion of the previous year. 'Then it was spontaneous and unconscious. Now it was evidently not of spiritual necessity.' Nevertheless his overall impressions of the effect of Inwood's visit were essentially positive, and in a letter to Inwood he gave it as his opinion that 'the tone of the Church has been greatly and permanently raised'.

98. McCracken makes the same point about the Tonga awakening of 1895, Politics, p.122.
99. Fraser, Primitive People, p.287.
101. Ibid.
102. Inwood, African Pentecost, p.79.
Ngoni Church Music

Another distinctive feature of Fraser's work which was closely connected with his conventions was his encouragement of the composition by Ngoni Christians of indigenous church music. Singing competitions were often held during the annual conventions, and up to fifty new hymns might be heard during the course of one convention. 103

Though closely connected with Fraser, Ngoni composition of Christian hymns was not started by him, but pre-dated his arrival in uNgoni. Furthermore it took its strength not simply from missionary encouragement, but from the traditional Ngoni love of music and strong tradition of composition.

This tradition is reflected in the Ngoni songs collected by Margaret Read during her field-work in Mzimba district in the 1930s. 104 While some of these are comparatively modern, others go back to the time of Zwangendaba. The growing integration of Christianity with Ngoni life is shown in this instance by two quite specific connections between traditional Ngoni music and Christian worship. In the first place, as Margaret Read discovered, Ngoni Christian ministers used some of these traditional songs as sermon illustrations, to illustrate such things as the difficulties of polygamy. 105 In the second place, some at least of the hymns composed by Ngoni Christians were set to traditional tunes, as for example the well-known hymn 'Wakucema, wakucema, vyaru vyose' 'He is calling, he is calling all countries' - which is said to have been composed to the tune with which the chief's

104. 'Ngoni Songs', Read Papers, 1/10, London School of Economics, and Margaret Read, 'Songs of the Ngoni People', in Bantu Studies, Vol.XI, No. 1, 1937.
messenger called the people together into the kraal.  

First Ngoni contacts with Christian music were almost certainly with Zulu or Xhosa hymns introduced from South Africa by William Koyi. 

By 1890 Elmslie was writing to Laws that he had obtained permission from the Zulu missionaries in South Africa to use their hymns in Ngoni, but four years previously, in 1886, he had already produced the small booklet Izongoma zo 'Mlunca - probably the first printed book in chiNgoni - which as well as the Ten Commandments, the Lord's Prayer and a few selected scripture passages, also contained Elmslie's translations of fourteen hymns, including 'Just as I am', 'Hallelujah, what a Saviour', and 'O come all ye Faithful'. 

By then, however, Livingstonia Christians in the different areas of the mission's work were already beginning to compose their own hymns. Almost certainly the earliest of these was one composed by Albert Namalambe, probably in the early 1880s, which was recently revived for the Livingstonia centenary celebrations. Amongst the Tonga also a similar development was taking place, and MacAlpine singled out Samuel Kauti Longwe as the outstanding contributor. 

It was primarily amongst the Ngoni, however, that the tradition of hymn composition developed. It was already well under way when

108. Elmslie to Laws, 4 September 1890, Ms.7894, N.L.S.
110. 'Albert's Hymn' written in Laws' handwriting on a distinctive pink paper which he was using in the late 1870s and early 1880s, can be found in Livingstonia Papers, Box 4, N.A.M. It has strong claims to being the first indigenous Christian hymn in Malawi. No tune has survived, but Mr. Mtengela Chimwa, the then headmaster of Livingstonia Secondary School, composed a new tune for the Livingstonia centenary celebrations in 1975, at which time Albert's hymn was revived.
111. 'Lectures on African Colleagues', MacAlpine Papers, B.U.L.
Fraser arrived in uNgoni, and was particularly strong at Njuyu station—at that time under the control of Kawelera Tembo. Both Fraser and Stuart commented in 1897 on the value of these local compositions, which were used not only in worship, but also in school instruction.112 It is significant that this tradition developed in an area so strongly influenced by Kawelera Tembo, for he was not only one of the leading Ngoni composers of Christian music, but remained right up until his death an expert on traditional Ngoni songs.113

Fraser, then, found an already thriving tradition of Ngoni Christian music by the time he arrived in uNgoni in 1897. His contribution was to encourage and organise this tradition to an extent totally unmatched in any other area of Livingstonia's work. Soon after his return in 1901 he was already organising musical competitions between the different schools. At Hora in 1901 about two dozen new hymns were heard; the following year fifty new compositions were submitted, and Fraser commented, 'Some pieces were particularly beautiful, and it was felt that a valuable contribution had been made to the hymnology of the Central Africa Church'.114 By the time that the new church at Loudon was opened in 1904, the musical festival had become an annual event, closely linked with the sacramental conventions.115

It is clear that Ngoni hymns were becoming part of the ethos of the conventions and of Ngoni life in a way which obviously differed from other parts of Malawi where the mission was working. Writing of

113. Many of the songs collected by Margaret Read in the 1930s were contributed by Kawelera Tembo.
115. Fraser, Primitive People, p.224.
her visit to the Hora convention in 1902, Miss Martin, a missionary at Khondowe, described how she sat on a hill and watched groups of people wending their way towards the mission station, singing as they came:

The singing still went on, and I noticed, as they stood to go through one stanza, that not only were the people clapping their hands, but were also at times accompanying the singing with slow movements of the body and the elevation of their sticks. I was quite at a loss to understand what it all meant.116

Though they were at their most natural when used as part of the singing and dancing tradition of Ngoni life, as in the above description, these new Ngoni hymns became so popular that they were soon being sung in other parts of the mission. Already by 1902 Miss Lambert was translating them into Chichewa for use at the Institution at Khondowe, and some time later MacAlpine's Tonga porters were singing them as marching songs on ulendo.117

When in 1910, a new Tumbuka hymn-book was being drawn up for use throughout the Livingstonia area, Fraser's membership of the committee responsible ensured the inclusion of many Ngoni hymns. To-day, in the latest edition of the same book, Sumu za Ukristu, 127 of the 401 hymns included are attributed to African writers.118 In fact, this is almost certainly an underestimation, since many unattributed hymns are also of African composition - notable among them No. 46 'Hena mwana-emberere', ('Behold the Lamb'), one of Charles Chinula's best known hymns. Of the 24 African hymn-writers named, all but three are from uNgoni.119 Among

117. Livingstonia Annual Report for 1902, Institution Report, p.16-17; and 'I will not cast him out', MacAlpine Papers, E.U.L.
119. Rev. Y. C. Kaunda 'Mudauko wa C.C.A.P. Synod of Livingstonia', p.69. This unpublished typescript is a compilation from local sources of the church history of the various areas in the Livingstonia Mission.
the Ngoni writers the most prolific are Peter Thole, Charles Chimula, Nawelera Tembo, Jonathan Chirwa, Hezekiah Teya, and Elija Chavula. Several of their hymns are also included in the hymn-book of the Blantyre Synod of the Church of Central Africa, Presbyterian, and in various English anthologies of African hymns.

Though by 1900 chilNgoni was already dying out as a medium of everyday speech, it was still being used in worship and public ceremony. Many of the earliest of the Ngoni hymns were written in chilNgoni and later translated into chitumbuka. Indeed, many of them still survive in chilNgoni and are used in worship in parts of MGoni. The existence of a strong Ngoni tradition of musical composition, its adaptation by the Ngoni to Christian hymnology, and Fraser’s sympathetic encouragement of this trend, all helped to integrate Christianity into the main stream of Ngoni life, and to some extent helped to preserve the Ngoni language as a medium of ritual and worship.

Fraser’s Attitude to Ngoni Culture

Fraser’s attitude to Ngoni music in many ways typifies his attitude to Ngoni culture in general, which was, on the whole, more positive than that of many of his colleagues. Margaret Read in writing of the Dutch Reformed Church missionaries among Gomani’s Ngoni, has commented on ‘their lack of interest in Ngoni culture as contrasted with the Scottish mission tolerance and respect for certain elements’.

120. e.g. Helen Taylor (ed. & trans.), Tunes from Nyasaland, Livingstonia 1959, and Free to Serve: hymns from Africa collected by Tom Colvin, Glasgow, [1970/]
While this comparison is obviously true, it might perhaps be more accurate to say that Ngoni culture was much stronger in the north, and therefore the missionaries had to come to terms with it. This is not to say that the Livingstonia missionaries were universally sympathetic to Ngoni culture—far less that the Ngoni were always satisfied with missionary attitudes. They were not. Furthermore the Scottish missionaries, Fraser included, made no attempt to accept Ngoni culture as a viable unit, but judged individual aspects of it against their own standards of right and wrong, or sometimes against similar customs among surrounding tribes. Nevertheless, given these provisos, it is probably true to say that the Scottish missionaries in general, and Fraser in particular, had a more sympathetic attitude to Ngoni culture than that displayed by missionaries to other Ngoni groups elsewhere in Malawi.

Fraser’s general attitude to African culture may best be summed up by one long quotation from an article he wrote towards the end of his career, and which was based on a lecture he gave to more than two hundred delegates concerned with Christian mission work in Africa at the Le Zoute Conference in 1926:

> I fear the evangel which de-nationalizes, which refuses to recognize the power of the Gospel to purify what is not essentially wrong, and which preaches first through prohibitions, rather than by the attraction of what is positive: ..... we come not to destroy distinctive nationality, but to fulfill what men have searched after gropingly; and for the enrichment of the world to retain and purify all that is not evil. Society has been safeguarded by many a social and magical tie, and none of these should be cut unless we give in their place surer bonds ..... If we only denounce magic, we leave society unprotected and unguided. If our presentation of the Gospel puts its emphasis on

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123. See, for example, Elmslie, *Wild Ngoni*, Ch.3, and Fraser, *Primitive People*, pp.182-185.
the prohibition of social practices which are not essentially evil, we are apt to rouse an antagonism of nationality when we should have made it our greatest ally. Thus individualism may seem to our western eyes the highest expression of a progressive Christian society. But the communal sharing of property and family interests is not anti-Christian.124

Yet the difficulty of a European missionary of Fraser's generation reaching an accommodation with Ngoni culture which was totally acceptable to Ngoni Christians themselves, can be seen in the reaction of Charles Chinula towards Fraser's attitude to traditional dancing. Fraser strictly distinguished between those dances which he considered immoral and those which were acceptable.125 Of the latter, the main dance of which he approved was the ingoma, though even here he felt that it sometimes took up too much time. Nevertheless he approved of it and even arranged a special session of many traditional dances for W. P. Livingstone, the missionary biographer and editor of the Missionary Record, when he visited Loudon.126 In spite of what appeared to his colleagues as a liberal attitude to dancing, Fraser's outlook did not satisfy Charles Chinula, who, while a teacher at Loudon in 1908, secretly encouraged his pupils to take part in dances at the school.127

Nevertheless, Fraser's attitude to Ngoni culture was basically sympathetic. While opposed to individual parts of the culture, such as polygamy and excessive beer-drinking, he was, at the same time, highly attracted by the Ngoni as a people. It was this ambivalence which

125. Fraser, Primitive People, pp.75-6
126. W. P. Livingstone, 'In the Bush with Donald Fraser', in Life and Work, January 1934, pp.18-19.
127. Quoted in McCracken, Politics, p.196.
enabled him to write, (on the deaths of Ng'onomo and Mabulabo in 1907),
with considerable paradox, but absolute sincerity: 'to the end they
lived and died polygamists, drunkards, heathen, yet brave and honourable
gentlemen'.128 Though opposed to most traditional doctors, (notably
the Kayevi practitioners who entered uNgoni in 1902, selling medicine
which, it was claimed, could give everlasting life),129 he admitted that
many local herbal medicines were effective, and even made use of them
himself to treat some sick calves.130 On occasions his attitudes —
notably his support for the Ngoni custom of marrying a deceased
brother's widow — brought him into conflict with his missionary
colleagues.131 Moreover, his openness met a ready response in some of
his younger colleagues - notably Cullen Young, who during Fraser's
furlough in 1912, held ingoma dances in the cattle kraal at Loudon.132

Above all, while by no means entirely satisfactory to all Ngoni
Christians, Fraser's attitudes were sufficiently open to encourage the
Ngoni to work out their own response to Christianity in the light of
Ngoni culture, and to find an answer which gave to that culture a place
of some importance in the new way of life. That the Ngoni were able to
preserve a distinctive and valid culture, while turning in large
numbers to Christianity, was due mainly to their own inherent strength
and cohesion, but partly to the sympathetic approach of Fraser.

128. U.F.C.S.M.R., February 1908, p.64: 'The Passing of Two Great
Angoni Chiefs'.
129. U.F.C.S.M.R., October 1902, p.450, and Fraser, Primitive People,
pp.198-9.
130. Ibid., p.141.
131. See below, p. 220-1.
Presbytery and Kirk Sessions

The cultural adjustment of the Ngoni to Christianity was, however, merely one of the factors necessary for the creation of a genuine Ngoni church; another was the creation of structures in which the Ngoni themselves would be the real and effective decision makers. Most Livingstonia missionaries were in theoretical agreement with this ideal. So too was the leading mission theorist of the day Gustav Warneck who argued in 1901 that:

All missionary experts capable of judging are at one in regarding the task of missions as being not simply the proclamation of the gospel and individual conversion, but the formation of the congregation or church. ....

The aim of Missions is not merely organised native Churches, but Churches standing by themselves, independent of the sending Christendom. 133

The period 1900-1914 saw the development of church structures - notably Presbytery and Kirk Session which contained the potential for meaningful African participation: one of the practical tests of these structures, however, was the amount of real power afforded to the Ngoni, (and other African Christians), in the decision-making processes of the church.

During these years, and, indeed, well into the 1950s, the main decision-making body of the Livingstonia Mission in Malawi was the Mission Council. The existence of this body on which local Christians had absolutely no representation severely limited the power of the local church. 134

The deliberate policy of the Mission Council in meeting just before Presbytery, so that a 'Mission policy' on important issues could

133. Ibid., September 1901, p. 400
134. See above: Footnote 1., p. 185.
be decided in advance, had two important consequences. In the first place it restricted even further the power of Presbytery to make its own decisions, and secondly it caused a good deal of resentment and bitterness among local Christians. On the other hand, it would be wrong to suggest that local Christians had no power on such bodies as Presbytery and Kirk Sessions - though such power as they had was severely limited by the existence and structure of the Mission Council.

The first meeting of what was at first known as 'the North Livingstonia Presbytery of the Presbyterian Church of Central Africa' took place in November 1899 in response to a minute of Mission Council approving its organization. No Ngoni elders were present at the first meeting. The first Ngoni elder to be a member of Presbytery was Mawelera Tembo, who was commissioned by the Kirk Session to represent them in October 1900. Following the administrative division of the Ngoni into three congregations in 1902, Andrew Mkochi and Thomas Mhoni were appointed to represent Hora and Njuyu respectively.

At first Presbytery was numerically dominated by missionaries, since membership was restricted to one elder from each area, while all ordained ministers were automatically members. Within a few years, however, African elders soon came to hold a majority on Presbytery. At

135. Livingstonia Mission Council Minutes, October 1912, No.49, N.A.M.
136. The late Rev. David Sibande, personal interview, 27 December 1971 and Elmslie to Laws, 21 March 1921, Box 9, Livingstonia Papers, N.A.M.
137. The Scottish missionaries at this time expected that the Dutch Reformed Church Mission, in what is now the Central region of Malawi, would become the South Livingstonia Presbytery. They, in fact, formed a totally separate Presbytery in 1912, which eventually joined Livingstonia and Blantyre in 'the Church of Central Africa, Presbyterian', in 1926.
138. Livingstonia Mission Council Minutes, 15-16 May 1895, Ms.7078, N.L.S.
139. North Livingstonia Presbytery Minutes, 22 October 1900, N.A.M.
140. Ibid., 10 May 1902.
the meeting of October 1911, for example, at which the thorny question of marriage to a deceased brother's widow was discussed, there were 26 Africans and 8 Europeans present. \footnote{Ibid., 20 October 1911.} This move towards an African majority on Presbytery was made possible by a motion proposed by Fraser and seconded by D. R. Mackenzie in 1907 'that the representation of Congregations to Presbytery should be in the proportion of one elder to every 300 members, or part of 300, in full communion'. \footnote{Ibid., 4 November 1907.} This proposal had the effect not only of creating an African majority on Presbytery, but of greatly increasing the overall importance of Ngoni elders on the body, since the numerical strength of the Ngoni church was, by then, much greater than that of any other area of the mission's work. \footnote{At the meetings of October 1912, for example, Loudon had 9 elders and Ekwendeni 5; the Ngoni total of 14 exactly matched that of the non-Ngoni areas: Bandawe 9, Khondowe 3, and Karonga 2. Normally during this period, the Ngoni representatives fell slightly short of an overall majority among the African members of Presbytery.}

There is no doubt that the block of European missionaries on Presbytery wielded far more power than their numerical strength might suggest. By this period, however, missionary representation can no longer be regarded as a monolithic power bloc. Though missionary differences and rivalries did not often come to the surface in Presbytery - they were more often fought out in Mission Council - there were, nevertheless, at least two distinct groups emerging. One, later nick-named the 'Lawsites', \footnote{Rev. Alexander Caseby, personal interview, 5 February 1974.} included Laws, Elmslie, MacAlpine and McNinn. The other, though varying in composition, included Fraser, Mackenzie, Prentice, Chisholm and Cullen Young. (Up until 1905 it had also

\footnote{Ibid., 20 October 1911.}
included James Henderson, who then went to be principal of Lovedale).\footnote{145} Though the two groups were by no means static, the latter may be said to be more liberal theologically, more positive towards African culture and advancement, and more opposed to Laws autocratic control of the mission.\footnote{146}

It is also possible to see similar divisions on the African side, between those who were regarded as being 'strong' against the missionaries, such as Edward Bothi Manda, Yesaya Zerenji Mwasi and Yesaya Chibambo, and those who were inclined to follow the missionary line - particularly if supported by Dr. Laws - such as Yuraia Chirwa and Peter Thole.\footnote{147}

One important occasion when such differences, (particularly on the missionary side), came to the surface, was the discussion in October 1911 of the local custom of chokoro - marriage to a deceased brother's widow - which was particularly prevalent among the Ngoni. This topic had already been discussed three times in Presbytery - in May 1900, November 1907 and, briefly, in January 1908. The law of Presbytery as a result of those discussions was 'that a man may not marry the widow of his deceased brother'.\footnote{148} This ruling, however, was apparently not acceptable to many Christians in uNgoni, and in October 1911 Loudon Session brought up the question again.

MacAlpine, seconded by Walter Henderson the builder, moved that

\footnote{145. In 1906, for example, when Rev. Carl Nauhaus of the Berlin Mission applied to join Livingstonia, Henderson, Fraser, Prentice and Chisholm all urged the Committee to accept him. The Mission Council decided not to accept him, and the Livingstonia Committee agreed with that decision on the basis that it would not be right to employ him 'to the exclusion of an ordained man from Scotland'. Minutes of the Livingstonia Committee, Nos. 22 & 79 of 1906.}

\footnote{146. See below, p.239 for comment on Dr. R. Mackenzie.}

\footnote{147. Rev. S. K. Msiska, personal interview, 26 April 1977.}

\footnote{148. North Livingstonia Presbytery Minutes, 6 November 1907 (quoting 10 May 1900), N.A.M.}
'as this matter was discussed on two previous occasions, and the last occasion was only four years ago, the Presbytery do not re-open the question'. Fraser pressed ahead, however, moving an amendment seconded by Edward Bothi Manda, that 'Considering that marriage with a deceased brother's widow is common native custom, and is not clearly contrary to Biblical Law, the Presbytery, while discouraging the custom, do not think such a marriage sufficient cause for discipline'. Fraser's amendment was carried by nineteen votes to nine.

The following year, however, while Fraser was on furlough in Scotland, Elmslie and Laws combined to propose the rescinding of Fraser's previous motion. Their proposal was passed unanimously which seems to indicate the intrusion of some new factor into the discussion possibly a legal opinion from the colonial government that such a marriage was illegal in the Protectorate.

Another important development for Presbytery at this time was the introduction of a Barrier Act, by which all important legislation had to be sent down to Kirk Sessions for discussion and approval before it could become a law of the church. Though this had been happening unofficially since at least 1906, Ekwendeni Kirk Session proposed in October 1912 that it become a law of the church. This proposal itself was sent down to Kirk Sessions for discussion, and after agreement became law in August 1913.

149. Ibid., 20 October 1911.
150. Ibid.
151. Ibid., 18 October 1912.
152. In 1908 Judge Griffin had declared such a marriage illegal under the Marriage Ordinance: North Livingstonia Presbytery Minutes, 29 January 1908.
153. North Livingstonia Presbytery Minutes, 14 May 1906, and 21 September 1906, N.A.M.
154. Ibid., 16 October 1912 and 18 August 1913.
On the face of it, this proposal would seem to have strengthened the power of local Christians, and given them more control over decision-making in the church. There is some evidence, however, that it may have had the opposite effect, and may, in fact, have been designed to limit the power of Fraser and the Loudon Session.

In the first place, a similar regulation was passed by Mission Council in October 1912 which agreed 'to have important questions affecting the Rules and Constitution of the Native Church dealt with in conference by the Mission Council before they come up for settlement in Presbytery'. McCracken claims that this regulation was meant to silence Fraser, who was on furlough at the time. In any case it highlights Fraser's desire to use the local church, (through the Presbytery), rather than the Mission, (as represented by the Mission Council), as the vehicle of policy decisions. Secondly, the actual wording of the Ekwendeni Kirk Session proposal to establish a Barrier Act, makes it likely that the proposal was drawn up by Elmslie, rather than the Ngoni elders. Thirdly it is at least possible that individual missionaries of strong personality would have more influence over their local Kirk Sessions than they would over the combined African voice of Presbytery; what might be called 'the missionary view' might, in fact, be more likely to prevail at Kirk Session level than at Presbytery. And lastly, under the terms of the Barrier Act, the

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155. Livingstone Mission Council Minutes, October 1912, No. 49, N.A.M.
156. McCracken, Politics, pp.197-8.
157. The actual wording of the proposal was 'that before any Presbytery of the Church shall pass acts which are to be binding Rules and Constitutions of the Church, the same acts be first proposed as overtures to Presbytery and by it be referred for consideration to the several Kirk Sessions of this church and their opinions and consent reported by their commissioners to the following Presbytery, which may then pass the same in binding acts'. North Livingstone Presbytery Minutes, 16 October 1912.
opinions of each Kirk Session large or small would be given equal weight when reporting back on any matter sent down to them. This would inevitably reduce the power of the large Loudon Session which at this time had nine representatives on Presbytery.

Whatever may be the truth of the matter, it would appear that the overall power of the local Church vis à vis the missionaries was not substantially affected by the introduction of the Barrier Act.

While the powers of Presbytery are of considerable importance, it is nevertheless true that the normal everyday running of the church at grass roots level was carried on in the local Kirk Sessions and Deacons' Courts. Here too, several distinctive policies of Fraser stand out.

Up until 1914 when the first African ministers were ordained, every Kirk Session met with a European missionary as Moderator. The power exerted by the missionary in this situation was considerable, and was, to some extent, controlled only by his own attitude towards the position. In keeping with their personalities it would appear that Elmslie maintained a much tighter hold on his Kirk Session than did Fraser. In 1905, for example, when Elmslie temporarily relieved Fraser at Loudon, he himself wrote the minutes of the Kirk Session for several meetings, even though Elijah Chavula was Clerk of Session and was present at the meetings.¹⁵⁸ Ngoni accounts also indicate that Fraser adopted a comparatively democratic approach to the position of Moderator of Session, encouraging elders to express their views.¹⁵⁹

¹⁵⁸. Loudon Kirk Session Minute Book, various dates 1905-6, N.A.M. ¹⁵⁹. In separate interviews Petros Moyo, Mhale Mtonga and David Sibande (all now deceased), stated that Fraser did not seek to dominate the Session, but asked the elders their opinions - though he himself would sometimes give advice.
Fraser also had a much more relaxed attitude to the question of suspension from and restoration to church membership. The Loudon Kirk Session, as a rule, restored suspended members quickly and regularly - sometimes less than a year after suspension. 160 During the period of two years between September 1905 and September 1907 when Fraser was in Scotland and first Elmslie and then McMinn were in charge at Loudon, only one suspended member was restored. Three were restored at the first meeting after Fraser's return in 1907, and in the course of the next few months more than half-a-dozen others were similarly restored. 161

The nature of the cases leading to suspension are of some interest. Most suspensions were imposed for marital or sexual offences, with beer-drinking being the next most common cause of church discipline. For example, in November 1905 the Loudon Session heard sixteen cases, of which ten were for marriage offences, four for beer-drinking, and two for spreading rumours. 162 It is interesting to compare this with the pattern of court cases heard at chiefs' courts in the 1930s, after the introduction of Indirect Rule. With the obvious exception of beer-drinking, (which was not, of course, an offence in itself in the chiefs' court), the pattern is surprisingly similar. Thus in the twelve months between April 1938 and March 1939, Mpherembe's Court heard a total of 130 cases; of these 57 were marital cases, 38 involved disputes over property, and 13 arose over quarrels. In a four month period between December 1938 and March 1939 Mtwalo's court heard a total of 106 cases, of which 66 were marital cases and 27 involved cattle or property. 163

160. See, for example, the cases of Mzanya Tembo, suspended 21 June 1904, restored 4 March 1905, and John Myayi, suspended October 1907, restored 3 June 1908, in Loudon Kirk Session Minute Book, N.A.M.
161. Ibid., 1905-08.
162. Ibid., 1 November 1906.
163. Field Note-book - 'Mzimba Emigration', in Read Papers, L.S.E.
Though the work of the traditional courts and the Presbyterian Kirk Sessions were obviously not identical, there is a sense in which they were both performing a similar function, though in the case of the Kirk Sessions this function, (the restoration of social harmony), depended on the will to restore, as well as to suspend. It would appear that in the case of Loudon the will to restore was there to a much greater extent than in most other Kirk Sessions.

Though the structures of Presbytery and Mission Council severely limited the powers of Kirk Sessions, it should not be thought that they were mere rubber-stamping organisations. The Kirk Session sometimes provided the forum for genuine and deep discussion of an important issue. One such issue, discussed at Loudon in 1912, was the problem of people who married without paying lobola, simply because they were too poor to find it. The question of the attitude of the church to lobola in general was one which had come up for discussion several times. In 1905, for example, Presbytery had asked the opinions of Kirk Sessions on the system. While Bandawe Kirk Session expressed disapproval, most other Sessions were in favour, and Presbytery approved a motion of Henderson's that the time had not yet come to legislate for the whole mission.164

When the Loudon Session took up the problem in 1912, therefore, they were not calling into question the procedure whereby a couple marrying without following correct Ngoni custom, (including the payment of lobola),165 would be suspended from church membership. What they were concerned about was how such a couple could regularise their marriage in the eyes of the church if the husband was too poor to afford lobola.

164. North Livingstonia Presbytery Minutes, 22 April 1905, N.A.M.
165. To marry in such a fashion, without paying lobola, was known in chiTumbuka as 'kujikwatisa yeka' - meaning 'to marry alone'. 
After a long discussion on 24 February 1912, the Loudon Session took the unusual step of putting the matter to a formal vote. The result showed that the Session was almost equally split, between those who, like Andrew Mkochi, were in favour of restoration (30 votes), and those who, like Jonathan Chirwa, believed the man should work hard until he had enough money to pay lobola (22 votes). The problem was deferred until the next meeting, ten days later, probably to give the elders time to work out a solution which was more widely acceptable. The formula agreed on 5 March shows a real attempt by the church to come to terms with traditional custom. If the parents of the girl agreed to marriage without lobola then the church would marry the couple; if the parents did not agree to marriage without lobola then the church would not marry them; if the parents agreed to a traditional marriage, but not to a church marriage, then each case would be decided on its merits.

This case, and many others like it, show the Loudon Session struggling to come to terms with the two separate cultures to which they now owed allegiance, in a way which would, as far as possible, reconcile, rather than alienate the old and the new.

As the church in Ulugoni grew, both in size and extent, the problem of how best to represent on Kirk Session the interests of its members in different areas became more pressing. The geographical extent of the problem can be seen in the fact that by 1914 the Loudon parish, theoretically covered by one Kirk Session, stretched over an area of 12,000 square miles. There were, in effect, two problems involved. The first was how church members from outlying districts could be

166. Loudon Session Minute Book, 24 February 1912, N.A.M.
167. Ibid., 5 March 1912.
adequately represented on a central Session which usually met at Loudon; the second was how the church in these areas could function efficiently from day to day in the absence of a Kirk Session in its immediate vicinity.

The first problem was solved by two simple expedients. As early as 1903 Fraser travelled around the different districts of the Loudon parish, meeting with the church members in each area, and asking them to choose elders to represent them on what later became known as Session likuru (the big Session). In March 1903, such elections were held at Kajijirwe, Chinyera, Engalaweni, Hora and Milala. Elmslie also came to realise the need for local representation and began a similar system in 1907, explaining to Laws that 'When an election is made here for all, too many are chosen locally and smaller districts outside have no chance of a local elder'.

The second solution was the creation of a far greater proportion of elders in Umgoni than in other parts of the mission. By 1909, for example, the ratio of elders to church members in the Ekwendeni parish was 1:27 and at Loudon 1:33. The equivalent figures for Khondowe and Bandawe were 1:57 and 1:82.

The second problem - that of how to ensure the efficient day-to-day administration of out-lying districts, when by Presbyterian custom no Session could meet without the chairmanship of an ordained minister - was solved by Fraser in a way unique to the Loudon area: the creation of sub-sessions (maSessioni phacoko).

169. Loudon Kirk Session minute-book, 21 March 1903, N.A.N.
170. Elmslie to Laws, 12 June 1907, Elmslie File, C.S.A.
Sub-Sessions and Balalakazi

The system of sub-sessions began in 1908, shortly after Fraser's return from furlough in Scotland, and at the beginning of an unbroken stretch of five years at Loudon - his longest in the period before the First World War. The huge Loudon district was divided into a dozen large parishes. Each one was put under the control of an evangelist and a few elders and deacons, who formed a sub-session, with responsibility for the day-to-day running of the parish.172 At the end of 1908 Fraser reported that the system was working admirably, and had led to better pastoral care, a more careful administration of discipline, and a great increase in the liberality of the people.173

Although their powers were limited the sub-sessions fulfilled a useful and important function. They had power to hear cases, and could suspend and restore hearers and catechumens. Cases involving church members however, had to be referred to the main session at Loudon:
'Session lati tirije mazaza kukamba mlando chifukwa ni Mkristu ulute ku Loudon Session'.174 (Session says we have no power to hear the case because he is a Christian, it should go to Loudon Session.)

Even in such cases as the one quoted above, however, the sub-session could investigate the details of the dispute and present them to the Loudon Session, so that a more accurate decision could be reached.

In addition to the hearing of cases, the sub-sessions were responsible for the day-to-day running of the congregation, the organization of financial contributions, and the pastoral supervision

172. Livingstonia Annual Reports for 1908, Report for Loudon, p.27.
173. Ibid.
174. Session Minute Book - Middle Rukuru (Mariba), 14 November 1916, N.A.M.
175. The term 'Mkristu': 'Christian', here means 'Church Member'.
of the Christians in the area. They met regularly and kept minutes which were occasionally checked by either a missionary, or, increasingly after 1914, by an African minister such as Jonathan Chirwa.

They appear to have been used as a means of ascertaining genuine grass-roots opinion on important matters. For example, in 1913, after the introduction of the Barrier Act, both the questions of the introduction of a Central Fund to support African ministers, and of a proposed Creed for the church were sent down to Loudon Session. Session proposed that both documents should be translated into chitumbuka and sent down to the sub-sessions for further discussion. One result of such detailed discussion was that while most sessions agreed to the setting-up of a Central Fund, Loudon reported that they considered it was too early for such a move.

In spite of their limited powers, it would appear that sub-sessions were both popular and useful. They probably developed out of the more modest Deacons' Courts, and were merely the institutionalizing by Fraser of a grass-roots control of the local church which was already in existence anyway. Nevertheless, they were one of the very few church bodies which met at that period without the presence and control of European missionaries, and as such, their importance should not be underestimated.

Another distinctive grouping organised by Fraser during this period were the balalakazi (women elders or deaconesses). They were first elected in 1901 at Hora to provide for the spiritual oversight of

177. Mariba Session Minute Book, various entries, 1914, N.A.M.
178. Loudon Kirk Session Minute-Book, 13 February 1913, N.A.M.
179. North Livingstonia Presbytery Minutes, 20 August 1913, N.A.M.
the female Christians. In the same year Fraser proposed in Presbytery the organization and training of an order of deaconesses — but no decision was taken. It was not for a further thirty-five years that they were to be fully integrated into the eldership structure of the church.

At Loudon during this intervening period they occupied somewhat of an intermediate position between elders and deacons. During Communion, for example, they sat on the platform with the other elders, but did not distribute the elements. Though the eligibility of women as deacons was accepted by Presbytery in 1922, it was not until 1935, and a strong appeal by Fraser’s widow Dr. Agnes Fraser, that Presbytery agreed to recognise women as elders on the same basis as men.

That recognition took so long was due to several factors. First, while the place of women in the non-Ngoni societies of northern Malawi was of considerable importance in socio-economic terms, they were allowed very little political power by their male counterparts. Secondly even in Ngoni society, where the royal women had considerable political power, this was normally exercised as a distinct female group, rather than in a mixed group of men and women. Thus, the idea of balalakazi, while more acceptable to the Ngoni than to other groups, took the form even here of a separate office. Thirdly, the ecclesiastical and social background of the Scottish missionaries themselves did not encourage the establishment of female elders. Indeed, women were not eligible for

181. North Livingstonia Presbytery Minutes, 27 May 1901, N.A.M.
182. Agnes R. Fraser, Fraser, p.89.
183. North Livingstonia Presbytery Minutes, 20 July 1922, and 6 July 1935. Dr. Agnes Fraser had returned to Malawi with the ashes of Donald Fraser, who died in Scotland in 1933, and was invited to address Presbytery at Mwenzo.
election as elders in the Church of Scotland until 1966 - thirty years after the church in Livingstonia had taken the step, and more than sixty years after Fraser had first introduced his balalakazi in ungoni.

Fraser's original concept of an order of deaconesses may be said to have failed, to the extent that it was not adopted by Presbytery, and therefore not officially recognised by the church, even in ungoni. Agnes Fraser believed that the scheme failed because it was premature. If by this she meant that neither the church in general, nor northern Malawian society were yet ready for it in the period prior to the First World War, then her judgement must be accepted as accurate. Yet Margaret Read compares the groupings of men and women elders in ungoni to the madoda and manina groupings of traditional Ngoni society, and there can be little doubt that the continuing de facto existence of the balalakazi in ungoni did much to strengthen the church, especially with the increasing drain of male leadership due to the growing necessity of migrant labour.

Ngoni Evangelists and Clergy

The growth of the church implied the training of African church leaders as evangelists and ordained ministers. Fraser's involvement in this was limited to the starting at Loudon of an order of evangelists around 1902, and his relations with the probationer ministers Charles Domingo and Jonathan Chirwa. As with the balalakazi, Fraser's immediate reaction to his perception of a need for greater religious teaching in

184. 'Act anent admission of women to the eldership', Church of Scotland, Reports to the General Assembly with the Legislative Acts, 1966, p.810.
186. M. Read, 'The Ngoni & Adjustments to Social Change', Read Papers, L.S.E.
schools was the speedy utilization of a group of Ngoni to meet the need.

The idea of evangelists, of course, was nothing new. Laws 1893 'Memorandum regarding the Organization and Development of the Livingstonia Mission', had stated the need for an institution 'for the training of native agents as artisans, teachers, evangelists and pastors, to assist the missionary in his work.' 187 Whereas Laws saw the Institution as 'a work for the future, as well as for the present', 188 Fraser was more concerned with the immediate need of ulNgoni.

Around 1902 he had appointed a group of evangelists 'who would stimulate the religious service of the schools, and who would travel constantly in couples, preaching the Word to the people who had no regular instruction'. 189 Among the first group of evangelists he appointed were the Mhlane brothers, Daniel and Simon, and Andrew Mkochi. Fraser's evangelists were trained 'on the job'. Every couple of months they came to Loudon for a week's intensive teaching by Fraser, before resuming their itineration. 190 The official adoption by Mission Council and Presbytery of the order of evangelists, and the beginning of 1904 of an evangelists' course at the Institution, 191 began a process of institutionalization in the training of evangelists and ministers which, (at least in the case of Daniel Mhlane), Fraser regretted.

At first I feared that the training at the Institution had spoiled his natural gifts of oratory. For he prepared his sermons carefully, and carried with him into the pulpit full notes which he rather slavishly followed. His attractive naturalness was crushed by his conscientious efforts to adhere to the formal exposition of his subject, his illustrations, instead of being drawn from the

187. Minutes of the Livingstonia Committee, 1891-1914, contains Laws' Memorandum, which was discussed by the Committee on 11 April 1893. 188. Ibid. 189. Fraser, Autobiography, p.176. 190. Ibid. 191. Livingstonia Annual Reports for 1904, Institution Report, p.13.
familiar things of everyday life and the old history of the tribe, were unearthed from lectures he had heard on Church History and from the puzzling incidents of European life. Gradually, he recovered his freedom .... 192

Fraser’s dislike of the Institution was strong and enduring. 193 Yet in several respects its importance, both for the development of the Church and of wider proto-political movements, is considerable. Though it was criticised by several of Laws’ colleagues, both for the way it started, and later, for the way in which it dominated both finance and staffing to the detriment of other stations, 194 the Institution did provide one of the first real multi-tribal environments in modern Malawi, (though it could be argued that the Ngoni state itself did this in a somewhat different way).

Elmslie’s views of the Institution were mixed. Writing in 1896 of the importance of the Institution for uNgoni, he was high in his praise, explaining that the flow of well-trained teachers which the Institution would soon produce, would speed extension. 195 By 1903, however, he was doubting the wisdom ‘in highly educating little boys whose characters are no guarantee of good service’. 196 He complained that of the 180 people who had gone through the Institution by 1901 only 87 had remained in mission employment. 197 Generally speaking, however, he was keener on the Institution than Fraser, and put a higher

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192. Fraser, Autobiography, p. 192.
194. Amongst the most vocal critics at the time were David Kerr Cross and Alexander Dewar. Cross, referring to Laws’ lack of consultation with his colleagues, and quoting an earlier remark by Bain, commented, ‘Dr. Laws should remember that this is a Presbyterian Mission, and that he is not Pope’. Dewar, less personally remarked, ‘but briefly the Institution is to succeed should everything else have to lie dormant or even fail’. Cross to Livingstonia Committee, 23 August 1894, Ms. 7877, N.L.S. Dewar to Smith 8 January 1897, Ms. 7880, N.L.S.
196. Elmslie to Laws, 16 September 1903, Elmslie File, C.S.A.
197. Ibid.
store by the importance of highly-trained African teachers.

The first Ngoni pupils arrived at the Institution in December 1895, just a few months after it opened. Early relationships were not always good. In July 1897 Miss Lizzie Stewart reported that 'This week there has been rebellion among the Ngoni girls. Owing to the cold they refused to begin work at the usual hour in the morning.' Five of the girls, including two Jeres, refused to give in, and finally managed to extract from Dr. Laws a compromise by which, during the cold weather, work would begin half an hour later. By 1901 Ngoni pupils were doing well at the higher levels of the Institution. In the annual examination for the 1900-01 school year Ngoni pupils gained first place in Standard VI, third place in Standard V, first and second places in Standard IV, and first, second and third places in Standard III.

One of the main purposes for which the Institution had been started was the training of African ministers. The theological course which began around 1896 should therefore, have been given a high priority among the courses of the Institution. Somewhat surprisingly, the opposite seems to have been the case, with the course several times suspended in the period up to the First World War. This, added to the extreme caution of the missionaries in their approach to the ordination of African clergy, the deaths of several promising students,

200. The Aurora, Vol. 5, 1 June 1901. Amongst those appearing at the top of these lists were Levi Numba, second in Standard IV, and Yesaya Chibambo, third in Standard III.
and the suspension or resignation of others, meant that the first ordinations were long delayed - not taking place until 18 May 1914 - almost fourteen years after the first two students, Charles Domingo and Yakobe Msusa Mwamba had completed their course.

Between 1900 and 1914 six Hgoni students were involved in the theological course, all of them subject to some extent or other to the long delays which preceded ordination. Of these six only three - Hezekiah Tweya, Jonathan Chirwa and Andrew Mkochi were ever ordained. Of the other three Thomas Rufu was suspended for 'immoral conduct' in 1900, and Andrew Kalemba Zimba and Daniel Mhlane both died before ordination. Mhlane, in particular, was a tragic loss to the church, and his pathetic plea in 1915, 'Let us be ordained before we die!' proved all the more poignant. Of the three who were ordained, the average length of time between beginning the theological course and being ordained was exactly ten years. To this must be added that all of them were already experienced Christians with many years of service to the mission before commencing the theological course. The extreme caution of the missionaries in this regard was meant to ensure a mature ministry. Instead it hampered the work of the church and created discontent and frustration among those waiting to be ordained.

One such was Charles Domingo, and his case is particularly important since it involved both uHgoni and Fraser. Domingo had been

202. Among the many theological students of this period who were never ordained for various reasons were: Thomas Rufu, suspended 1900, Yakobi Msusa Mwamba, died 1900, Filemon Kamkwala Chirwa, returned to teaching c.1900, Andrew Kalemba Zimba, murdered 1907, Charles Domingo resigned 1908.

203. Andrew Kalemba was beaten to death by robbers near Mzimba boma in 1907 on his way to Loudon to attend a convention; Daniel Mhlane died of dysentery in 1917.

204. Fraser, Autobiography, p.206.

205. Tweya 1900-1914; Chirwa 1904-14; Mkochi 1911-17.
brought to Malawi from Quelimane in 1881 by William Koyi. For a time he worked as a servant of Laws, who was so impressed by him that he took him to Lovedale in 1891 to be educated there. On Laws' return in 1894, Domingo rejoined him and soon became one of the first theological students at the new Khondowe station. By 1900 he had completed his theological course, together with Yakobe Msusa Mwamba from Bandawe, who was to die very shortly afterwards.

Had Domingo been ordained at this point, or even within the next couple of years, he would probably have given long and valuable service to the North Livingstonia Presbytery, but the continued delays in his ordination served to frustrate and embitter him. For several years he was a highly praised teacher at the Institution, before being appointed in May 1903 as 'a licentiate of the Presbyterian Church of Central Africa to preach the Gospel. Such a position should theoretically have led to ordination after a minimum delay of six months, but by 1908 Domingo had still not been ordained.

Following his licensing Domingo was posted to uNgoni where he worked for some time at Chinyera. Both Fraser and the Loudon Session thought he had done good work there and wanted him to stay, but at some stage he was posted back to the Institution, where he was working late in 1907. At that point he was once again posted to uNgoni – this time to Loudon.

In January 1908 the Kirk Session at Loudon minuted the fact that they

207. North Livingstonia Presbytery Minutes, 2 November 1900, N.A.M.
209. North Livingstonia Presbytery Minutes, 13 May 1903, N.A.M.
210. Ibid., 9 May 1900.
211. Loudon Kirk Session Minute Book, 4 January 1904, N.A.M.
were 'happy to welcome Rev. Charles Domingo to be a minister of the church under Rev. Donald Fraser'. That short but genuine welcome reflected in its terms the seeds of a crisis which within one year were to lead to Domingo's leaving the mission. 'A minister of the Church under Rev. Donald Fraser' begged the whole question of the relationship of the African minister to the European missionary - a relationship which was to cause future discontent at several stages in the history of the church.

Technically speaking, of course, Charles Domingo was a probationer, or assistant minister, and consequently under the supervision of an ordained minister. But whereas such a position in Scotland would have lasted only one or two years before ordination, and according to the Presbytery rules drawn up by the Presbyterian Church of Central Africa, could, theoretically have been as little as eighteen months in Livingstonia, it was now eight years since Domingo had completed his theological training, and five since he had been licensed as a probationer. The resulting build-up of frustration on Domingo's part seems not to have been appreciated by any of the European missionaries.

Sometime before November 1908 he quarrelled with Fraser at Loudon. Though the details of this quarrel are not now known, all Ngoni informants are agreed that it concerned his subordination to Fraser, the long delay in his ordination, and his lack of any real authority as a minister. According to Zechariah Ziba, (quoted by McCracken), it

212. Ibid., 15 January 1908.
213. For example, a similar quarrel arose at Bandawe early in 1915 between Revs. Y. Z. Mwasi and W. Y. Turner.
214. North Livingstonia Presbytery Minutes, 9 May 1900, N.A.M.
215. Personal interviews, the late Petros Moyo, 28 December 1971, and the late Rev. David Sibande, 27 December 1971, as well as those sources quoted by McCracken, pp.198-9 - Charles Chimula and Zechariah Ziba.
was at a subsequent meeting, when Domingo asked Fraser for his blessing, and the request was refused, that the break was completed. 216 This last incident, however, appears to be so completely out of character for Fraser, that a more convincing explanation, on the basis of the available evidence needs to be sought.

To begin with it would appear that the quarrel was not in itself the cause of the break, but merely a symptom of the frustration which led to it. It is not coincidental that the break took place at the same time that Elliot Kamwana Chirwa was beginning his work on the lakeshore, and that Domingo made contact with John Chilembwe almost immediately after leaving Loudon. 217 One tiny example of the kind of niggling regulations which could lead to a build-up of frustration may be seen in the fact that the probationers at this time were not allowed to pronounce the benediction at the end of a service, but could only say the Lord's Prayer. 218

Furthermore, although missionary literature is conspicuously silent about Domingo's break with Livingstonia, Fraser himself did later comment on the quarrel which finalised the break. Giving evidence to the Chilembwe Rising Commission of Enquiry in July 1915, Fraser was several times encouraged to denounce Domingo and the work he was doing. Not only did he refuse to do so, commenting, on the contrary, on Domingo's good manners, and ability but he went on to comment on the quarrel between them. According to Fraser he had publicly reprimanded Domingo for a speech he had made which Fraser regarded as unacceptable. Fraser now commented that he may have been wrong to speak to Domingo

publicly. This comment throws some new light on the affair, and suggests that it was the public humiliation by Fraser, which the missionary later regretted, which had consolidated Domingo's discontent and caused him to leave.

Thus it may be concluded that though the quarrel itself was not the cause of the rift, and though it seems unlikely that Fraser should refuse his blessing to Domingo, nevertheless a serious quarrel did take place which Fraser later regretted, and Domingo's break with the mission was sudden and unexpected - Loudon Kirk Session commenting 'Charles Domingo left his work without telling others and went home. Session were surprised because he had said nothing about going away'.

That there was a growing swell of discontent amongst many Livingstonia Christians during this period is undeniable. In some cases, as was to happen again in the early 1930s, it led to defections and the formation of independent churches; in others the discontent was contained within the existing system, but was nonetheless real. To some extent this discontent was the product of that aspect of the Livingstonia system which encouraged intellectual questioning and debate. Two examples from this period, both of which involve the Ngoni, and the missionary D. R. Mackenzie, will serve to illustrate this intellectual encouragement. The first was a debate held by the Literary Society at the Institution, of which D. R. Mackenzie was the patron, on 'the rival claims of different tribes to be considered the greatest'. The Ngoni speakers cited their organisation, their military discipline, their

219. Fraser's evidence to Chilumbwe Rising Commission of Enquiry, C.O.525/66, pp.541-2, P.R.O.
220. Loudon Kirk Session Minute Book, 10 November 1908, N.A.M., my translation.
221. The topic of Independent Churches formed by ex-Livingstonia Christians will be dealt with briefly in Chapter 6, 'Independent Churches'.
222. U.F.C.S.M.R., October 1904, p.481, 'A Debate on Tribal Excellency at Livingstonia'.

herdsmanship and their higher moral code, and ran out narrow winners from the Tumbuka, with the Tonga third.

The second example again involved D. R. Mackenzie and took place at Karonga in 1912. Mackenzie wrote:

Around us at Karonga are a considerable number of men who were once Church members, but who have lapsed for various causes; educated men many of them, and it occurred to us that we might do something to get into touch with them by throwing open the office on Saturday afternoons as a Reading Room and Library, into which we put weekly such papers as are likely to be useful to them, along with books which they can read with profit. 223

One of those who took advantage of this reading-room was Levi Mumba from Mwendeni, and one of the outcomes of the experiment was the formation soon afterwards of the North Nyasa Native Association, of which Mumba was elected secretary.

Conclusion

The debate on 'tribal excellency' at Khondowe, and the formation of the North Nyasa Native Association at Karonga highlight two aspects of the development of Ngoni Christian leadership - both religious and political - which were to become more important with the passage of time. The first was the very real pride in an Ngoni identity, and this was as true of non-Zansi-Ngoni like Yesaya Chibambo and Mawelera Tembo as it was of the Zansi-Ngoni themselves. The second was the growing proto-nationalism which the widening horizons of Institution education, common Christian identity, and, in some cases, migrant labour provided. If the period which began with the First World War was to see a hardening and focusing of Ngoni discontent, it was also to bring about a heightening of both Ngoni culturalism and Malawi proto-nationalism.

223. Ibid., August 1912, p.350.
Between 1900 and 1914 several important developments had taken place which were to be of lasting significance. The first was the physical growth of the church both numerically and geographically. Both Christianity in general and Presbyterianism in particular had, by the beginning of the First World War, established themselves as the major religious force of a sizeable portion of the population. The appearance of alternative forms of Christianity during this period appear to have made little significant difference to this overall picture.

The second development was the adoption by the Ngoni church, (and in particular that part of it which made up the Loudon congregation), of a distinctive Ngoni form of worship characterised by the large sacramental convention and the widespread use of a genuinely Ngoni hymnology. It has been shown that while Fraser was instrumental in encouraging these trends, they succeeded largely because of genuine Ngoni interest in them, even, to some extent, in other areas where the resident missionaries were less sympathetic.

Finally, the period saw the attempts of African Christians to come to terms with the missionary-oriented power structures of the mission and church, and though the Ngoni church may have succeeded - partly with Fraser's help - in democratising these structures to some small extent, in uNgoni, as elsewhere, power remained largely in missionary hands.
The Ordination of the First Livingstonia ministers – May 1914
(L to R standing: A. G. MacAlpine, W. A. Elmslie and R. Laws
L to R. seated: Y. Z. Mwasi, Hezekiah M. Tewya,
Jonathan C. Chirwa)
CHAPTER FIVE

THE FIRST WORLD WAR AND ITS IMPACT,

1914 - 1920

The Church in 1914

On the 18 May 1914 the long-delayed ordination of the first African clergy of the Livingstonia Mission took place at Bandawe. Of the three men ordained that day - Jonathan Chirwa, Yesaya Zerenji Mwasi and Hezekiah Mazuva Tweya - two, (Chirwa and Tweya), were described by A. G. MacAlpine as Ngoni. In fact, both were from abafo families, captured by the Ngoni and assimilated into their society. Tweya was a Tonga-Ngoni, Chirwa a Tumbuka-Ngoni. That they were not identified as such by MacAlpine, (or even as Tonga and Tumbuka), is perhaps an indication that the term 'Ngoni' was coming to be used in a much wider cultural context than it had been a generation earlier. It is also an indication of the success of Ngoni society in assimilating captives, (notwithstanding the Tonga and Tumbuka rebellions of the 1870s and early 80s); for in all but the narrowest genealogical sense the two men clearly were Ngoni.

The occasion of the ordinations was regarded by the missionaries as a 'red-letter day in the history of the Mission'. In one sense it was, for it clearly marked, in however limited a way, a stage in the growth of a genuinely indigenous church in the area. In another sense, however, it highlighted the long delay in the whole process of ordination

2. Tweya is undoubtedly a name of Tonga origin. Chirwa is also common among the Tonga, but is given by T. Cullen Young, History of the Tumbuka-Kamanga Peoples, p.142, as a clan from the Tumbuka-Kamanga area.
since the beginning of the mission almost thirty-nine years previously - a delay due mainly, though not entirely, to extreme missionary caution in the training and ordination of local Christians. Such caution had been explained by Fraser in the previous year when he had written, 'One of the chief dangers of giving ordination to a people recently rescued from barbarism is that while educational attainments may be easily ascertained, there is no good test of established Christian character'. A rather less charitable explanation was proferred by Charles Domingo who had written in 1911, 'White fellows have been here for nearly 36 years, and not one of them sees a native as his Brother, but as his boy, tho' a native is somehow wiser than he in managing God's work'. Alexander Hetherwick of the Blantyre Mission was one of very few Scottish missionaries who believed in a comparatively short period of training and probation preceding ordination. Most took the view that a long period of probation was necessary as a test of character, and it was this view which had prevailed at Livingstonia.

Within six weeks of the first ordinations at Bandawe, however, another event, taking place thousands of miles away, set up a series of ripples which were to reach even as far as ulNgoni. The assassination of the Archduke Franz Ferdinand at Sarajevo, and the outbreak of the First World War which followed it, were to have a profound impact on both ulNgoni and the growth of the church there. In the years which followed 1914, therefore, the precise pattern of church-mission relations, was determined not only by the views of Ngoni Christians and the

5. Charles Domingo to Joseph Booth, 19 September 1911, Domingo Papers, Chancellor College Library, University of Malawi.
policies of the Scottish missionaries, but also by the various pressures and restrictions imposed by the impact of war on Central Africa.

On the eve of war the Livingstonia Mission had a network of 282 schools in uNgoni, (attended by more than 18,000 pupils), a church membership in excess of 4,000, and a Christian community of over 18,000. Church membership in the area had increased at an average annual rate of just over 6% during the previous five years – rather more slowly than in the mission as a whole. This comparatively slow growth rate, particularly at Loudon, (and also at Bandawe), was probably due to three factors; first a natural tailing-off after the fairly rapid expansion of the years up to 1909 – culminating in the unusually high number of baptisms in 1909; secondly, the adverse effects on the work of Livingstonia of the presence of the Watch Tower movement and the Seventh Day Baptists in uTonga and uNgoni; thirdly the expansion of the newer stations such as Lubwa, Chitambo and Tamanda, which inflated the average increase for the mission as a whole.

By 1914, the European infrastructure of the mission, recovering from a comparatively lean spell following the death of its biggest single benefactor, Lord Overtoun, in 1908, seemed to be on the brink of a period of renewed expansion. At Lubwa, near Chinsali in what is now the Eastern Province of Zambia, Rev. & Mrs. McMinn had just arrived and selected a new site for a mission station; at Tamanda, further south Mr. & Mrs. Riddell Henderson were living in temporary houses while looking for a tsetse-free area for permanent settlement; Rev. T. T. Alexander had just been appointed to open a new station among the Senga

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7. See statistical chart in Fraser, Livingstonia, p.85.
8. See statistical charts on pp. 263 and 254.
at Chasefu - a task which Fraser himself would have been happy to undertake, had he been allowed to do so.\(^9\) In addition 1914 saw the last big influx of European personnel to Livingstonia for several years, with the arrival of Rev. Charles Stuart and his wife, Rev. T. T. Alexander and his wife, Miss Maxwell, and Dr. Hubert Wilson, and his sister Ruth, (both of the latter incidentally grandchildren of David Livingstone).\(^10\)

The foundation for this expansion to the west, had, of course, been laid by years of dedicated work by African teachers and evangelists, beginning in the last years of the nineteenth century with the missions to the Marambo carried out by volunteer teachers from Ekwendeni, Bandawe and Khondowe. The gradual expansion of these seasonal efforts, particularly after Fraser occupied first Hora and then Loudon, had led to the growth of a small but expanding band of Livingstonia Christians in what is now Zambia. Foremost among those who ministered to and led them was David Kaunda, (father of President Kenneth Kaunda of Zambia), a Tonga-Ngoni who settled at Lubwa in 1904 and was still working there with his wife Helen when McMinn arrived almost ten years later.\(^11\) With the foundations laid by men like David Kaunda at Lubwa, (and John Afwenge Banda at Mwenzo), the church looked set for a period of expansion from 1914 onwards. The establishment of a permanent station at Chasefu, in particular, would have freed the Loudon congregation from responsibility for that area to their west, and enabled them to concentrate more on their own extensive and populous district. The outbreak of war, however, prevented the opening of Chasefu, and Alexander was assigned temporarily to Loudon.\(^12\)

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10. [Ibid.; April 1914, p.179.](#)
11. For further details of David Kaunda, see Fergus Macpherson, Kenneth Kaunda of Zambia: the Times and the Man, Lusaka, 1974, pp.26-42.
The Immediate Impact of War

The outbreak of war had an almost immediate effect on Livingstonia and its work, due to the proximity of German East Africa, and the military campaign which ensued. Its impact on the Ngoni was both physical and psychological, as will be explained below, and had a deep-seated effect not only on the work of the mission, but also on the attitudes of the Ngoni people.

Soon after the outbreak of war, a party of one hundred and sixty Ngoni under the leadership of Mzukuzuku left Loudon to help defend Karonga. Among those volunteering for war service was Daniel Nhlane, who had just finished his theological course at Khondowe, but his offer was declined by the Resident, H. C. Macdonald, because, according to Fraser, 'he knew his service among his own people was so great that he must be kept among them'.

The introduction of what amounted to conscription, involving as it did primarily the educated, (including teachers), as clerks and interpreters, and the able-bodied, (including many pupils), as carriers, hit particularly hard at the school system throughout Livingstonia, and led, during the course of the war, to a substantial reduction in schools, teachers and pupils.

In addition, large numbers of missionary staff became involved in the war. By 1916 W. P. Young, T. C. Young, Howie, Wilson, Chisholm, Stuart, McGregor, Mackenzie, McDonald, Innes, Kirkwood, as well as nurses...
Wilson and Brown were all on military service. McCracken has estimated that by 1918 over half of the Scottish missionaries were involved in war work of some kind. 16

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Schools</th>
<th>Pupils</th>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>1909</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Loudon</td>
<td>150</td>
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<tr>
<td>Ekwendeni</td>
<td>83</td>
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<tr>
<td>Bandawe</td>
<td>138</td>
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<tr>
<td>Mission Total</td>
<td>661</td>
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One result of the reduction in missionary personnel was that the whole higher educational system of the mission at Khondowe virtually came to a standstill. A handful of selected pupils, mostly from distant stations like Chitambo, remained behind and were taught by Mrs. Laws, but classes such as the theological and medical courses were suspended - the former not resuming until late 1920. 17

Another result of the enforced reduction in missionary personnel, as well as the small but steady decline in finance from Scotland during this period, was, as A. C. Ross has remarked of the Blantyre Mission, an increase in Africanization. 18 In the case of Livingstonia, at least, this was due to the pressures of war, rather than the policies of the

missionaries, and was, in any case, held in check by the widespread European criticisms of indigenization in the wake of the Chilembwe Rising.

Livingstonia and the Chilembwe Commission of Enquiry

Though neither the Livingstonia Mission nor its adherents were directly involved in the Chilembwe Rising, they nevertheless fell under the general government suspicion which included all missions, and especially those with a comparatively advanced system of education. The work of Elliot Kamwana Chirwa in the area around Bandawe in 1908-9 did nothing to reduce the suspicion of the government and many planters towards the Livingstonia Mission in 1915. There were, in addition, several factors which also directed governmental attention towards uNgoni, and the work of the Livingstonia Mission there.

The first factor was the involvement of some of the Ncheu Ngoni in the rising and their consequent confusion by the administration with M'mbelwa's Ngoni. The second was a series of minor disagreements between Chimtunga and the colonial authorities, leading in March 1914 to a reduction in the subsidy paid to Chimtunga, (and also to Chinde), for what the government described as 'neglect of assistance in the collection of hut tax'. The third was the opinion of the Chief Secretary, publicly expressed in Blantyre during the Chilembwe Rising, that there was 'unrest among Nombera's Angoni'. Such a statement was, in Hetherwick's view 'calculated to further increase the panic which

19. 'Secret despatch', Governor Smith to Colonial Office, 15 November 1915, C.0.525/63, P.R.O.
20. 'Report on the Government Commission of Enquiry' by Rev. A. Hetherwick 'for the information of the Foreign Mission Committee of the Church of Scotland', included in Despatch 18730, C.0.525/71, P.R.O.
had already seized the European community of Blantyre'. The fourth factor was the presence of Charles Domingo and the Seventh Day Baptists in Mzimba district. Given Domingo's connection with Booth and Chilembwe, and the visit of Walter Cockerill to the area in August and September 1914, his work at Chipata only served to increase government unease about the loyalty of uMgoni.

The Commission of Enquiry which followed the Chilembwe Rising called several Livingstonia missionaries, including Elmslie and Fraser, to give evidence. Several others, including Laws, Cullen Young and Prentice sent written statements. In addition two senior Livingstonia African employees, Yesaya Chibambo and Yuria Chirwa also submitted written evidence. To some extent the Commission of Enquiry provided the Livingstonia missionaries with a platform from which to explain and defend their policies; it is therefore important to examine their evidence, since it outlines their views of the missionary task at this period.

The overwhelming impression of the oral evidence of the Livingstonia missionaries to the Chilembwe Commission of Enquiry was that they were very much on the defensive. In this connection it has to be remembered that there was a strong current of European feeling at the time that Africans had been given too much power and independence by the missions. In face of this the Livingstonia missionaries were keen to point out the extent to which African Christians were controlled by European supervision, and the limited amount of real responsibility they possessed. Elmslie, for example, in defining the nature of the work of an ordained

21. Ibid.
22. For further details see Shepperson and Price, Independent African, pp. 209-17.
African minister, commented, 'He is an assistant to me, working under my supervision. He has no congregation of his own. He lives on the station with me and takes his work according to my guiding'. Fraser likewise commented, 'Our native pastors are not equal with the European ministers'.

In fairness to the Livingstonia missionaries it has to be remembered that they were reacting to a particular criticism, and had that criticism been, (as it would more likely be to-day), that African Christians were given far too little responsibility, their evidence would doubtless have been very different. Nevertheless Hetherwick's evidence to the commission makes it clear that defence was not the only response in such circumstances, and that it was possible to explain the Scottish missionary point of view positively, without making excuses for it in the light of European criticisms.

The nearest Livingstonia approach to Hetherwick's aggression was the firmness of Laws' written statement to the commission, in which he outlined his views on the gradual devolution of authority to African Christians, though he admitted that this process might take several generations to complete. Nevertheless, both his statement, and his actions in the Legislative Council both before and after the commission, make it clear that he was not going to be brow-beaten by European pressure.

The evidence of both Elmslie and Fraser, given in the face of what was sometimes very hostile questioning, (particularly of Elmslie), was

23. Evidence of Rev. Dr. W. A. Elmslie to Nyasaland Native Rising Commission of Enquiry, p.502, C.O.525/66, P.R.O.
24. Evidence of Rev. Donald Fraser to Nyasaland Native Rising Commission of Enquiry, p.545, C.O.525/66, P.R.O.
on the whole, fairly defensive. Faced with this hostile questioning and the implied disloyalty of the Ngoni, Elmslie went to some lengths to point out the loyalty of the northern Ngoni during the Arab war of 1887, the Chibisa affair of 1896, and the Mpezeni trouble of 1899, as well as pointing out that there was absolutely no sign of unrest in uNgoni during the Chilembwe Rising. He emphasized the importance of European supervision in the work of the mission, pointing out that he had cycled 1,100 miles between March and July to supervise schools. In addition, he remarked, there were nine certificated schoolmasters in the Kwenendi district who also acted as school inspectors - each being responsible for about ten schools.

Fraser during his evidence also laid considerable stress on the need for European supervision, and cited examples from South and West Africa where, in his view, lack of European supervision had led to a decline in standards of efficiency. This in its turn had led to renewed European intervention, African resentment, and the growth of independent churches. McCracken rightly contrasts Fraser's views in this respect with those of Laws, whom, as he points out was convinced 'That religious secession more commonly resulted from a denial of African authority than it did from granting that authority too soon'. Yet if Fraser's views on the origins of independency were mistaken, his attitude to the need for European supervision must be seen in the context of his use of African inspectors as part of the system.

Fraser recognised that even with a large amount of European itineration - in his own case about 200 days per year - each of the 180

27. Ibid., p. 498.
29. McCracken, Politics, p. 245.
schools in Loudon district could be visited only once, or at most twice per year. He accepted that 'that is a very small part of our supervision'. For the rest he relied, as Elmslie did at Ekwendeni, on African school inspectors, each with ten to fifteen schools under his control, who reported to him periodically at Loudon. Thus while Fraser undoubtedly believed strongly in the need for European supervision, it was often an indirect supervision, and in practice it was the African school inspector, as much as the itinerating missionary, who was responsible for the maintenance of standards throughout the Loudon congregation.

It was in his comments on government policy in Ulgoni and elsewhere in Malawi that Fraser was most forceful. Speaking of the need to 'conserve native loyalty', he went on to suggest changes in government policy which would bring this about. These included a more substantial grant for education, the appointment of a veterinary surgeon to Nombera's district, the provision of more wells for drinking water, and the encouragement of cotton-growing in the area. He went on to criticize the system of labour certificates whereby an African who had worked for a European for one month paid only half the normal rate of hut tax. Fraser suggested that African employers of labour, such as mission teachers and clerks who employed people to build their houses or hoe their gardens should be able to sign labour certificates. The existing system, he claimed, 'is not a sign that a man has done an honest month's work, but that he has done an honest month's work for a European'.

In reply to the standard question asked to most missionary

30. Fraser's Evidence, p.544.
32. Ibid., p.548.
witnesses about whether they knew of any 'native grievances', Fraser
detailed several grievances with which he was familiar. (This was in
sharp contrast to Elmslie who merely replied, 'I suppose they have but
I don't think I should state them').

Fraser complained particularly about police methods of exacting
taxation, whereby they sometimes captured local girls and held them as
hostages until their village had paid its tax. Though this method was
not laid down in the ordinance, Fraser indicated that it had official
approval. He also claimed there was a lot of dissatisfaction with
judgements given in court, and blamed this on the fact that Residents
were often transferred frequently from one district to another, before
they had got to know the people, customs and laws. He approved of the
system adopted in uNgoni where the Resident sat with two local assessors.
Finally, though Fraser approved of the principle of village concentration
as laid down in the District Administration (Native) Ordinance of 1912,
he objected to the attempt to force people into large villages. He
believed that such attempts frequently led to quarrels within the
village and that what the government should be encouraging was 'a
concentration more of areas than of villages'.

While fairly firm in his outlining of what he understood as 'native
grievances' Fraser's evidence contained little to substantiate the
opinion of at least one government official, (based on Fraser's relations
with the government a decade earlier), that he 'must be a regular fire¬
brand'. Indeed his attitude to the colonial government, (especially
in relation to the war effort), was perhaps more favourable than it had

33. Elmslie's Evidence, p.507.
34. Fraser's Evidence, p.550.
35. Agnes Fraser, Donald Fraser, p.106.
ever been, and since his attitude on this matter was to be vital in his relations with the Ngoni over the next few years, it is necessary to examine briefly his general attitudes towards the war.

Fraser's Attitudes towards the War

It is not without significance that Fraser, having been invalided home to Scotland for an operation for appendicitis early in 1914, was in Britain at the outbreak of war and for the few months which followed it, arriving back in Malawi in June 1915. This short but significant period in Britain may well have intensified Fraser's general feelings of patriotism which are well attested both before and after 1914.

In 1906, for example, while addressing a Student Volunteer conference at Nashville, Tennessee, Fraser had commented,

It is the fashion to cry out against the scramble for Africa. I do not know what motives may have prompted each nation; but I do know that without such a partition as has now taken place, the evangelization of inner Africa would have been impossible. I am a loyal Briton, and I am proud of the high imperial destiny of our nation, for I see that the result of its occupation of Central Africa was the healing of Africa's open sore.

At Loudon, by the end of the war, he had covered the pulpit in the church with a Union Jack.

Though he regretted the outbreak of the First World War in terms of the breaking of fellowship with the German missionaries of Tanzania, Fraser believed that 'there will not be any difficulty in letting the native see that we have taken the Christian part in this conflict'.

36. Daly to Turner, 17 April 1914, Ms.7668, N.L.S., and Nyasaland Native Rising Commission of Enquiry, p.200, 18 June 1915, C.0.525/66, P.R.O.
While this opinion, and another which accompanied it, ("the prestige of Christianity, and its national testimony will not suffer much new hurt"), 39 may both be regarded as wide of the mark, they are indicative of Fraser's general support for the war effort.

In terms of the direct impact of the war on the Ngoni, Fraser believed that they should play their part and encouraged them to enlist. 40 In so doing he seriously miscalculated the strength of Ngoni feeling against the war. The attitudes of both Fraser and the Ngoni towards the war can best be seen in the Chimtunga affair, which came to a head in October 1915.

The Chimtunga Affair

Late in 1915 paramount chief Chimtunga was arrested, deposed, and detained at Chirongo by the colonial authorities for refusing to recruit carriers or supply food to help in the war effort. He was kept there until 1920, when he was allowed to return to uNgoni, but only, (in the eyes of the British), as a village headman. 41 While the events connected with the deposition appear to be fairly straightforward, they can only be fully understood when looked at against the background of government relations with the Ngoni between 1904 and 1915, and in the light of government nervousness about the loyalty of Malawians in general, as a result of the First World War and the Chilembwe Rising.

Following the agreement between Sharpe and Chimtunga in September 1904, which brought uNgoni under British rule, relations between the

39. Fraser, Livingstonia, postscript. A single page postscript, written in December 1914 when the book was already at press, described Fraser's reaction to the outbreak of war.
41. Governor to Secretary of State for Colonies, 17 January 1916, C.0.525/66, and 19 April 1920, C.0.525/89, P.R.O.
British and the Ngoni, (after an initial period of uncertainty and suspicion), appear, on the whole, to have been fairly good. At any rate Alfred Sharpe himself seemed pleased with the way things were going. In 1906, after a visit to uNgoni, which included Loudon and Maimba, he reported that:

the whole of Mombera’s District is now peaceful and contented .... The expense of the administration of the Mombera District is small: a great deal of the petty Magisterial work is taken off Mr. MacDonald’s hands by the Chiefs. He informs me that they have assisted him greatly and that they are as a rule trustworthy and reliable and undoubtedly thoroughly loyal.42

Following a further visit in September or October 1909, just a few months before he left Malawi, Sharpe again wrote in terms which made clear his pleasure at the situation in uNgoni:

The present state of the district is entirely satisfactory .... The places of the old chiefs have been taken by their successors all of whom are superior men and more capable of dealing with political and administrative questions under the direction of the Resident than any Chiefs we possess in other districts of Nyasaland.43

Soon after Sharpe’s departure from Malawi in 1910, however, relations with the Ngoni appear to have deteriorated rapidly, and it would seem that the colonial authorities were following a deliberate policy of divide et impera. By 1913 Acting Governor F. B. Pearce, (who had presided over the trial of Ziehl at Ekwendeni in 1899),44 was suggesting to the Colonial Office the sub-division of Mombera’s District into two distinct sections. Though one of the reasons given was the size of the district, (which covered 4,193 square miles), the North

42. Ibid., Sharpe to Secretary of State for Colonies, 22 June 1906, C.0.525/15.
43. Ibid., 30 October 1909, C.0.525/29.
44. See above, Chapter 3, 'The Ziehl Case'. 
Nyasa District which adjoined it was, in fact, slightly bigger. More significant was Pearce's admission that:

In most other Districts the presence of several different tribes tends to maintain the racial balance, and thus facilitate the task of administration, whereas in the Momba District there are no such counteracting influences and consequently the Angoni (as the Zulu tribe in question is called) occupies a position of solidarity and local predominance which obtains in no other part of the Protectorate. In short, it was the unity of the Ngoni which troubled the colonial authorities.

Although the plan to sub-divide the district was approved in principle, it was never implemented, due to financial restrictions at the Colonial Office, and the outbreak of the First World War. Nevertheless, there already existed, even before the Chintununga Affair of 1915, a desire on the part of the administration deliberately to reduce the powers of the Ngoni Chief's agreed in 1904. In October 1915, Chintununga's refusal to supply carriers or food gave to the colonial authorities the chance for which they had been waiting.

Though a subsequent government enquiry established that the trouble was caused solely by the attempt to requisition labour and foodstuffs, and Fraser estimated that 'there was no disloyalty in the tribe, only a reluctance to make any sacrifice', the initial government reaction was to try to link the affair with a possible rising of Malawi Muslims fomented by the Germans. (A letter from Count Falkenhain, commander of the German forces in southern Tanzania, to Mwalimu Isa, encouraging him in 'the holy war' against the British, did make brief mention of

45. Acting-Governor Pearce to Secretary of State for Colonies, 22 May 1913, C.O.525/49, F.R.O.
46. Ibid.
the Ngoni, but the reference is more likely, in the context, to have been to the southern Ngoni). 48

At any rate the Chimtunga affair was deliberately used by the government to dismantle the special position agreed with the Ngoni in 1904, and which the missionaries, including Fraser, had helped to obtain. The office of paramount chief was abolished, Chimtunga was detained at Chiromo, the subsidies paid to the other Ngoni chiefs were withdrawn, and the District Administration (Native) Ordinance of 1912 was applied to the district. 49 It is perhaps not without significance that Shepperson and Price suggest that it was the introduction of this ordinance which may have led the Ncheu Ngoni to join Chilomba in 1915. 50

Following the detention of Chimtunga, the Chief Secretary, H. L. Duff, visited uNgoni and carried out an investigation into the affair. His report, together with a letter which he drew up on behalf of the Governor to the Ngoni chiefs, indicates a remarkable lack of sensitivity towards the Ngoni position, and it was perhaps due mainly to the mediating advice of H. C. Macdonald that more Ngoni chiefs were not removed. Duff, for example, described Mzukuzuku’s explanation that he refused to allow requisitions because he could not disobey Chimtunga as ‘a piece of impertinence in so far that it assigns more importance to Chimtunga’s orders than to those of the Government’. 51 It was left to Macdonald to point out that ‘the custom of the Angoni attaches peculiar weight to the position of the supreme tribal chief so that the lesser

49. ‘Message to Angoni Chiefs’ signed by Chief Secretary H. L. Duff on behalf of the Governor, enclosed with Governor to Secretary of State for Colonies, 17 January 1916, C.O.525/66, P.R.O.
chiefs consider they must not act in opposition to him. Duff’s letter to the Ngoni chiefs is likewise couched in terms aimed at chastising what he regarded as the ungrateful Ngoni for their lack of appreciation of the benefits of British rule. His opinion that the 1904 agreement was a special and temporary concession, aimed at bringing the Ngoni gradually under British rule, seems to be an attempt to justify the reduction of Ngoni powers in 1916, rather than an accurate assessment of Sharpe’s intentions twelve years earlier.

Nowhere in any of the official reports to the Colonial Office at this time is even the slightest mention made of missionary involvement in the affair, although, (and perhaps even because), as Shepperson and Price point out, such involvement 'probably prevented disturbances in the area'. On this occasion the wheel had swung full circle, and it was once again the myth of 'the wild Ngoni' which was being encouraged.

In spite of this omission, Fraser’s involvement in the affair was considerable, and had a profound effect, at least in the short term, on Ngoni attitudes towards the Livingstonia Mission in general, and Fraser himself in particular.

Fraser first became involved when he received a letter from H. C. Macdonald, informing him that following Chimtunga’s refusal to supply carriers and foodstuffs, a force of soldiers and a maxim gun were on their way to uNgoni from Karonga. Shortly afterwards Daniel Nhlane and Andrew Kalemba arrived with the news that the chief had fled and was on his way to see Fraser. When he arrived Fraser advised him to give himself up voluntarily at Mzimba. He eventually agreed to do so,

52. Ibid.
53. Chief Secretary to the Resident, Mzimba, 6 January 1916, C.O.525/66, P.R.O.
and the next morning Fraser rode ahead on his motor-cycle to the Boma to inform Macdonald that Chimtunga was on his way. 55

In addition Fraser became involved in several other ways. First, he called in the neighbouring chiefs and headmen, and preached a sermon to them, and to the crowds who had gathered for one of his regular conventions, on the need for everyone to help in the war effort. 'The men were urged to volunteer as workers, the women to go home and grind meal and sent it to the Boma'. 56 Secondly he passed on a government message that the troops on their way from Karonga would be billeted on each of the chiefs in succession until the full quota of men and food demanded had been supplied. Thirdly he closed down all the schools and urged the teachers to volunteer for service.

There is evidence that these actions made Fraser highly unpopular in certain areas of ulNgoni — notably Klangeni in chief Nabalabo's area. Rev. Y. E. Nyirenda in a recent paper on the topic claims that 'Whenever he went there after the event he was ignored by his followers and disliked by the local people. The gifts they used to welcome him with of eggs, groundnuts and beans as well as chickens were withheld. When drums beat on Sundays for services, many did not turn up'. 57

There may have been a further reason for this unpopularity. Chief Secretary Duff insisted to H. C. Macdonald that his 'Message to Angoni Chiefs' should be translated into chiNgoni, as closely to the original as possible. He added, 'in order to ensure this, it will probably be

56. Ibid.
Daniel Mtusu Nhlanie
well for you, in preparing the translation, to invite the collaboration of some missionary who is well acquainted with Chingoni'.\(^{58}\) If Macdonald followed this advice it would certainly have been to Fraser that he turned for help, and, given the highly derogatory tone of the letter from the Ngoni point of view, any involvement by Fraser in its presentation would undoubtedly have been highly unpopular.

One aftermath of the whole Chimtunga affair was the deep and lasting resentment on the part of the Ngoni of the whole ntengatenga system. Margaret Read discovered that the feeling was still strong in the late 1930s when 'The older men kept on referring to the promises made at recruitment which were not fulfilled—promises allegedly referring to development in the Dead North and to the prospects of earning better wages'.\(^ {59}\) Though Fraser had encouraged recruitment, it is clear that by the end of the war he had, at least, come to appreciate the tremendous suffering endured by many of the ntengatenga.\(^ {60}\) Such an appreciation was doubtless encouraged by his colleague Daniel Nhlane who, as Fraser realised, 'was wild with indignation at the sufferings of his own tribesmen who had gone to the front as carriers'.\(^ {61}\)

The general bulk of evidence tends to suggest that Fraser's unpopularity was limited and temporary. Nevertheless it would be true to say that on no other occasion did Fraser come closer to identification with the colonial authorities than during the First World War, and on no other occasion was he, apparently, more unpopular with the Ngoni.

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58. Chief Secretary to the Resident, Mzimba, 6 January 1916, C.O.525/66, P.R.O.
60. U.F.C.S.M.R., April 1919, p.75.
61. Fraser, Autobiography, p.207.
Developments within the Church

It was against this background of uncertainty and resentment that the work of the church was carried on during these years. That it was hampered by the war – particularly on the educational front – goes without saying. Livingstonia's very predominance in this field up to 1914 meant that her teachers bore what was perhaps an unfair part of the burden of work as interpreters and clerks. In 1914 the Livingstonia Mission as a whole was operating a network of 907 schools and employing a total of 1,674 teachers; by 1920 the respective numbers had dropped to 682 and 1,222 – roughly equal to what they had been in 1909. The pattern at Loudon was very similar, and there, as elsewhere in the mission, the period saw a sharp drop in the total number of pupils attending school.

The effect of the war on the growth of church membership is more difficult to assess, and the pattern is not so uniform throughout the mission. Excluding the Tanzanian field taken over from the Moravians in 1917, the actual Christian community of the Livingstonia Mission as a whole slightly decreased during the war period, whereas the total

62. In 1905, Livingstonia operated more than half of all the schools in Malawi, (512 out of 834), according to figures in James Johnston, Dr. Laws of Livingstonia, London, n.d., p.143. By 1910 the percentage had dropped, but was still 39% (446/1,116); quoted in McCracken, Politics, p.221. From then onwards some other missions began to increase their educational establishments at a very fast rate, e.g. between 1910 and 1915 the Dutch Reformed Church Mission increased its number of schools by 150%, the White Fathers by 154% the Marist Fathers by 390%. (Governor to Secretary of State for Colonies, 27 November 1916, C.O.525/69, P.R.C.). Nevertheless, Livingstonia was still by 1915 the second biggest educational establishment in Malawi after the D.R.C.

63. These included some small unapproved schools, not included in government figures. U.F.C.S. Foreign Mission Report for 1914, statistics after p.106, and for 1920, statistics after p.56.

64. The term 'Christian community' as used by the Livingstonia Mission included all Hearers, Catechumens and baptised Church members, as well as baptised children. It was, however, sometimes used in a slightly wider sense.
number of full church members (communicants) continued to rise, though at a slightly slower rate than before the war. It may be argued that the overall fall in the Christian community is most clearly linked with the decrease in the number of schools, (and, even more significantly, in the number of scholars), since it was largely from the schools that the Christian community was gleaned. In addition, the large number of Malawians on war service undoubtedly contained a sizeable percentage of Livingstonia adherents, thus further reducing the figures. What is certainly true is that the growth of the church was much slower than it would have been, but for the disruption caused by the war.

For uigoni there is a significant difference in the patterns of growth between Loudon and Ekwendeni during the period, as can be seen from the accompanying charts.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Livingstonia Mission - Full Church Members (Communicants)</th>
<th>1909</th>
<th>1914</th>
<th>1920</th>
<th>Annual % Change</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>1909-14</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Loudon</td>
<td>1919</td>
<td>2299</td>
<td>3149</td>
<td>+4.0%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ekwendeni</td>
<td>1147</td>
<td>1729</td>
<td>1794</td>
<td>+10.1%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bandawe</td>
<td>2134</td>
<td>2603</td>
<td>2500</td>
<td>+4.4%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Khondowe</td>
<td>514</td>
<td>914</td>
<td>1207</td>
<td>+15.6%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>MISSION TOTAL</td>
<td>6225</td>
<td>9513</td>
<td>11197*</td>
<td>+10.6%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Excluding Rutenganio, Tanzania

65. The terms 'communicants' and 'full church members' were synonymous. They referred to adult baptised Christians in good standing, who were therefore entitled to partake of the Sacrament of the Lord's Supper (Communion).

66. The accompanying charts are based on Livingstonia Annual Report for 1902, p.54, and U.F.C.S. Foreign Mission Reports for 1914 and 1920, statistics after pp.106 and 56 respectively. Figures have been worked out to the nearest decimal point.
Livingstonia Mission - Christian Community (Adherents)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>1909</th>
<th>1914</th>
<th>1920</th>
<th>Annual % Change</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>1909-14</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Loudon</td>
<td>8400</td>
<td>8863</td>
<td>10139</td>
<td>+1.1%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ekwendeni</td>
<td>3402</td>
<td>6614</td>
<td>8000</td>
<td>+18.9%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bandawe</td>
<td>5409</td>
<td>7036</td>
<td>7600</td>
<td>+6.0%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Khondowe</td>
<td>2000</td>
<td>3800</td>
<td>2700</td>
<td>+18.0%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>MISSION TOTAL</td>
<td>22183</td>
<td>38350</td>
<td>36213</td>
<td>+14.6%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Excluding Rutenganio, Tanzania

The period between 1909 and 1914 had seen a rate of church growth at Loudon much slower than either that at Ekwendeni, or in the mission as a whole. The most likely reason for this was simply a natural tailing-off after the years of very rapid expansion in the years following the establishment of Loudon. Conversely, the period up to 1909 had seen relatively slow growth rate at Ekwendeni due partly to the deliberate policies of Elsmie, and the expansion between then and 1914 was probably due largely, (particularly in terms of the Christian community), to a rapid increase in the number of pupils attending school. 67

For the period of the First World War and its immediate aftermath an interesting reversal of the immediate pre-war trend took place. While church membership at Ekwendeni increased at an annual rate of only 0.6% (and at Bandawe actually declined), at Loudon the annual percentage increase was, at over 6%, actually higher than during the years immediately preceding the war.

Furthermore while at both Ekwendeni and Bandawe in the years between 1909 and 1920, the rate of the expansion of the Christian

67. See chart on p.247.
community had been consistently faster than that of communicant membership, at Loudon the relationship was reversed with church members increasing at a faster rate than the general Christian community.

One reason for this would appear to be that the initial rapid expansion of Christianity in the Loudon area, together with the establishment of a large number of bush schools - 150 by 1909 - had created a vast pool of potential Christianity from which to sustain church growth even during the war. Another factor was undoubtedly the significantly higher number of children consistently baptised at Loudon as compared with Ekwendeni. 68

In addition, many of the policies outlined in Chapter 4 created at Loudon a church more genuinely based at village level, which was better able to withstand the pressures created by the war. Finally, the inauguration by Fraser in 1915 of a new category of church workers - the catechists (bafumbirini) - made better use of available manpower in the pastoral supervision of catechumens and church members.

Beginning around 1915 Fraser set aside thirty of his most reliable teachers to specialise in training and examining catechumens. The need for such a group in Fraser's view was twofold. First it was necessary to give the catechumens the best instruction possible; secondly, the teachers who often carried out the work of instructing catechumens were already overburdened by a host of other responsibilities including their normal teaching duties, daily services, Sunday schools and Sunday services. 69

Each catechist was given a district involving four or five schools.

68. Between 1905 and 1909, for example, 1382 children were baptised at Loudon, as against 612 at Ekwendeni.
69. Donald Fraser's 'Report on Catechists' cod. but c.1915, Box 1, Livingstonia Papers, N.A.M.
During the school term he acted as a school inspector as well as a catechist; in the holidays he concentrated entirely on his catechetical work - itinerating around his district, giving an average of four lessons a month at each village, getting to know his own catechumens in their own homes. After preparation for baptism each catechist examined his own catechumens before passing them on to the local minister or missionary for final approval. In line with his general views on European supervision, Fraser instructed small groups of catechists at Loudon for two or three days every six weeks, but then allowed them a fair degree of freedom in their own districts. In addition to their work with catechumens, they were specifically expected to become involved in the pastoral care of church members - especially those who had been disciplined.\(^70\)

In spite of its apparent advantages in terms of more detailed pastoral care at village level Fraser’s scheme met with objections from some of his missionary colleagues. Partly this was no doubt due to the fact that he seems to have introduced the scheme without reference to Mission Council, but their main objection appears to have been financial. Teachers were normally paid only while schools were in session, i.e., for seven or eight months of each year. During the remaining months they received no income from the church. Fraser employed and paid the catechists for the entire year and some of his colleagues complained that the extra money would have to come from Scotland.\(^71\) A compromise was arrived at in 1916 when Mission Council agreed that Fraser could employ in the school holidays only such catechists as could be paid for locally.\(^72\)

\(^{70}\) Ibid.
\(^{71}\) Ibid.
\(^{72}\) Livingstonia Mission Council Minutes, No. 14, October 1916, N.A.M.
Though it appears trifling, the dispute involved an important matter of policy—the whole question of self-support in the local church. Laws believed strongly that 'Self-support is alike the stimulus and the safe-drag on self-government and is to my mind essential for a healthy Church. The salaries of evangelists and ministers should be found by and the amount settled by the native Christians themselves!  

Fraser, on the other hand, regarded self-support as a goal at which to aim, rather than as a hurdle to be cleared. 'I accept as a first principle', he wrote, 'that the church must learn to support her own agents, but I do not admit the principle that until she does she can have no agents specializing for her.' Elmslie eventually came to agree with Fraser, writing to Laws in 1921, 'I very much doubt whether we do right in demanding self-support before a congregation can call a minister'.

For Fraser, however, the main importance of the scheme was not financial, but pastoral, and he claimed in 1917 that it had led to a large number of restorations of suspended members and catechumens, and more than seven hundred conversions to Christianity, as well as a fifty per cent increase in financial giving.

In 1917 Mission Council once again allowed Fraser's scheme to continue, and it was still in operation in 1919, though it may have died out soon afterwards. Nevertheless, it would appear to have been a significant factor in the maintenance of church growth in the Loudon area during the First World War.

73. Laws to R. W. Iyall Grant, 2 July 1915, Box 1, Livingstonia Papers, N.A.M. Also in Nyasaland Native Rising Commission of Enquiry, 'Written statement by Dr. Laws', pp. 440-43, C.O. 525/66 P.R.O.

74. 'Report on Catechists', Box 1, Livingstonia Papers, N.A.M.

75. Elmslie to Laws, 27 January 1921, Box 9, Livingstonia Papers, N.A.M.

One reason for the importance of the *bafumbiriri* was the extreme shortage of ordained African ministers during the war, together with the suspension of the theological course at Khandowe. In addition, the African ministers and licentiates produced in uNgoni were only of limited value there, first because they were usually employed at mission stations as assistants to Europeans, and secondly because most of them were soon transferred to work outside the area.

After their ordination in May 1914, Hezekiah Tweya and Jonathan Chirwa were assigned initially to Ekwendeni and Loudon respectively. At the same time two more Ngoni Christians, Andrew Mkochi and Daniel Mhlane had finished their theological course and were put on probation for one year before being licensed in August 1915.\(^77\) In October 1916 Chirwa and Mkochi were appointed to Mwenzo and Chinsali respectively. Fraser was obviously reluctant to let them go, and explained that in doing so 'Loudon congregation was offering its best'.\(^78\) 1917 not only saw the death of Daniel Mhlane, but the temporary transfer of Hezekiah Tweya from Ekwendeni to Karonga - left without an ordained minister by the departure of D. R. Mackenzie on war service. By the end of 1917, of the four Ngoni ministers and licentiates only Andrew Mkochi was working in uNgoni - having returned from Chinsali to be ordained at Loudon in November 1917.\(^79\)

It was not until July 1919 that Loudon was given permission to call an African minister of its own\(^80\) - the first congregation in uNgoni to do so. From then onwards the Ngoni clergy were to play a vital and

\(^{77}\) Livingstonia Presbytery Minutes, 15 May 1914, and 27 August 1915, Livingstonia Papers, N.A.M.

\(^{78}\) Ibid., 21 October 1916.

\(^{79}\) Ibid., 4 and 5 November 1917.

\(^{80}\) Ibid., 23 July 1919.
distinctive role in the development of the church in uNgoni, but in the period of war it was arguably the more humble Ngoni Christians, at village level, whose contribution was more vital to the survival of the church.

The Influenza Epidemic and its Consequences

The end of the war coincided with the outbreak of the worldwide influenza epidemic in which twenty million people are said to have died in a few months. While the actual rate of mortality among Africans in Malawi was comparatively low - 11.7% of those admitted to government hospitals - its effect on the life of the church was serious.

The epidemic moved north from South Africa around September 1918, reaching Salisbury in the middle of October, Beira a few days later, Port Herald (Nsanje) on 5 November, and Blantyre on 9 November. By January 1919 it had reached uNgoni, and was complicated by an outbreak of dysentery brought back by carriers returning from the war.

Both at Skwendeni, and at Loudon, mission teachers were deeply involved in attempts to prevent the spread of the disease through the supply of basic medicines, and instruction in simple hygiene. In spite of these precautions more than two thousand Ngoni are said to have died during the epidemic.

Coming as it did at the end of a period of social disruption and

81. See below, Chapter 6.
83. Ibid.
84. Ibid.
86. Ibid., and Donald Fraser, African Idylls, London, 1923, p.103.
political discontent, the effects of the epidemic on uNgoni were more serious than might otherwise have been the case. One result was a marked increase in the fear of witchcraft, and the use of traditional medicines. In Fraser's view the disruption caused by the war and the influenza epidemic which followed it were a common cause of the resurgency of witchcraft. He wrote, 'When war passed through Ngoniland, leaving our people puzzled and maimed, influenza followed close in its tracks cutting large swathes with its deadly sythe, and upsetting the mental balance of many'. 89 The resultant turning of many to traditional methods of healing was a natural response to a series of misfortunes to which Christianity appeared to have no easy answer. In some other parts of Africa one result of the epidemic was an impetus towards the formation of independent churches, as H. W. Turner notes of the Aladura movement in West Africa, and Bengt Sundklær of the Zulu in South Africa. 88

There appears to have been a rapid increase in the number of traditional doctors, and Fraser regarded most of them as 'charlatans who had an active time reaping a great harvest in fees'. 89 His assessment cannot have been completely wide of the mark, for in 1920 the Mombera Native Association was also calling for the suppression of immigrant witchfinders. 90 Fraser's decision to speak out against the doctors, and its effect on the Ngoni, may have been influenced by events a few months earlier, when the Ngoni asked him to pray for rain, after a period of prolonged drought. Fraser's willingness not only to

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90. Minutes of the Mombera Native Association, 1-2 September 1920, quoted in McCracken, Politics, p.268.
pray directly for rain, but, unlike Elmslie, to do so at the chief's kraal, and the rain which followed within a few hours, may have helped to re-establish his reputation among the Ngoni. At any rate he decided to speak out against what he saw as an increase in witchcraft.

The circumstances of what followed are of interest in that they once again show Fraser in close co-operation with the colonial authorities. In consultation with the Resident at Mzimba he preached a sermon on witchcraft, which included references to both the Levitical and the colonial law on the matter, and announced that the government had agreed that all sorcerers who renounced their practice before 8 May would be free from persecution. He then printed hundreds of leaflets summarising the Protectorate law and his own proposals that sorcerers should surrender their medicines to him. These were sent out to the teachers to be read in the villages. "Then", added Fraser, "we waited for two or three days lest our game of bluff would not be successful." By this he obviously meant that had the traditional doctors refused to come forward, there was very little the government or the church could have done about it. In the event, by 8 May one hundred and fifty-two doctors had come forward and surrendered their medicines. Fraser himself was aware that the effect would only be temporary. The episode, culminating in the collection of the surrendered medicines and accoutrements in the church at Loudon, and their burning outside it, may have distinguished inadequately between mfwiti and ng'anga, but it may at least be said that it was one of the few attempts by the Livingstonia Mission directly to confront the problems caused by the fear of witchcraft.

92. Ibid., October 1920, p.160
93. Ibid.
The Church after the War

By 1918, Elmslie, in appealing for help for Livingstonia from young ministers in Scotland, was complaining that 'much of the work is at a stand-still'. This was a situation which was true of most areas of the mission's work but particularly of its schoolwork. Malcolm Hoffatt, in writing to Laws at much the same time, explained that a combination of war service as porters, and the attraction of high wages both in Zaire and on the Copper Belt had meant that 'about 40% of our helpers have left our service [at Chitambo] during the past year and we are now very short-handed'. Laws himself confessed that 'As soon as Government school inspectors are inspectors for the grant, the weakness of our school work will be manifest ... because we have lost so many of our teachers on war service'. Even Fraser, reluctant to reduce his educational work, was forced to cut the number of schools in the Loudon district from 190 to 120 in 1920, and dismiss some of his teachers 'because of the difficulty of supervising them and the increased cost of salaries'.

In purely statistical terms the ecclesiastical work of the church in Ulgoni might be thought not to have suffered unduly from the war. The increase in church membership was small but steady, and the total Christian community in the area, in spite of the sharp fall in school attendances, showed an increase of almost 3% per annum during the period 1914-20, compared to an actual decrease averaging almost 1% per annum in the mission as a whole.

94. Ibid., May 1918, p. 82.
95. Hoffatt to Laws, 27 September 1919, Chitambo Correspondence, Box 7, Livingstonia Papers, N.A.M.
96. Laws to Ashcroft, 1 July 1920, Ms. 7885, N.L.S.
98. See charts on pp. 263 and 264.
At Loudon in particular, as already pointed out, the rate of increase in church membership was actually faster than it had been before the war, in spite of Fraser's temporary unpopularity in 1915. That this was so, was probably due mainly to the existence of church structures in the Loudon district which were better geared to the functioning of the local church at grass-roots level. These included sub-sessions, balalsakazi, and, after 1915, catechists.

Below these statistics, however, many important changes had taken place in Ngoni attitudes, which were to become increasingly obvious in the years after the war.

The first was the growth of a deep resentment towards the colonial government, and, to a lesser extent, towards the mission. This was based initially on the treatment of Chitunga, who, though he does not seem to have been a particularly efficient or popular paramount, was nevertheless the symbol of Ngoni power and status. It soon broadened to include the whole mtenatenga system, and the sufferings it caused. As shown, Fraser, and, no doubt, the other missionaries were not exempt from this resentment - though the extent and depth of it is hard to assess.

The creation of the Nombera Native Association in 1920 provided a vehicle for the formal expression of Ngoni discontent. Increasingly too, within the structures of the church, Ngoni and other local Christians were beginning to express their discontent with various aspects of mission policy.

The upsurge of a reliance on traditional medicine, which followed

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99. See above, p.264.
100. The late inkosana Mpho Jere, personal communication, 12 January 1979.
101. Both these topics will be dealt with in more detail in Chapter 6.
the influenza epidemic, may have been a temporary phenomenon – as it was traditionally at times of particular crisis. At the same time it is hard to avoid the conclusion that the war loosened rather than tightened the cultural ties between the Ngoni and Christianity, and prevented Christianity from becoming the force in uNgoni which it might otherwise have been.

Economically, the period after the war and the influenza epidemic seems to have seen an increase in migrant labour. Certainly Cullen Young reported from Loudon in 1920 that 'a very large number of the men of the Church have gone to South Africa for work'.

Though migrant labour from uNgoni had begun before the turn of the century, the greater mobility of male labour brought about by the war, and the lack of economic alternatives in the immediate post-war period probably encouraged it still further. By 1939 Margaret Read calculated that in a group of thirty-four villages in the south Mzimba area, (i.e. the district for which Loudon was responsible), 41% of the men were away on migrant labour, and of these more than one third were machona, (or permanent exiles). One effect of this on church life was further to increase the predominate position of women in the congregations – though, apart from Fraser's balalakazi, there had been, up to this point, very little scope for female leadership within the structures of the church.

Finally, although he was not aware of it at the time, by 1920 Fraser's direct contribution to the growth of the church in uNgoni had

102. Cullen Young to Ashcroft, 24 January 1921, Ms.7885, N.L.S.
103. See, for example, Swann to Sharpe, 7 August 1894, F.O.2/67, F.R.O., for one of the first references to northern Ngoni undertaking wage labour for the government outside uNgoni.
104. Women became eligible to be deacons in 1922 (Livingstonia Presbytery Minutes, 20 July 1922, Livingstonia Papers, N.A.M.). The question of women elders was raised in 1921, but not finally decided until 1936, (Livingstonia Presbytery Minutes 21 July 1921 and 13 and 14 August 1936).
almost come to an end. Around April 1920, ill-health forced him (for
the fourth time in his career) to return to Scotland. He was to
spend the next three years there, first of all directing the Scottish
Churches' Missionary Campaign of 1921-22, and then as Moderator of the
General Assembly of the United Free Church of Scotland in 1922-3. It
was not until August 1923 that he and his wife once again sailed for
Africa, and then he was to have less than two years at Loudon - and
that interrupted by a missionary campaign in South Africa - before
being called back to Scotland in 1925 to become secretary of the Foreign
Mission Committee.  

In 1920, however, that was still in the future, and the Ngoni
church, having survived the pressures of the war years, was about to
begin a period of increasingly active African leadership, which those
very pressures had helped to make possible.

105. Laws to Acting Chief Secretary, 26 March 1920, C.0.525/89, F.R.O.
107. Agnes Fraser, Fraser, pp.258-66 and 277-83.
CHAPTER SIX

THE NGONI CHURCH IN THE TWENTIES AND EARLY THIRTIES

One result of the First World War in Malawi was a raising of African expectations which the years which followed failed to satisfy. Margaret Read’s work among the Ngoni seems to indicate that this was the case in a socio-economic sense. ‘The older men’, she found in the late 1930s, ‘kept on referring to the promises made at recruitment which were not fulfilled - promises allegedly referring to development in the Dead North and to prospects of earning better wages’. ¹

Such disillusionment was also a feature of church politics during the twenties and early thirties. Though the number of African clergy remained limited - there were still only seventeen by 1930² - their growing influence and self-confidence created a situation in which they were more willing to make their discontent known. Since for the whole of this period the Ngoni provided more ministers than any other single tribal grouping - and indeed for the period 1925–30 made up more than half of the entire group of African ministers - their contribution to the disputes of the 1920s was considerable. In addition the Presbytery rule of 1907, allocating one representative elder to Presbytery for each 300 communicant members of a congregation, ensured a large Ngoni representation there.³

Of the various ways in which African Christians manifested their discontent in the 1920s, the most immediate was in the proceedings of

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². Livingstonia Presbytery Minutes, various references 1914–30, Livingstonia Papers, N.A.M.
³. Ibid., 4 November 1907.
the Presbytery. In 1915 Fraser had claimed that disagreements on Presbytery were never racial; by 1921 Yesaya Chibambo was claiming that they almost always were. Though both statements are undoubtedly exaggerated, it nevertheless remains true that there was a distinct shift in African attitudes, (or at least in a willingness to express those attitudes), in the period after the First World War.

A second and more extreme manifestation of African discontent with the mission, was the secession of various Livingstonia Christians during the period to form independent churches. The great period of secession took place in the late twenties and early thirties, and though many of them were led by suspended Livingstonia Christians, it would be a mistake to assume that their suspension was anything more than an immediate trigger to action. Some deeper and more serious causes need to be found.

Finally, though it was not a specifically religious reaction to discontent, the formation of the Mombera Native Association in 1920, involving as it did many of the leading Ngoni adherents of the Livingstonia Mission, cannot be totally divorced from the growth and philosophy of the Ngoni church during this period.

**Yesaya Chibambo's Letter of Protest**

Within the church, and particularly in the early 1920s, it might justifiably be said of Livingstonia Christians in particular, as Richard Gray has remarked of Nyasaland Africans in general, that "they did not challenge European leadership, but they criticized, in a respectful manner, certain of its policies." One outstanding example

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4. Fraser's Evidence to the Chilembwe Commission, p.545, C.0.525/66, P.R.O., and Livingstonia Mission Council Minutes, July 1921, appendix to Minute 26, N.A.M.
of such criticism was a long letter addressed by Yesaya Chibambo to the Livingstonia Mission Council in July 1921.\(^6\)

Chibambo, at that time one of the leading schoolmasters in the employment of the Livingstonia Mission, had become in 1920, as McCracken points out, the first recipient of the Honours Diploma for Schoolmasters.\(^7\)

In 1915 he had been the only northern Ngoni to submit evidence to the Chilembwe Commission, and though his contribution in that instance was short and unexceptional, it was indicative of his leading position among educated Ngoni.\(^8\) He was one of the most respected Africans of the period, by both missionaries and his fellow Africans. In 1921 he had a distinguished career in front of him as Ngoni historian, ordained minister, adviser to Mtwalo and leading informant of Margaret Read during her field-work among the Ngoni in the 1930s. (He was also the father of McKinley Qabaniso Chibambo, one of the original members of the first Malawi cabinet in July 1964). When he died in 1944 he was described by one missionary as one who took a 'fearless stand for what is right and just'.\(^9\)

In his letter to the Mission Council in 1921, presented through Dr. Elmslie - in itself an example of some of the attitudes against which he was protesting - he outlined several grievances of African employees of the mission, which he presented in the form of a series of questions. In doing so he claimed that though he had acted alone in submitting the questions, they represented the thinking of many African

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9. Unsigned to J. W. C. Dougal, 19 September 1944, F.M.C. Correspondence Box 1, Livingstonia Papers, N.A.M.
Christians. He began by admitting that 'There is a great fear on the part of the native to write to the masters or officials, and such fear conceals much of his thought from the mind of the European'. He then went on to outline several areas of discontent. These may be summarised as the unsatisfactory terms of employment of African employees of the mission, the low social and professional status accorded to them in their service of the mission, and the lack of opportunity for any African employees of the mission to take any direct part in its main decision-making structures.

In particular Chibambo made several specific complaints. These included the fact that teachers were not paid for the whole year, but only for the months when schools were open, that they had no definite contracts of employment, that African employees of the mission were given no pensions, or travelling expenses, and that their families were not cared for in the event of their death.

Apart from the merely financial complaints, Chibambo also complained about what he saw as the lack of respect and responsibility afforded to African employees, and especially teachers. He pointed out that Africans were not allowed to report to Mission Council about their own work, that reports, by contrast, were sometimes given by missionaries who had no detailed knowledge of the work involved, that African teachers were provided with insufficient materials to carry out their work satisfactorily, and that they were not allowed to teach classes beyond Standard III. This group of what may be termed 'social and professional complaints' could be summed-up in Chibambo's remark that 'The native is not regarded as a co-worker with the missionary'.

11. Ibid., p.354.
Finally, Chibambo suggested that it was time to admit some of the leading African employees of the mission to the meetings of the Mission Council, adding: 'The missionary is in Africa for the uplift and improvement of the native. This improvement can better be carried out if the mind of the native and of the missionary are working and designing together'.

Though the reply of Mission Council was, on the surface, couched in respectful and sympathetic language, (perhaps indicating the esteem in which Chibambo was held), it conceded very little to his demands. In reply to his suggestion that some Africans should be admitted to Mission Council, it was pointed out that not even all European workers were members yet. On a purely factual basis, this was correct. It had been only during the previous year, for example, that the first woman member had taken her seat on Mission Council, and it was not for several years to come that all artisans were to be members. Yet insofar as Chibambo had asked only that 'some remarkable native servants of the Mission should be encouraged to attend Mission Council' and had here, and elsewhere in his letter, carefully avoided suggesting actual membership of the Council, the reply of Mission Council might well be regarded as irrelevant.

In retrospect the occasion may be regarded as a lost opportunity. In August 1923, in reply to a remit from the Kaffrarian Mission Council in South Africa on the same subject, the Livingstonia missionaries gave it as their opinion that 'in Livingstonia the native helpers have not yet reached a stage where they can profitably attend the meetings of

12. Ibid.
13. Ibid., p.355.
Council. Yet there is no doubt that the dichotomy between Mission Council and Presbytery was both artificial and productive of division and resentment. The failure to involve African Christians in the early twenties led to severe difficulties in the 1950s during attempts to set up Joint Councils as a step towards eventual indigenization of church structures, and the integration of Mission Council and Presbytery. While some of the African opposition to the moves may be traced to contemporary suspicion of anything that smacked of 'partnership', there is no doubt that it was largely due to the resentments built up by the continued separate existence of Mission Council and Presbytery in the decades after 1920.

Other Internal Sources of Discontent

Chibambo's letter in 1921 was only one of many examples where African discontent with the workings of the mission became vocal. Such expressions of discontent were not entirely unknown in the period before the First World War. In 1913 Karonga congregation had complained to Mission Council about the proposal to move D. R. Mackenzie, then at Karonga, to Bandawe, with the result that the decision had been reversed and Mackenzie had, temporarily at least, remained at Karonga.

In the period after the First World War, however, such expressions of discontent became much more widespread, though admittedly more often given expression in Presbytery than in Mission Council. Several of these

disputes, like Chibambo's references to the possibility of Africans on Mission Council, indicated the uneasiness of the relationship between Presbytery and Council--between African church and European mission.

In 1921 Elmslie had pointed out to Laws that the practice of holding Mission Council before Presbytery was causing discontent among members of the latter body, who believed that the missionaries met in advance to decide issues which were due to be raised in Presbytery. This was, in fact, the case, at least on occasion, since a minute of Mission Council in 1912 had agreed that in order to guard against hasty and ill-considered legislation in the Native Church, the Mission Council make arrangements whenever possible, to have important questions affecting the Rules and Constitution of the Native Church dealt with in conference by the Mission Council before they come up for settlement in Presbytery.17

There was also discontent that the African members of Presbytery had to sit and wait, sometimes for several days until Mission Council had been completed. (Similar causes of resentment remained even in the late 1940s and early 1950s, when, one African minister later commented, even with an African Kirk Session and moderator, you had to sit and wait until the Europeans arrived, before starting).18 As a result of Elmslie's comments in 1921, the practice of Mission Council meeting before Presbytery seems to have been reversed, though by 1952 the original system was once again in operation, with Presbytery fixing its meeting for that year 'at the place and in the week following the meeting of Mission Council'.19

17. Ibid., October 1912, Minute 49.
19. Livingstonia Presbytery Minutes, 24 August 1951, N.A.M.
Another similar cause of discontent, involving the relationship of European missionaries to the African church, occurred in 1926 when Loudon Kirk Session complained about the ordination as an elder of the missionary James Smith. Smith had been elected an elder by Loudon Session, but was then ordained by the Mission Council, meeting as an overseas Presbytery of the United Free Church of Scotland, without reference to Loudon Session, who were understandably annoyed. The Loudon Session suggested that in future members of Presbytery should be associated with Mission Council during the ordination in Malawi of any European missionary, and that all such ordinations should be carried out in public.

Mission Council were, at the time, considering the ordination as a minister of A. C. Halliday, and, no doubt largely as a result of Loudon's protest about Smith's ordination to the eldership, decided to consult the Presbytery on the matter before proceeding. Nevertheless, Mission Council made it clear that 'this reference to the native Presbytery is not meant to set up a precedent in dealing with such proposals'. Whether or not this isolated incident can be regarded, as McCracken suggests, as 'an important step' in that 'the council surrendered its exclusive control over the ordination of Scottish lay agents' is open to question. It is at least as likely that it was a spontaneous attempt to placate the anger of Loudon Session - as the reference to no precedent being set would appear to indicate. Nevertheless the fact that such a gesture was made indicates the growing power of African leadership in Presbytery.

20. Ibid., 17 July 1926.
21. Ibid.
22. Livingstonia Mission Council Minutes, July 1926, Minute 33, N.A.M.
23. McCracken, Politics, p.249.
The increasing influence of that leadership, as has been pointed out above, was due more to a growing self-confidence, than to any huge increase in the number of African clergy. Yet the slow rate of ministerial training and ordination was not to the liking of many African Christians. One reason for the continued slow growth of the number of African clergy during this period was the failure to maintain continuously a Theological course. In 1931 Presbytery petitioned the Mission Council to re-open the course, as a number of students who were half-way through their course were unable to complete it. Mission Council replied that it was sympathetic, but could do nothing until another ordained man was sent from Scotland. Nevertheless, although there was no immediate easing of the European staff situation, the course was re-started in December 1932, with the missionaries obviously aware of the growing shortage of African ministers - for the early 1930s actually saw a decrease in their already limited ranks. Between 1930 and 1933 Charles Chimula, Yafet Mnandawire and Yesaya Zerenji Mwasi all broke away from Livingstonia to form their own churches. In addition, Hezekiah Tweya died in 1930 and David Kaunda in 1933. Thus by 1933, the total number of African ministers was reduced from seventeen to twelve while the number of church members continued to increase steadily. In response to this crisis an unusually high number of theological students were accepted in the early thirties, and in 1935 eleven students completed their training - the largest number to do so at any one time (at least until well after the Second World War).

Another issue of dispute during the twenties, was the general level
of salaries paid to African employees. In 1922 senior employees petitioned Mission Council for an increase in salary. Though a meeting was arranged with them which ministers and licentiates were invited to attend as advisers, the problem remained a source of friction. Generally speaking, by this period, mission salaries were much lower than those paid for comparable work by commercial companies, or the government. Chiswakhata Mkandawire, who at this period was working in the general office at Khondowe, has estimated that a clerk-typist, who in the early twenties was earning eight shillings a month at Khondowe, would have been paid £1.50 in government service. When he tried to leave, however, Laws refused him permission, and in 1976 he was still there, having completed more than half a century in the same office, and graduated from junior office boy to Principal of the Overtown Institution.

Behind many of these sources of conflict lurked a deep African resentment at many of the social conventions of the period, which was not always obvious, especially to the missionaries of the time. It was nevertheless very real, and can be seen quite clearly in the autobiographical sketch of Paul Bwembya Mushindo, the Bemba evangelist and minister who worked for many years in the Livingstonia sphere in eastern Zambia. Though this is not an Ngoni source, it is worth quoting briefly as one of the very few written accounts by an African employee of the Livingstonia Mission, of his reaction to the social conventions of the inter-war period.

Mushindo’s experiences largely centred around his relationship

28. Livingstonia Mission Council Minutes, October 1922, Minute 12, N.A.M.
with Rev. R. D. McMinn, with whom he worked for many years at Lubwa, and though McMinn's racial attitudes were more extreme than those of some of his Livingstonia colleagues, they were not entirely untypical. Among the customs which Mushindo mentions were the fact that Africans approaching a European house had to stand some way off and wait until they were called, that some Europeans would not eat food with Africans, that in Lubwa church the Europeans had separate seats, and drank from the communion cup before Africans, and that he was forced to travel in the back of a lorry, although there was space in the front beside McMinn. Mushindo was also deeply hurt by the fact that McMinn had once ordered him not to wear shoes, and to the end of his life he continued barefoot.

Though it is true that the situation at Lubwa was abnormally oppressive, and that Mushindo himself admits both that some later missionaries there fought against it, and that he was treated better at other stations, e.g. Khondowe, his comments are nevertheless important in that they highlight an issue which undoubtedly affected African attitudes throughout the period.

Other African informants have similar, if less extreme tales to tell. Rev. David Sibande remarked of the 1920s that 'in those days even African ministers did not stay in European houses', and recalled that in 1924 Dr. James Kweggir Aggrey of Ghana, then a member of the Phelps-Stokes Committee on education, had been the first African to sleep in the house of a European at Khondowe. Aggrey's visit to Khondowe, in April 1924, is still remembered there by some people to-day,

31. Ibid., pp.23, 42 and 46.
33. Mushindo, Life, pp.23 and 43.
even to the extent of being able to recall the sermons he preached, and one respected African minister, (now deceased), recently recalled with great pride how, as a small boy in 1924, he had actually touched Dr. Aggrey. The tremendous impact which he made was based not simply on his ability or personality, but also, clearly, on the fact that he was an African who was treated as an equal by the white missionaries.

The Case of Jonathan Chirwa

In addition to such chronic cases of African discontent as those outlined above, there occasionally arose incidents where cultural disagreements caused tensions between African Christians and European missionaries, though in spite of Chibambo's statement to the contrary, the lines of division were seldom completely clear-cut. One such case was the campaign for the restoration of Jonathan Chirwa, after he had resigned from the Christian ministry, following a case of adultery in 1918.

Chirwa, following his ordination in 1914, had worked with Fraser at Loudon, before being sent to Mwenzo in 1916 to take charge of the station and fill the vacancy caused by the death of John Afwenge Banda. While there he committed adultery, and following a confession to Fraser, resigned his ministry and was suspended from church membership by the Presbytery which met in July 1918 at Khondowe. For the next six years the Ngoni church, closely supported by Fraser, who was deeply involved in the case, carried on a constant struggle to have Chirwa restored.

37. Livingstonia Presbytery Minutes, 22 July 1918, N.A.H. Fraser was clerk of Presbytery at this time and wrote the minute as follows: 'With great sorrow the Presbytery heard their beloved brother Jonathan Chirwa make confession of sin and resign his ministry'.
In July 1919 Presbytery received various petitions for the restoration of Chirwa to the Christian ministry, and Fraser and Andrew Mkochi reported on his conduct in the previous year. Presbytery decided by 23 votes to 9 that he should not be restored yet, but Mkochi and Fraser were given permission to appoint him to any work they saw fit.\(^\text{38}\)

That full restoration did not take place then, only twelve months after Chirwa's suspension, was hardly surprising, but when restoration was again refused the following year, it became obvious that some members of Presbytery, including several influential missionaries, were opposed to restoration in the foreseeable future. Presbytery recorded that 'The fear was expressed by many speakers lest the Presbytery seem ahead of Christian public opinion and by a premature restoration lower the estimate of the Christian ministry at the very outset of its history in the country.'\(^\text{39}\) Yet it seems clear that, in UNgoni at any rate, Christian public opinion favoured restoration, for an Ngoni elder of the period was quite clear that 'people wanted him to come back'.\(^\text{40}\)

The influence of the European missionaries on Presbytery was still very great. ('They tried to dominate', according to Chiswakhata Mkwandawi.\(^\text{41}\)) In the absence of Fraser, on his extended furlough from 1920-23, no other European missionary seemed willing, or able, actively to pursue the case for restoration. Those opposed to restoration adopted the tactic of delay. In 1921 the annual petition from the Loudon group of congregations was presented by Andrew Mkochi. The minutes merely record that as Jonathan Chirwa was not present no decision

\(^{38}\). Livingstonia Presbytery Minutes, 23 July 1919, N.A.M.
\(^{39}\). Ibid., 20 July 1920.
\(^{40}\). Rev. Mhale Mtonga, personal interview, 29 December 1971.
\(^{41}\). W. Chiswakhata Mkwandawi, personal interview, 21 January 1977.
By now the divisions on the missionary side were becoming more clear-cut. At the beginning of the year Fraser had written to Elmslie from Scotland protesting his dissatisfaction that Chirwa had not been restored and implying that such restoration would be in accordance with the mind of Christ. Elmslie however dismissed such a view, claiming that 'Paul's clear actions in an atmosphere such as we have point to caution'. He added,

"I think Jonathan has been pampered since his case came up, and his repentance has made him a hero in the attitude of many. I myself think he should not have been permitted to take any public duties. He was suspended from the ministry which is not merely dispensing the sacraments."

The latter references are to the fact that Chirwa, in accordance with the permission given to Fraser and Mkochi in 1919, had been gradually allowed to assume various ecclesiastical duties in the Loudon area, and was, by now, performing the duties of an evangelist.

Once again, in July 1922, Loudon petitioned Presbytery for Chirwa's restoration. This time a special committee was set up to enquire into the case, which reported back four days later that no final decision should be taken until the two European missionaries who had heard the original case (probably Laws and Fraser), returned from furlough. This effectively postponed the decision until the Presbytery of 1924, which met at Khondowe in September of that year.

By that time Fraser had returned from furlough, and became,

42. Livingstonia Presbytery Minutes, 25 July 1921, N.A.M.
43. Quoted in Elmslie to Laws, 28 January 1921, Livingstonia Papers, Box 9, N.A.M.
44. Ibid.
45. Ibid.
47. Livingstonia Presbytery Minutes, 20 and 24 July 1922, N.A.M.
once again, directly involved in the case. Earlier in the year he had taken Chirwa on ulendo with him, (helping to dispense communion in the outlying districts around Loudon), and had described him as 'my beloved native helper'.

It was clear that the time for a decision had arrived. When Presbytery met MacAlpine and Laws proposed that the case be referred to a joint Synod of Livingstonia and Blantyre, (who were just about to unite in one church). The Ngoni church was by now in no mood for further delays and two leading Ngoni Christians, Andrew Mkochi and Yobe Nhlane proposed 'that the case be proceeded with now'.

This proposal in itself was a clear indication of their determination, for seldom, if ever, up to that point, had African Christians so directly opposed the will of Laws. Their amendment was, however, carried, by 29 votes to 5.

Immediately after that Mkochi moved and Fraser seconded 'that Jonathan Chirwa be now restored'. Laws moved that he be not restored, and the meeting was adjourned for the night. When it reconvened the following morning Laws changed his amendment to 'that Jonathan Chirwa be not restored now', and was seconded by MacAlpine. When a vote was taken only 2 voted not to restore, and 36 to restore, and Jonathan Chirwa was immediately reinstated as a minister.

Four years later, in 1928, he was elected as Moderator of Presbytery, and is remembered as one of the finest of the early ministers. By the early 1930s he had become an éminence grise at Loudon, described by one young missionary of the period as 'a real father-in-God to me' and by

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49. Livingstonia Presbytery Minutes, 11 September 1924, N.A.M.
51. Rev. Dr. W. H. Watson, personal communication, 8 October 1974.
another as 'a very loving and loveable man'.

Behind the personalities of the 1924 Presbytery deeper issues were involved. According to one eye witness account African opinion was unanimously in favour of restoration, but Laws and MacAlpine refused, arguing 'it is not law in Scotland'. Their argument was that for the purpose of maintaining the high moral standards expected of the clergy, no minister guilty of a serious moral lapse should be restored. This was a view which Fraser had had to fight right since 1918, for when Chirwa had first resigned his ministry and been suspended from church membership, some had argued that he should be deposed with no hope of future reinstatement. At the time Fraser had argued strongly against that line, and now again in the Presbytery of 1924, in answer to the argument that it was not law in Scotland, he countered 'This is an African church. We cannot take the laws of home'.

In fairness to Laws and MacAlpine it should be said that they appear to have been genuinely concerned to uphold the reputation of the Christian ministry, but in view of public opinion throughout uNgoni, and Chirwa's subsequent career, their concern would appear to have been misplaced.

Transfer of Kasungu and Tamanda to the Dutch Reformed Church Mission

If the case of Jonathan Chirwa shows how the Ngoni church had been able eventually to achieve its own way, even against strong missionary opposition, the process by which Kasungu and Tamanda were transferred to the Dutch Reformed Church Mission at much the same time, reveals

54. Agnes Fraser, Fraser, p.232.
the extent to which the big decisions of mission policy were still firmly in the hands of the Mission Council.

Kasungu had been pioneered by four Tonga teachers, Joseph Kofeya, Naason Nyirenda, Esaau Macheu and Yoram Mkopeka Chirwa. They had travelled south with Dr. George Prentice in November 1897 to the area of Chief Mwase Kasungu. There Prentice had left them and returned to Bandawe. By the time that he returned to settle at Kasungu in 1900, seven schools had been opened. Progress was slow but steady up to about 1909, by which time there were still only 93 church members.

Between then and 1914 the growth in membership increased at 55% p.a., and even though it slowed down slightly during the war, at 32% p.a. it was still more rapid than in practically any other area of the Mission. By 1920 the number of church members had increased to 1,043, making Kasungu the fifth biggest station of the Livingstonia Mission, in terms of church members, after Loudon, Bandawe, Ekwendeni and Khondowe in that order.

Long before that, however, moves had been afoot to transfer Kasungu to the D.R.C. Indeed the first suggestion of a transfer had been made as early as 1899. By 1910 Prentice, among others, was again suggesting its transfer. The main reasons for this were financial and geographical. Kasungu had been pioneered at the time of Livingstonia's period of greatest geographical expansion, when, between 1894 and 1907 new stations had been opened at Khondowe, Mwenzo, Kasungu itself, Tamanda, Loudon, Lubwa and Chitambo, as well as the general evangelistic expansion into the Marambo. The death of Lord Overtoun, the mission's greatest single financial supporter, early in 1908, together with a

57. Ibid.
59. Daly to Prentice, 5 August 1910, Ms.7867, N.I.S.
general decline in mission finance at this period, led the Livingstonia Committee to order all missionaries to reduce their expenditure, and to begin to review their overall commitments. In addition, the Livingstonia Mission sphere, originally centred at Cape Maclear, had with the move to Khondowe in 1894 become firmly centred on what is now the northern region of Malawi. The gradual expansion of the D.R.C. Mission in the chichewa-speaking central region appeared to afford some support for the geographical logic of transferring Kasungu to that mission.

A decision to transfer Kasungu was actually taken in 1912, but in the following year Fraser, on leave in Scotland, received a gift of £5,000 from a Glasgow businessman, and this was enough to reprieve Kasungu for the next few years. At the same time, the first elders were elected at Kasungu, in June 1913, so that subsequently the station could be represented on Presbytery - though, as events were to show, with little result in terms of influencing the eventual ecclesiastical fate of their area.

By 1921 the Livingstonia Mission Council had agreed to vacate Kasungu, (and Tamanda), due to a shortage of European staff. Negotiations were prolonged with the D.R.C. Mission, while decisions such as how much they would pay Livingstonia for the existing buildings and equipment were taken.

Throughout this process, little or no account was taken of the

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60. Minutes of the Livingstonia Committee, 1891-1914, 19 March 1908, Minute 7, C.S.A.
61. Daly to Miss Ballantyne 4 April 1913 and Daly to Prentice, 26 May 1913, Ms.7667, N.L.S.
63. Livingstonia Mission Council Minutes, July 1921, Minute 15, N.A.M.
views of the local church at Kasungu. Riddell Henderson, for many years
the missionary in charge of nearby Tamanda, and at that time on furlough
in Scotland, wrote to the Livingstonia Committee complaining of this
lack of consultation:

We have two fully organised congregations with considerably
over a thousand members, and twice as many catechumens;
these are unanimously against the change. It is to be
regretted that in connection with the proposed transfer
no reference whatever has been made to the congregations
and nothing has been done to explain to them the necessity
for the transfer, or to lessen their opposition to it.\footnote{64}

At the same time, Prentice at Kasungu, (while he himself seemed
to be in favour of the transfer), was making it clear that opposition
to the move came from both local Christians and missionaries. Writing
to Laws in September 1923, he commented that 'the elders are up in arms
against it', and in a separate letter two weeks later, he referred to
the fact that 'the ladies here threaten to make a protest'.\footnote{65}

It was not until a year later, and after detailed discussions
with the D.R.C. Mission had already taken place, that the matter was
brought before the Presbytery. By that time the issue had, in effect,
already been decided, and Presbytery had no option but to agree. They
appointed a committee to meet with the local congregations at Kasungu
and Tamanda to explain the transfer and to carry it out.\footnote{66} The actual
transfer took place on Saturday, 8th November 1924.\footnote{67}

Local opposition to the transfer was so great that it extended even
to Kasungu Christians working outside Malawi. One such Christian was
Ngwazi Dr. H. Kamuzu Banda, now Life President of Malawi. When he
heard of the decision to transfer Kasungu to the D.R.C. Mission he was

\footnote{64. Riddell Henderson to Ashcroft, 14 October 1923, Ms.7886, N.L.S.}
\footnote{65. Prentice to Laws, 1 and 15 September 1923, Kasungu Correspondence,
Livingstonia Papers, Box 7, N.A.M.}
\footnote{66. Livingstonia Presbytery Minutes, 16 September 1924, N.A.M.}
\footnote{67. McAlpine to Ashcroft, 25 November 1924, Ms.7887, N.L.S.}
very angry. As one who had been educated at Livingstonia Mission schools, first at Mtunthama, and then at Chilanga, near Kasungu, he had an obvious interest in the future of the area. During the First World War he had left Kasungu, and was, by the 1920s, working as a mine clerk in South Africa. He has said that his opposition to the Dutch Reformed Church Mission taking over Kasungu was, 'because they did not teach English and they despised Africans even more than the British missionaries'. His reaction was no doubt shared by many other Livingstonia Christians working outside Malawi at that time.

Within a year the return of German missionaries to Tanzania led Livingstonia to withdraw from that field, and some of the missionaries to criticise the decision to vacate Kasungu. Rev. Charles Stuart, who had himself been chairman of the committee appointed by Presbytery to oversee the transfer of Kasungu and Tamanda to the Dutch Reformed Church, wrote to Dr. Laws in September 1925, 'One now sees more than ever what a mistake we made in giving up Kasungu and Tamanda'.

It seems obvious that the mistake could well have been avoided, if the Livingstonia Committee in Scotland, and, more importantly, the Mission Council in Malawi, had taken more account of the feelings of local Christians on the matter.

68. Ngwazi Dr. H. Kamuzu Banda, Life President of Malawi, personal comment to the author, 16 November 1975.
70. Stuart to Laws, 18 September 1925, Mvendeni Correspondence, Livingstonia Papers, Box 9, N.A.M.
The Formation of the Church of Central Africa, Presbyterian

Less than a week after the restoration of Jonathan Chirwa, and the final decision of the Livingstonia Presbytery to transfer Kasungu and Tambanda to the Dutch Reformed Church Mission, an event of much wider significance than either took place. The Presbyteries of Livingstonia and Blantyre united to form the Church of Central Africa, Presbyterian. Though it was theoretically a union of two African churches, it came about almost entirely as a result of European initiatives, and reflected the wishes and ideas of the respective missions, rather than the opinions of local Christians, who, while they approved of the union, (or, more accurately, the federation), as far as it went, would probably have preferred a wider grouping.

As early as the 1890s both Laws of Livingstonia and David Clement Scott of Blantyre had suggested some sort of wider union - Scott in particular talking in terms of one church for British Central Africa.\(^71\) The first meeting of the newly formed North Livingstonia Presbytery on 15 November 1899 noted a Livingstonia Mission Council minute to the effect that 'from the beginning the Presbyterian Church of Central Africa should look forward to federation or union with other Christian communities in the country'.\(^72\)

In October 1903 Livingstonia Presbytery responded favourably to a letter from Hetherwick suggesting the formation of a Synod made up of Livingstonia, Blantyre and the D.R.C.M., and instructed Laws to inform Hetherwick that its formation should not be delayed, even if only two Presbyteries wanted to join.\(^73\) Further discussions were held the

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72. Livingstonia Presbytery Minutes, 15 November 1899, N.A.M.
73. Ibid., 14 and 15 October 1903.
following year during the United Missionary Conference at Blantyre, and by 1910, when the third missionary conference was held at Mvera, Livingstonia and Blantyre had formally agreed that the union should take place. By October 1911 a Basis of Union had been worked out. The union was approved by the mother churches in Scotland in 1914, but the intervention of the war delayed its implementation, and it was not until September 1924 that it finally took place.

The above outline suggests the extent to which the negotiations were dominated by the European missions involved. Though it was not the missions, but the African presbyteries which were uniting, African Christians were given an extremely limited part in the negotiations.

At the Fourth General Missionary Conference which immediately preceded the formation of the C.C.A.P. at Khondowe in September 1924, the thirteen ordained African ministers of the two uniting missions were not even delegates, but were listed only as visitors. Nevertheless they made their views clear – the official report noting that 'The native speakers unanimously emphasized that the Church in Africa has nothing to do with denominational differences of the Home Churches. It finds its base of unity in the Bible'. One of those who undoubtedly spoke was Y. Z. Mwasi, who nine years later returned to the topic of 'denominationalism', claiming that denominationalism was 'against the teaching of the Bible' and 'a relic of the Church of the Middle Ages'. He objected in particular to the minute of the C.C.A.P. regulating the

74. Livingstonia Presbytery Minutes, 6 October 1904 and 18 October 1911; Livingstonia M.C. Minutes, September 1910, Minute 45, and Appendix 1 and October 1911, Minute 79, N.A.M.
76. Ibid., p.62.
relations of Synod with churches not in the Federated Board of Missions, by which church members moving from one area to another would only be accepted by the C.C.A.P. if they were members of one of the Federated Missions. 78

While it is true that Mwasi was, at the time, attempting to justify his own break with the C.C.A.P., 79 his comments nonetheless highlight the concern of many African Christians at the time to avoid what they saw as a denominationalism based mainly on European ecclesiastical history.

In this respect Fraser's views on the nature and extent of the C.C.A.P. more nearly corresponded with those expressed by the African Christians at the 1924 missionary conference, than they did with those of either Laws or Hetherwick. Indeed, as D. C. Scott in the 1890s had spoken of one church for Central Africa, so Fraser looked forward to a union which was more than narrowly Presbyterian. Thus, in 1910, at the meeting which had formally agreed on the union of Livingstonia and Blantyre Presbyteries, Fraser, (seconded by Chisholm), had proposed that the name of the church should be simply 'The Church of Central Africa', allowing for the possibility of future interdenominational expansion. It was, however, Elmslie and Hetherwick's amendment to call the proposed church 'the Church of Central Africa, Presbyterian' which carried the day by 10 votes to 3. 80 It is tempting, though not necessarily accurate, to presume that the third vote for Fraser's motion was that of Y. Z. Mwasi, who was present at the meeting as a Livingstonia

78. Ibid., quoting Minutes of C.C.A.P. Synod, Nkhoma, 5 August 1932.
79. See below, p, 315 section on 'Independent Churches'.
80. Livingstonia Mission Council Minutes, September 1910, Appendix 1 - 'Meeting at Kvera of representatives of Blantyre and North Livingstonia Presbyteries, 3 August 1910.'
delegate.

In September 1924 Mwasu, together with Laws and MacAlpine formed a small committee to make the final arrangements for the union. When it finally took place, on 17 September 1924, 28 ministers and 32 elders signed the roll and officially constituted the Synod of the Church of Central Africa, Presbyterian. Of these, 13 ministers and 30 elders were Africans - a majority of over two-thirds. In view of the continued existence of the Livingstonia and Blantyre Mission Councils, however, and the disproportionate missionary influence at Presbytery level, it may well be asked what was the relevance of the creation of the C.C.A.P. for African Christians in general, and for the Ngoni church in particular?

Undoubtedly it contributed, in an ecclesiastical sense, to that general widening of the horizons which was a feature of the period encompassing the First World War and the decade which followed it. Though it was mainly a European creation, the C.C.A.P. enabled African ministers and elders to see themselves as part of a larger ecclesiastical set-up, extending, (after 1926 when the Mkhoma Presbytery joined), over the whole of Malawi. It is not entirely coincidental that it came into existence at the same time as the Representative Committee for Northern Province Native Associations. The late Inkosana Mopho Jere, who in 1928 went to work as a clerk in the medical department of the government in Zomba, soon became both Secretary of the R.C.N.P.N.A. and representative elder in the C.C.A.P. for all the northern Christians from Karonga to Kasungu who were working in Zomba. Both posts represented, if in

82. See below, p.312 section on 'Nombera Native Association'.
83. Inkosana Mopho Jere, personal interview, 27 December 1971. Several other writers e.g. Tangri, have interviewed Mopho Jere about his part in inter-war politics; some refer to him as Isaiah M. Jere.

(cont'd.)
The African Ministers of the Church of Central Africa, Presbyterian in 1924

The photograph, taken at the inauguration of the C.C.A.P. in September 1924 at Khondowe, shows all the African ministers of both Blantyre and Livingstonia Presbyteries at the time.


slightly different ways, a general drift away from a narrow tribalism, towards a wider proto-nationalism. Nor is this simply a matter of hindsight, for the contemporary writings of Livingstonia products such as Y. Z. Mwasi and Levi Mumba make it clear that their minds were already moving in that direction.84

The Ngoni Clergy In the Twenties

Alongside such national developments as the formation of the C.C.A.P., important changes were taking place in the Ngoni church at grass-roots level. One of these was the growing importance of African ministers in the congregational life of the church.

At least three factors limiting the rapid development of indigenous ordained leadership in the church have already been noticed. First, the long delay in ordaining the first African ministers, secondly the periodic suspension of the Theological course, and the consequent limitation on the number of clergy produced, and thirdly the employment of ordained ministers as assistants to Europeans at central mission stations, rather than as independent parish ministers.

As the 1920s progressed the third of these factors began to change significantly, allowing more scope for authentic ministerial leadership at congregational level. Laws' strict ideas about self-support had ensured a system whereby only those congregations who could support a

83. (cont’d.) His full name is Isaiah Murray McCallum Nkhofo Jere. Inkosana is his Ngoni title meaning 'little chief'. He is a direct descendant of Nku, uncle of Zwangendaba.
84. See, for example, Y. Z. Mwasi 'Essential and Paramount Reasons', pp.2-3, paragraph 6; Levi Mumba 'Native Associations in Nyasaland', in the South African Outlook, June 1924, and Mumba to Mwase Kasungu, 3 May 1941, Jere File Shepperson Collection.
minister financially had the right to call one. In 1919 Loudon was
given the right to call its own minister for the first time, though
here again he would have worked in practice as an assistant to the
European missionary at the station. In 1923 Hezekiah Twaya, nine years
after his ordination, became the first minister to be called to an
Ngoni congregation, (apart from a 'European' mission station), when he
became the minister of Enukweni (Henga West).

In addition a small but steady stream of Ngoni christians entered
the theological classes in the early 1920s. These included Peter Thole
and Samuel Chibambo in December 1920, followed by Charles Chimula in
1921, Zekariah Ziba in 1922, and then Yesaya Chibambo and the Tonga-
Ngoni David Kaunda, who were accepted in 1924. Though not a large
number in itself, this intake ensured a doubling of the number of Ngoni
ministers from three to six in 1925, when Thole, Chimula and Samuel
Chibambo were ordained, rising to eight by 1929, with the ordinations
of Ziba and Yesaya Chibambo. This was, however, still a pathetically
small number in relation to the Christian community of uNgoni, which
had reached over 23,000 by 1927. It is worth remembering, on the
other hand that Presbyterianism in Malawi was, and is, much less
dependent, numerically, on its clergy than was its Scottish counterpart,

85. Laws to R. W. Lyall Grant, 2 July 1915, Livingstonia Papers, Box 1,
N.A.M. 'The salaries of evangelists and ministers should be found
by and the amount settled by the native Christians themselves'.
Presbytery could appoint ministers to congregations where they were
needed, but congregations could only call ministers if they were
self-supporting and could pay the minister's salary. Laws,
Reminiscences, pp.139-40, and Livingstonia Mission Council Minutes,
24 September 1910, Minute 41.
86. Livingstonia Presbytery Minutes, 23 July 1919, N.A.M.
87. Ibid., 16 April 1923.
88. Ibid., 20 July 1921, and 22 September 1924, and MacAlpine 'Report
on Theological and Evangelist classes', July 1923, Ms.7886, N.L.S.
89. Livingstonia Presbytery Minutes, 11 October 1923, 25 December 1926,
and 1 September 1929, N.A.M.
90. Livingstonia Mission Annual Statistics, Livingstonia Papers, Box 8,
N.A.M.
and that the clergy were merely the tip of an ecclesiastical iceberg, also made up of a vast number of evangelists, elders, deacons, catechists and teachers, all of whom were actively involved in the day-to-day running of the church.

Several factors combined to ensure that most Ngoni ministers would have their own congregations by the end of the twenties. The first was the increasing ability of congregations to support a minister of their own, (due in part to the increase in size of most congregations). The second was a regulation introduced in 1927 which allowed two poor congregations to issue a joint call to a minister. As a result of this regulation Njuyu and Emcisweni called Peter Thole in 1927, Hoho and Elangeni Charles Chinula in 1928, (though Elangeni eventually withdrew), and Engalaweni and Milala Andrew Mkochi in 1929. The third was a continued shortage of European staff which forced the missionaries into granting slightly more responsibility to African ministers than might otherwise have been the case. The fourth was a concerted attempt to force more congregations into supporting an ordained minister by deliberately ending the evangelists' course.

In 1922 Elsmalie proposed that Kirk Sessions should be encouraged to look forward to the pastoring of congregations by ordained ministers, rather than evangelists. This proposal was adopted unanimously and in the following year it was decided to drop the Evangelists' course altogether, as from 1924. Theoretically such a move could have been justified had it led to a marked increase in the number of theological candidates in the years immediately following 1924. This, however, did

91. Livingstonia Presbytery Minutes, 20 July 1927, N.A.M.
92. Ibid., 16 September 1927, 28 May 1928, 19 October 1928 and 7 June 1929.
93. Ibid., 24 July 1922, and 15 August 1923.
not happen. Indeed, by 1925 Fraser was complaining that 'there will be no candidates for the Ministry from Loudon for a long time now. Two or more of our evangelists might have gone forward but they will never be able to master the English necessary under the present conditions'.

The evangelists were often men of wide Christian experience, if of somewhat limited academic education. Up until the 1930s they outnumbered the ordained African clergy, and often ran congregations in the absence of an ordained minister. They were even, on occasion, given authority to administer the sacraments.

By far the longest-serving of these evangelists was Mawelera Tembo, the first Ngoni convert, who had been in the service of the mission ever since his baptism in 1890. He completed the Evangelists' course at Khondowe in 1909, and worked as an evangelist in the Njuyu area right up until 1934 - only three years before his death.

The relationship between evangelists and ministers illustrated the dilemma in which the Livingstonia Mission found itself (for, once again, though theoretically a matter for Presbytery, the issue was decided, in practice, by the Mission Council). Whether the main criterion for theological training and ordination should be education or experience was a problem not unique to Livingstonia. Their decision in the 1920s to abandon the Evangelists' course, but, at the same time to insist on a high standard of academic achievement for admission to the Theological course, seriously limited the number of available candidates for the ministry at a time when they were badly needed.

94. Fraser to Laws, 17 August 1925, Loudon Correspondence, Livingstonia Papers, Box 7, N.A.M.
95. Livingstonia Presbytery Minutes, 15 August 1936 and 11 August 1937, N.A.M.
In practice the order of evangelists never died out, for in addition to those already trained and appointed by Presbytery - twenty were in service in 1928 - a new order of local evangelists began to grow up, chosen, appointed and paid by individual congregations, to meet the need for local leadership.

Fraser at Loudon had made particular use of evangelists to supervise that extensive district. In 1920 of a total of 63 evangelists listed as employed by the whole of the Livingstonia Presbytery, 45 were working in Loudon. These included, of course, Fraser's catechists, and with their demise in the 1920s the number of evangelists at Loudon inevitably fell. Nevertheless, Fraser would appear to have favoured the employment of comparatively large numbers of non-ordained evangelists, whose training was not strictly tied to academic education, at a time when some other missionaries, notably Elmslie, were trying to phase them out.

The Retirement of Fraser

Apart from his deep involvement in the case of Jonathan Chirwa, and his reactions to the report on Livingstonia by Rev. Frank Ashcroft, Secretary of the Foreign Mission Committee, (which will be dealt with in the next chapter), Fraser's direct contribution to the developments of the early 1920s was relatively limited. The immediate reason for this, as pointed out at the end of the previous chapter, was simply that he was in Scotland from mid-1920 until August 1923.

When he returned to Loudon towards the end of 1923, it was with

97. Livingstonia Presbytery Minutes, 30 May 1928, N.A.M.
100. See pp.274-5 above.
some misgivings about the future, for already there were suggestions, following the impact he had made as Moderator of the General Assembly of the United Free Church, and as leader of the Scottish Churches Missionary Campaign, that his future work might lie in Scotland. By March 1924 he was writing to Ashcroft, 'The thing I hope is plain: that you must not ask the Assembly to call me home. My work is here'. When the immediate likelihood of his recall had passed in 1924 he once again wrote to Ashcroft, 'I was most thankful that I was to be allowed to do the work here which I love beyond all else'.

The reprieve, however, was short-lived. Early in 1925 he set out on a long-planned evangelistic campaign to South Africa, which was to last several months. During his absence in South Africa he was appointed Home Organisation Secretary of the U.F.C Foreign Mission Committee, to organise interest and support in Scotland, for the work of the United Free Church abroad. It was not an appointment which he welcomed. 'I have come home', he wrote a few months later, 'reluctantly, painfully'.

In spite of his own reluctance to leave Africa finally, several factors had combined to ensure his eventual recall. First the continuing shortage both of finance and staff for the foreign mission work of the U.F.C. led to the creation, following the death of Dr. Webster, (one of the Foreign Mission Secretaries), of a new post with special emphasis on the encouragement and education of the church in Scotland for the

101. Agnes Fraser, Fraser, p.277.
102. Fraser to Ashcroft, 31 March 1924, Shepherdson Collection.
103. Fraser to Ashcroft, 30 May 1924, Ms.788?, N.L.S.
105. Ibid., April 1926, p.179.
whole task of mission. Secondly Fraser's reputation as an ecclesiastical statesman, and leader of evangelistic campaigns, already high before 1920, had been enhanced by his years in Scotland between 1920 and 23. (Though he retained a reputation as a great money-raiser, it was a job which he personally detested. On one occasion, having been asked to solicit a large donation from someone who had already contributed, he approached the house, rang the bell, and then ran away.). Thirdly his declining health made it unlikely that his African career could be sustained indefinitely.

Fraser received news of his appointment in June 1925, while he was still in South Africa. He was personally very reluctant to accept the appointment, but felt that the Church had called him and he had to go. He accepted by telegram on 16 June, and returned to Loudon to make his parting arrangements. A few months later, in October 1925, Fraser's was one of three names proposed as colleague and eventual successor to Dr. Laws as principal of the Overtoun Institution, and de facto leader of the Livingstonia Mission. 'He would infuse into the place the spirit and atmosphere which is unfortunately absent', Malcolm Moffatt, Livingstone's nephew, had written from Chitambo in February 1925. By then it was already too late to change the course of Fraser's impending appointment to Scotland, and he had to be content with the knowledge that Laws' eventual successor, W. P. Young, had been his junior colleague at Loudon, and held views on the future of the mission and church very similar to his own.

106. Agnes Fraser, Fraser, pp.277-81.
108. Ibid.
110. Moffatt to Ashcroft, 7 February 1925, Ms.7888, N.L.S.
Fraser's departure from Loudon was, as might be expected, an emotional occasion. A congregation of several thousand was present on the final Sunday morning, and Fraser preached at least part of his sermon from the open-air pulpit which he had had constructed against the outside wall of Loudon church for just such large gatherings.\footnote{U.F.C.S.M.R.; January 1926, p.5.} Following the service, ministers, evangelists, elders and deacons entered the vestry, and there Fraser asked them to bless him. They prayed, laid their hands on him and sang in shiNgoni the Aaronic blessing, 'The Lord bless you and keep you': 'Inkosi kubusise, kanyise buso pesulu kuwe, ibe namusa kuwe. Ikanyise buso pesulu kuwe no kutula'.\footnote{Y. C. Kaunda, 'Mudauko wa C.C.A.', Synod of Livingstonia', (unpublished typescript), p.99.}

In spite of the underlying resentments of race relations in the 1920s, which this chapter has highlighted, and of which Fraser was a part, there is no doubt that he occupied a place of special affection with the Ngoni, and particularly with those of the Loudon area. Several informants have contrasted his behaviour and attitudes with those of other missionaries, and almost all have mentioned his joyfulness and the fact that he visited people in their villages.\footnote{e.g., personal interviews with Mopho Jere, Petros Moyo, Mbalo Mtonga and David Sibande.}

Though a fuller assessment of Fraser's importance and impact will be attempted below,\footnote{See 'CONCLUSION'.} the warmth and content of the minutes of appreciation presented to Fraser on his retirement, might be noted here, for though they cannot be said to present an objective assessment of his work, they nevertheless help to indicate those aspects of it which made an immediate impact on the Ngoni. Amongst the points singled out...
in the minute of the Loudon Session were the facts that he ate the ordinary food of the country, he loved the children of Africa, he took the side of the Ngoni against Ziehl, he was known throughout every village in the area, he had a great concern for the salvation of souls, and he was kind and gentle with old people. The religious references apart, it might be said that most of the other points of contact involved Fraser's identification with traditional Ngoni values.

As well as the minute from the Loudon Session, Fraser was presented with an address by the Nombera Native Association. Though similar in content to that of Loudon Session, it contains a few points not mentioned above. These were Fraser's holding of large annual conventions, his encouragement of Ngoni church music, his frequent journeys, for example to the Marambo, and his help in political matters— including, rather surprisingly, a complimentary reference to Fraser's part in the 1915 trouble over supplying carriers and food. In addition, the M.N.A. address also paid tribute to Mrs. Fraser, and apart from the obvious comments on her work as a doctor and teacher of women, singled out the fact that 'during your visit to South Africa she has proved herself wise and sympathetic all through the great famine that befell Angoniland this year'. This reference is particularly important in that it highlights the fact that during Fraser's frequent absences on ulendo the administration of the station was often left to his wife, who was a very able woman in her own right.

Fraser's contacts with the Ngoni were never completely severed,

115. Agnes Fraser, Fraser, pp.272-3.
116. A summary of this address, as it appeared in U.F.C.S.M.R., November 1925, p.524, is printed as 'Appendix A'.
117. For this last reference, see paragraph 7 of Appendix A.
118. Appendix A.
and he kept in touch both with local Christians and with the missionaries who succeeded him; nevertheless his direct influence on the growth of the Ngoni church came to an end with his departure in August 1925. Some indication of his overall influence in the area may be gathered from the fact that for many years a common form of oath in uNgoni was 'nikuti pasogolo pa Fulamu' - a mixture of chiTumbuka and chiNgoni meaning 'I swear by Fraser'.

The Mombera Native Association

The address presented to Fraser by the Mombera Native Association in 1925 is one small indication of the connections between that body and the Livingstonia Mission. The fact that almost all leading members of the association were Livingstonia educated, and that, to some extent, the M.N.A. and the mission shared the same concern to preserve traditional moral values, (which both saw as being attacked by modernising tendencies in colonial society), helped to maintain a certain mutual sympathy between the two organisations. To some extent, the M.N.A. may well have seen itself as taking over the function previously occupied by the mission, as mediator between Ngoni traditional authority and the colonial government.

The formation of the Mombera Native Association in 1920 was part of that general widening of horizons which characterised the period after the First World War. This was not, of course, a process confined to the Ngoni, for in the previous year the West Nyasa Native Association


The term 'sogolo' is probably a corruption of the old Zulu 'tjolo' a qualifying form from the verb 'ukutjo', 'to declare or affirm'. See Döhne, Dictionary, p.349.
had been re-formed, and in the years which followed several other
Native Associations sprang up, both within Malawi and further afield.\textsuperscript{120}

As several writers have pointed out most of the Native
Associations in Malawi were, in the inter-war period, essentially non-
tribal in outlook.\textsuperscript{121} This was generally true of the Nomberra Native
Association, though there was a much closer identity with the
traditional leadership in Ngoni society than was perhaps the case with
some of the other associations.

One of the main explanations of this supra-tribal outlook of the
native associations may well lie in the broadening experiences of
migrant labour and war service, which helped to create what may be
called a Nyasa identity. In addition, however, there were several
factors connected with the Livingstonia Mission which tended also to
produce supra-tribal associations.

To begin with most members of the northern associations were
Livingstonia educated. Those who had attended the Overtoun Institution
at Khondowe had, during an education often spanning many years, mixed
and discussed with those of other tribes. All conversation was supposed
to be in English, and anyone found conversing in the vernacular was
beaten and had their food taken away by the prefects.\textsuperscript{122} Secondly the
nature of that education encouraged intellectual debate and discussion,
and while Laws taught a good deal about civic duties, he was well aware

\begin{itemize}
\item \textsuperscript{120} For connections between Livingstonia, and Zambian Welfare Associations,
see D. J. Cook, 'The Influence of Livingstonia Mission upon the
Formation of Welfare Associations in Zambia, 1912-31', in Ranger
and Weller, \textit{Themes in the Christian History of Central Africa}.
\item \textsuperscript{121} See, for example J. van Velsen, 'Some Early Pressure Groups in
Malawi' in Stokes & Brown, \textit{The Zambesian Past}; Manchester 1966,
and R. K. Tangri, 'Inter-war Native Associations and the formation
of the Nyasaland African Congress' in the \textit{Transafrican Journal of
\item \textsuperscript{122} Mopho Jere, personal interview, 27 December 1971.
\end{itemize}
of the need for political self-expression. Thirdly, those members of the associations who were Livingstonia ministers and elders had for years been accustomed to supra-tribal discussion at Presbytery level, and several of them had experience of writing minutes in English. It might also be argued, in the case of the Nombera Native Association, that Ngoni society itself was, in a sense, supra-tribal.

Most Livingstonia missionaries accepted and even encouraged the Native Associations as a necessary and healthy stage in the development of African political responsibility. This was as true of the missionaries in uNgoni, as in other areas. In 1921 Elmslie, for instance, wrote from Ekwendeni that 'the Native Association here is doing good work' in protesting against what they regarded as immoral practices. Many of the grievances mentioned by Fraser in his evidence to the Chilembwe Commission in 1915 were similar to those discussed in the 1920s by the Nombera Native Association. These included the need to provide a veterinary officer for the district, and government help in cotton-growing experiments.

Many of the Ngoni members of Native Associations had particularly close connections with Livingstonia. Admittedly some, like Levi Mumba, probably the most important single figure in the development of Malawi politics between the wars, were suspended Livingstonia members. Others however, like Charles Chimula and Mpho Jere were Livingstonia ministers and elders.

124. See, for example, Donald Fraser, the New Africa, London 1927, pp. 161-2.
125. Elmslie to Laws, 18 January 1921, Ekwendeni Correspondence, Livingstonia Papers, Box 9, N.A.N.
127. McCracken, Politics, p. 269.
Inkosana Mopho Jere
in the early 1930s
The widening of the northern associations to form the Representative Committee for Northern Province Native Associations in 1924, is closely linked with two Ngoni: Levi Mumba, who was largely instrumental in starting it, and Mopho Jere who became its Secretary in 1928 and its president sometime before 1957. The two men were, in fact, brothers-in-law, Levi Mumba's first wife being a sister of Mopho Jere.

In the 1930s, and particularly after the introduction of Indirect rule in 1933, Ngoni chiefs sought the help of educated men in their approach to the colonial government. To some extent education as such was the important factor, but the fact that several of the Ngoni chiefs had been educated at Livingstonia schools, and that historically the Livingstonia Mission had acted as a mediator between the Ngoni and the colonial government, gave Ngoni chiefs confidence in seeking the advice of Livingstonia ministers and elders such as Yesaya Chibambo and Mopho Jere.

Whether or not the Mombera Native Association was a basically conservative or progressive body is a matter of some dispute. On the one hand it was made up of a new élite pressing for social and economic changes, on another it was closely connected with traditional Ngoni values. Pressed as to why he had not joined the Nyasaland African Congress in 1944, Mopho Jere replied 'They wanted to put educated men in the place of chiefs. Education is education, but chiefs are chiefs'.

130. McCracken claims six out of the seven Ngoni chiefs in the 1930s had been educated at Livingstonia schools. McCracken, Politics, p.286.
It may be best then to look upon the Mombera Native Association in the 1920s and 30s as a bridge of compromise between the past and the future. For some of its members their main aim was to safeguard the past, for others to secure the future. In ecclesiastical terms the associations may equally have had a two-fold significance. For some they provided a place where educated Livingstonia Christians, frustrated by their lack of control in the church courts, could be their own bosses, even though their independence was largely illusory. For others they provided a stepping-stone to more complete African control in the formation of independent churches.

**Independent Churches**

The development of independent churches from the Livingstonia Mission has been adequately dealt with by writers such as McCracken and Rotberg,¹³₂ and will be touched on only briefly here.

Apart from the period 1908-09 when both Elliott Kamwana Chirwa and Charles Domingo established rival bodies to Livingstonia in uTonga and uNgoni, the late twenties and early thirties was the great period of secession from Livingstonia. Between 1928 and 1934 at least four important independent churches were formed by ex-Livingstonia Christians. In 1928 several Livingstonia graduates including Paddy Nyasulu who had been an elder at Livingstonia during the First World War formed the African National Church, on the northern lakeshore in the area between Chitimba and Chilumba.¹³³ (Rotberg also mentions Levi Mumba as among the founders, but as he was working at Zomba at the time it seems that his contribution may have consisted in helping to draw up the

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¹³³ Livingstonia Presbytery Minutes, 24 August 1915, N.A.M.
In 1932 the first ordained Livingstonia minister to form an independent church, Rev. Yafet Mkandawire, started the African Reformed Presbyterian Church, in the same general area as the National Church. Mkandawire had been ordained in 1918 together with Edward Bothi Manda, and assigned to the Livingstonia group of congregations under the direction of Dr. Laws. In 1927 he became the first African treasurer of Presbytery, and by 1928 was minister to the congregations of Harara and Mileve on the lakeshore. On 28 July 1932 he was reported to have taken phemba medicine to escape being poisoned. A special committee set up to investigate the matter reported in October that phemba was an evil practice, and Mkandawire was deposed from the ministry and suspended, in spite of a motion from the two Loudon ministers Zekariah Ziba and Andrew Mkochi, that he be merely severely reprimanded. Within a month, according to McCracken, he had set up his own independent church.

Unlike Y. M. Mkandawire, Yesaya Zerenji Mwas is still a minister in good standing with Livingstonia Presbytery when, in September 1933 he confirmed his resignation — a course which he had been threatening since July 1932 — and formed his own church, The Blackman's Church of God which is in Tongaland. Since 1903, when he had passed his theological exit examination with an average 88.5%, he had been one of Livingstonia's leading intellectuals. Renowned for speaking his mind, he had, on occasion alarmed even some of his African colleagues.

134. Rotberg, Nationalism, p.149.
135. Livingstonia Presbytery Minutes, 19 and 21 July 1918, N.A.M.
136. Ibid., 17 September 1927 and 30 May 1926.
137. Ibid., 28 July and 24 October 1932.
138. Ibid., 18 July and 26 September 1933.
139. Ibid., 13 May 1903.
by his outspokenness in Presbytery. One elder of the period recalled how on more than one occasion some of his colleagues advised Mwasi, 'Sit down Mwasi, you are going to be arrested!'; to which he would reply, 'No I will not sit down; this is the Church'. Mwasi had been the first African minister to hold a congregation of his own - in October 1916 he was called by the congregation of Sanga, between Bandawe and Nkhata Bay - and the first African Moderator of Presbytery, in July 1918. The occasion of his break with Livingstonia was a complicated dispute in which five elders from Sanga congregation and three from Lumphasa brought complaints to Presbytery against Mwasi's handling of the congregations. Though the details of the dispute are not relevant here, it should be noted that Mwasi's decision to secede was linked with his belief that Presbytery, in receiving the complaints in what he believed to be an unconstitutional way, had acted unjustly towards him.

In November 1930 the Ngoni minister Charles Chinula confessed at Presbytery to being guilty of adultery. He was deposed from the Christian ministry and suspended from church membership. In August 1931 and July 1932 he asked for restoration to church membership. On the first occasion he was refused, on the second the case was referred back to Hoho Kirk Session for decision, on the motion of Edward Bothi Manda and Y. Z. Mwasi. Since the request for restoration had come from Hoho

141. Livingstonia Presbytery Minutes, 20 October 1916, and 16 July 1918, N.A.M.
143. Ibid., pp. 10-12.
144. Livingstonia Presbytery Minutes, 27 November 1930, N.A.M.
145. Ibid., 24 August 1931 and 26 July 1932.
Kirk Session in the first place, it is safe to assume that Chinula was restored to church membership, but his efforts to be restored to the ministry met with no success, and in 1934 he formed his own church - Eklesia Lanangwa (the Church of Freedom). Apart from his abilities as a teacher, (in 1923 Charles Stuart, then at Loudon, had remarked, 'Charles is the best teacher I have'), his most distinctive contribution to the life of the church was as a writer of hymns, several of which are amongst the most popular in the current hymn-book of the Livingstonia Synod.

Though a theoretical union of the churches of Mkandawire, Mwasi and Chinula took place in 1935, under the title of the Blackman's Church, the three groups, as McCracken has pointed out, remained largely independent of one another. Though each was strongest in its own tribal area none of the churches could be described as tribal in the sense in which the Ama Nazaretha of Isaiah Shembe might be so described. They were at most regional, held together by the strong personalities of their founders, (at least in the cases of Mwasi and Chinula).

The question obviously arises, 'what factors in the Livingstonia Presbyterianism of the twenties and early thirties led to these notable defections?' McCracken has suggested several. They include friction over the transfer of authority to Africans, and differences over the approach to religious institutions and beliefs (such as polygamy), though he claims that these factors should not be overestimated.

146. McCracken, Politics, p.275.
147. Stuart to Laws, 22 May 1923, Loudon Correspondence, Livingstonia Papers, Box 7, N.A.M.
150. McCracken, Politics, pp.276-7.
addition he lists several new factors which 'throw light on the character and timing of the break'. These include the theories 'that the historical traditions and theological foundations of Livingstonia predisposed her members to independent action', and that there was at this period 'a growing disillusionment with some aspects of the Christian message as propagated by European missionaries', notably their inability to deal with problems like witchcraft.

The following comments might also be added. The secessions should be seen as part of the general disillusionment amongst educated Africans which characterised the 1920s. It has been shown that within the Livingstonia Mission, discontent with several aspects of church politics was very real at this period. Given this background it is not surprising that sooner or later secessions should take place.

The existence of Native Associations in the 1920s accustomed African ministers to independent action, and may well have heightened their desire for African leadership. Certainly, a good deal of Mwasi's important statement of his reasons for leaving the C.C.A.P. is taken up with the need for indigenous control.

Another factor which has perhaps not received enough attention in this context is the widespread retirial of many of the pioneer missionaries in the late 1920s and early 1930s. The retirial of Fraser in 1925 has already been noted - but he was only one of many. Between 1925 and 1935 almost all of the pioneer missionaries retired - Laws at Khondowe, Fraser at Loudon, Elmslie and Stuart at Ekwendeni, MacAlpine at Bandawe, McMinn at Lubwa, Chisholm at Mwenzo, Prentice at Kasungu and

151. Ibid., p.277.
152. Ibid., pp.277-9.
Moffatt at Chitambo. Between them they had given a total of more than 350 years service to Livingstonia. There is something to be said for the view that while many of the established African Christian leaders may have been reluctantly prepared to put up with a good deal of European dominance from the pioneer missionaries, they would not have accepted it nearly so easily from their successors. The retirement of many of the pioneers by 1930 may have encouraged the idea that African influence was on the increase, (as, in fact, it was). Mwasi's frustration may well have been due to his belief that he had been denied his rights as a fully ordained minister by one of the last of the old guard - MacAlpine. It is surely not without significance that the two missionaries accused by Mwasi of having denied him his rights in this case, MacAlpine and Turner, were the same two with whom he had had serious disagreements in the past.

The suspension of Yafet Mandawire in 1932 would appear to have been very harsh, not only because of the nature of his offence at a time when fear of witchcraft was on the increase, but also because of his previously trouble-free record. It may well be then that the very harshness of the suspension led him to make what may well have been an impulsive secession, which further added to the sense of frustration felt by the others.

In many respects Chinula's case was similar to that of Jonathan Chirwa, and he himself may well have expected reinstatement as a church minister. Restoration to church membership was normally a matter for the local Kirk Session, and in this respect the Loudon group of

154. Livingstonia Staff-Book, C.S.A.
156. Ibid., Mandi, 'Independency', pp.4-5, and Livingstonia Presbytery Minutes, 12 February 1915.
congregations, particularly in Fraser's time, had a reputation for thorough investigation of each case and reasonably speedy restoration of those who had genuinely repented.  

Restoration to the ministry, on the other hand, was a matter for Presbytery, and though the case of Jonathan Chirwa showed that it was far from automatic, that of Edward Bothi Manda, who was suspended in October 1925 following his conviction for embezzlement at Karonga, may well have afforded Chinula some hope of a reasonably quick restoration. Manda was restored to church membership in July 1926, less than a year after his suspension, and to the Christian ministry in July 1929, less than four years after his original suspension. Chinula's long delay in actually breaking with Livingstonia after his suspension would seem to indicate that he was hoping for a similar course of events, and his eventual secession may well have been brought about by his assumption that such a reinstatement was not, after all, going to take place.

While there were undoubtedly personal factors involved in the secession of all three ministers - and these should not be overlooked - their near concurrence makes it certain that some of the factors outlined above were also at work. A final factor, by no means dominant on its own, but undoubtedly playing some part in the overall decision, was the economic viability of a secessionist congregation. While much more detailed study would need to be done before any definitive conclusion could be reached, it seems likely that the very limited financial support afforded to Livingstonia's African ministers, made secession less hazardous financially than might be imagined. A new salary scale

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158. Livingstonia Presbytery Minutes, 14 October 1925, 15 July 1926, and 11 July 1929, N.A.M.
proposed and agreed to by Presbytery in 1927, would have given ministers a salary of £3 per month, but earlier in the same year MacAlpine had admitted that Y. Z. Mwasi had had no salary for six months, and that a special supplement promised to him by Presbytery, had never been paid. In such circumstances ministers contemplating secession for other reasons, may have felt that financially, at least, they had little to lose.

The Ngoni Church in the Early Thirties

The first few years of the 1930s was a period of severe difficulty in the Livingstonia Presbytery as a whole. By 1930 the number of ordained ministers in the Presbytery had reached seventeen, eight of whom were Ngoni. By 1933 death and secession had reduced that number to twelve, of whom six were Ngoni.

The secessions in themselves obviously created a sense of uncertainty and division in the church as a whole - not lessened by squabbles over disputed property such as church buildings and communion silver. Nor were they a short-term difficulty, for relations between the new churches and Livingstonia continued to be a source of conflict well into the 1940s. In the early 1930s, as noted above, Mwasi had complained of the C.C.A.P. decision to recognize only members of the Federated Missions as reciprocal members. By 1935 Presbytery had ruled that members of the Blackman's Church seeking admission to the C.C.A.P. would have to go through church classes before being baptised - a

159. Ibid., 20 July 1927.
160. MacAlpine to Laws, 19 February 1927, Bandawe Correspondence, Livingstonia Papers, Box 9, N.A.M.
161. Livingstonia Presbytery Minutes, 15 June 1935.
162. See above, p.297-8.
decision which was confirmed in 1937.\(^{163}\) Presbytery's official line hardened even further when, in 1941, Charles Chinula wrote to them raising the question of reciprocal recognition of membership and intercommunion between the two churches. Presbytery replied that it did not recognize in the origin of the body you represent nor its standards as far as they are known, a valid claim to recognition as a Church'.\(^{164}\) Chinula, incensed by the tone of Presbytery's letter, wrote back

You people don't know other people's rights, hence your insulting them. You are my friends, I must admit that, but I am in a different Church from yours, and that Church has its own rights and privileges, and so to treat a person as if he is under you is rather insulting him.\(^{165}\)

It needs to be said, however, that though official relations with Chinula remained cool, personal relations between him and C.C.A.F. Ngoni ministers and elders were much more friendly.\(^{166}\)

The early 1930s also saw a resurgence of reliance on traditional methods of witch-finding and witchcraft eradication. This was a problem common to all areas of Livingstonia, and linked by some writers with the increase in social and economic tensions arising out of the effects of the world-wide economic slump on Central Africa.\(^{167}\) In uNgoni in 1932 Jonathan Chirwa reported from Loudon that the area was 'still troubled with such evil practices as Vimbuza, Virombo, Vyanuzi and Maura, and that these are even practised by the elders of the Church'.\(^{168}\)

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163. Livingstonia Presbytery Minutes 17 June 1935 and 11 August 1937 N.A.M.
164. Ibid., 26 June 1941.
165. Charles Chinula to W. H. Watson, 1 August 1941, personally held.
166. This has emerged in conversation with various Ngoni ministers who knew Chinula.
168. Livingstonia Presbytery Minutes 25 July 1932. Vimbuza, Virombo and Vyanuzi are all forms of spirit possession; Maura is the use of bones or other physical implements to diagnose the source of disease.
In the following year the area was also affected by the Mohape witchcraft eradication movement, whose practitioners were invited into the district by the Ngoni paramount.169 This upsurge of fear of witchcraft and of traditional responses to it once again highlighted the failure of Livingstonia to provide any satisfactory alternative solution to a recurrent need.

The continued reliance on migrant labour in the thirties also created difficulties for the church in uNgoni. By 1935 the Emigrant Labour Committee, set up by the Governor, estimated that 120,000 men from Nyasaland - more than a quarter of the total male population - were working abroad.170 The percentage figures for parts of the Mzimba district were much higher.171 One immediate effect of this on the church in the area was to make it a predominantly female institution. The widespread use of balalakazi in the Loudon area undoubtedly helped to lessen the negative effects of this situation, and to ensure a higher standard of spiritual supervision than would otherwise have been the case, though Margaret Read found that most missionaries believed that the whole system of migrant labour led to broken marriages and slacker morals.172

The world economic slump had various effects on the European-based work of the Livingstonia Mission. In 1931 the Foreign Mission Committee of the Church of Scotland, (formed by the union of the United Free Church and the Church of Scotland in 1929), commented on the need to cut back its expenditure by £10,000 in the next year, and in 1933 a

169. McCracken, Politics, p.280.
171. Ibid., p.617 and 619.
172. Ibid., p.624.
special Survey Committee set up to investigate how best expenditure could be cut complained that 'reduction has been rendered much more difficult by the fact that reduction of expenditure has been going on for years past'. At the same time the missionaries at Livingstonia continued to complain of lack of European staff. A memorandum of 1936 pointed out that nineteen missionaries were doing the work which had been done by thirty ten years earlier. The real tragedy, however, was not that this was the case, but that few local Christians had been trained to take their places. By 1933 there was no girls' boarding department at Loudon, Bandawe, Livingstonia or Chasefu.

Nevertheless it would be inaccurate to look at the Ngoni church in the early 1930s in a totally negative light. The strength of that church lay in a combination of the innate resilience of Ngoni society and a pattern of church life allowing much more responsibility at congregational level than in some other parts of the mission. Both these factors, while not unaffected by the wider changes mentioned above, helped to ensure the survival and growth of the church in the 1930s.

In 1929 Fraser, in reply to a letter from Cullen Young at Loudon, had written:

I am afraid what you say about the gradual submergence of the Ngoni is true. One has seen it going on for the past thirty years, but there is really nothing in the Ngoni type to give itself the permanent leadership. At the same time they have changed the whole social customs of the country, and it seems to me to have immensely raised the moral and social tone of the land.

173. Leslie Duncan (Organizing Secretary F.M.C.) to William Johnston, 8 December 1931, included with F.M.C. Correspondence, Livingstonia papers, Box 1, N.A.M., and C. of S. F.M.C. Minutes 21 November 1933.
174. 'Memorandum on Men's Staffing position at Livingstonia Mission', F.M.C. Correspondence, Livingstonia Papers, Box 1, N.A.M.
175. C. of S. F.M.C. Minutes, 17 October 1933.
176. Fraser to Cullen Young, 19 October 1929, Ms.7690, N.L.S.
PLATE 17

Lazaro Jere
Inkosi ya Makozi M'mbelwa II
Eraser's pessimism about the political future of the Ngoni was balanced by his high estimation of their social and moral impact on the area. Their political status does seem at this time to have been declining. In 1926 28% of the inhabitants of Mzimba district had classified themselves as Ngoni; by 1931 the figure had dropped to 23% - a possible indication of the falling social prestige of an Ngoni identity.  

The introduction of Indirect Rule in 1933, however, by the enactment of the Native Authorities Ordinance and the Native Courts Ordinance in that year, served to halt, and indeed to reverse this trend. Though one of the underlying purposes of Indirect Rule may well have been to pull the rug from under the feet of educated Africans by replacing Native Associations with traditional authorities as the spokesmen of their people, the close liason between traditional chiefs and Christian ministers and teachers would seem, in the Ngoni case, to have forestalled that.

As Tangri has pointed out, in the 1930s the Ngoni paramounts M'mbelwa and Gomani were the only tribal authorities with subordinate Native Authorities under them. The ordinances of 1933 recognized M'mbelwa as paramount chief of the northern Ngoni, with six subordinate chiefs under him. These were Mtwalo, Mpherembe, Chinde, Mzukuzuku, Mzikubola and Mabulabo. M'mbelwa's court was to be a court of appeal from those of his subordinate chiefs. The eventual title of the new paramount Inkosi ya makosi (chief of chiefs), was suggested in M'mbelwa's Council by Rev. Andrew Mkochi. These moves infused a new life and enthusiasm into Ngoni traditional authority from which the church, with its close connections with that authority almost certainly benefitted.

177. Margaret Read, Ngoni, p.12.
as well.

Another aspect of the virility of the Ngoni church in the early thirties can be seen in the literary compositions of Ngoni Christians of the period. Apart from the continued production of Ngoni hymns, three other literary achievements stand out from the period of the early 1930s. The first was Yesaya Chibambo's completion of his *Makani cha baNgoni* (History of the Ngoni) in 1932, which became part of a historical reader used in Livingstonia schools. A work of important historical significance, it was also clearly, in Chibambo's view, a justification of the Ngoni adoption of Christianity, and of their claim to have been the forerunners of the new religion in northern Malawi.¹⁸⁰

The second important literary achievement of the period was Charles Chinula's chiTumbuka translation of 'Pilgrim's Progress' — *Ulendo wa Mkrístu* which he seems to have completed in the early 1930s during his period of suspension but before his secession from Livingstonia.¹⁸¹ He was later annoyed that Cullen Young had revised part of his manuscript, and commented drily,

> Mr. C. Young believed himself to have mastered CiTumbuka but made some changes in my translations. It would be absurd for me to try to correct an English book written by a white man.¹⁸²

Perhaps the most impressive of all these literary achievements was the translation of the Old Testament into chiTumbuka, virtually single-handed, by Samuel Hara, a Loudon elder then working at Fort Jameson. In 1930 he wrote to Fraser in Scotland telling him of his efforts. Though Fraser expressed his doubt that it was possible to achieve a satisfactory translation without some knowledge of Hebrew, he

¹⁸⁰. See, for example, Chibambo, 'Makani', pp. 79 and 83-4.
¹⁸¹. *Livingstonia Mission Council Minutes*, July 1932, Minute 12, N.A.M.
¹⁸². Chinula to Watson, 1 August 1941, personally held.
encouraged Hara to continue with his work.

Keep on with it, for it is good for you and you may be able to give a rendering which will be helpful to your fellow Africans. I am very proud to think that you, who have been my personal servant long ago, should have attempted this very high piece of work. 183

Hara, relying on comparison of the Zulu, Nyanja and English Old Testaments, had begun his monumental task in March 1930. 184 He completed it just over three and a half years later, on 15 October 1933. Eventually, after many delays and considerable revision Hara’s translation was finally published in 1957. 185

It is some indication of the literary value of the three works discussed above, that to-day, almost fifty years after their completion, all three are still in print and in regular use in the north of Malawi. In a period of difficulty and disillusionment for the African Christians of the Livingstonia Presbytery, they represent the essential vitality of the Ngoni church.

183. Fraser to Hara, 8 October 1930, Ms.7690, N.L.S.
185. Ibid.
CHAPTER SEVEN

FRASER AS A MISSION STRATEGIST

Introduction

Fraser's active missionary career ended, as it had begun, with the chairmanship of a major missionary conference. Before leaving for Africa in 1896 he had chaired the Liverpool Conference of the Student Volunteer Missionary Union.¹ Now, in September 1926, shortly after leaving Africa for the last time, he was chairman of the Le Zoute conference on 'the Christian Mission in Africa'.

Each conference was, in its own way, concerned with the priorities of the mission task, and each reflected the changing perspectives of European missionaries on that task. While at Liverpool in 1896 the priority had been evangelism, as summed up in the watchword of the S.V.M.U., 'The Evangelization of the World in this Generation', by 1926 education had become the main theme of the conference at Le Zoute; and while Liverpool was largely concerned with the spiritual state of individual missionaries, with a lot of emphasis on personal holiness, prayer, and the work of the Holy Spirit,² the emphasis in Belgium in 1926 was much more on the missionary method, and, in particular, the relationship of missionary societies to colonial government in such fields as education.³

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Though for most of the period between the two conferences Fraser was a working missionary, his wider influence on mission thinking was not negligible. In Scotland the widespread interest in his writings was supplemented by the many schemes he undertook during his furloughs - such as the institution of the Mission Study Movement in 1906-07. His writings were also known further afield, particularly in the U.S.A. and South Africa, and his attendance at international conferences, such as the Nashville meeting of the American Student Volunteer Conference in March 1906, helped establish him as an international missionary figure.

Nevertheless, it would be true to say that Fraser's greatest influence as a mission strategist came in the 1920s. There are several reasons for this. First of all, his long period of furlough in Scotland between 1920 and 1923, (involving as it did both the organization of the Scottish Churches' Missionary Campaign, and his Moderatorship of the General Assembly of the United Free Church), served to widen his already substantial reputation. As one church writer put it in 1923, 'His fame, extensive before, is now world-wide'. Secondly, his return to Scotland in 1925 to take up the important post of Home Organization Secretary of the F.M.C. placed him in direct contact with the latest trends in missionary thinking, and with the main organs of missionary organization. Both can be seen in his close contacts during this period with J. H. Oldham and the International Missionary Council. Thirdly, his personality, which disliked controversy, had ensured that his earlier writings, while quite distinctive, stopped

6. Agnes Fraser, Fraser, p.278.
short of open criticism of the policies of the mission of which he was a member. Increasingly in the 1920s, and particularly after 1925, he became more open about some of his differences of opinion with certain of Livingstonia's methods.

This chapter will attempt, therefore, to define and examine some of the main strands of Fraser's thinking about missions, primarily, though not exclusively, in the 1920s, and to assess his place in the mainstream of missionary thinking during that period.

Ashcroft's Report and Fraser's Reaction

Fraser's first major contribution to the strategy of the Livingstonia Mission in the 1920s had come in his response to a report drawn up by Rev. Frank Ashcroft, one of the secretaries of the F.M.C., following a tour he had made of the Livingstonia stations in 1922.

Ashcroft had been sent to Livingstonia by the F.M.C. of the United Free Church, to assess the situation there in the light of the limited financial resources of the early 1920s and to recommend possible changes in policy. He set out from Edinburgh in February 1922, and by the end of March had reached Kabwe (Broken Hill) in Zambia. Between April and August he proceeded on what was probably the most wide-ranging tour of Livingstonia by any visitor from Scotland, taking in all the European stations of the Livingstonia Mission in Zambia, Tanzania, and Malawi.

During his visit to Loudon in July, he reported that the station was almost deserted, due to a bad outbreak of influenza. This

7. Ashcroft's Report is available in manuscript in Church of Scotland Archives, and is printed in the U.F.C. Foreign Mission Report for 1923; 'Report of the Deputy on our Central African Fields'.
8. 'Report on his African Tours 1920-23', Dr. Frank Ashcroft, 10 July 1923, C.S.A.
prevented him seeing any of the schools in operation there - and indeed most of them were closed in other parts of uNgoni also. Nevertheless, a large section of his report, presented to the General Assembly of the U.F.C. in 1923, dealt with the need for educational reorganization in the mission, and it was this, more than anything else that called forth Fraser's response.9

One of Ashcroft's main targets of attack was the village school system, particularly at Loudon, where he considered that the one hundred and twenty schools in the district10 were 'too many, in my view, for any one man to superintend'.11 It was a view shared by Elmslie, who wanted to cut down the number of schools in the area as a whole, but anticipated that Fraser would not agree.12 In Ashcroft's view

Far too many schools ...... have been opened in each district, without sufficient attention to the educational needs of the district as a whole, and to the need of constant supervision by the missionary himself of such schools ...... far too many of these schools are poorly equipped and inadequately staffed, and are quite unfit to be considered real steps in the educational ladder which the missionaries are seeking to construct.13

He suggested a reorganization of the village school system - considerably reducing the number of village schools, raising the standards in those remaining, and extending the school year from six to nine months. Among his other suggestions was the setting-up of three training schools for village teachers, at Khondowe, Mwenzo and Kyimbila.14

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10. Plus 20 at Chasefu, across the border in Zambia, which had been administratively separated from Loudon for the first time in 1923.
12. Elmslie to Laws, 12 March 1921, 'Ekwendeni Correspondence 1921-27' Livingstonia Papers, Box 9, N.A.M.
14. Ibid.
Ngoni Teachers 1897

The group includes, (last four at right of back row),
Makara Tembo, (one of the first Ngoni converts), Ben Nhlane,
Amon Jere, (inkosi Mtwalo II), and Joseph Tembo.
Fraser, who was on furlough during Ashcroft's tour, and didn't, therefore, meet him at Loudon, took issue with many of his recommenda-
dations, and embodied his criticisms in a long document stretching to
nine typed pages. To the extent that Ashcroft had seen few of the
schools in action, and had admitted that several of the missionaries
were discontented with the present educational set-up in regard to the
large number of village schools, Fraser may have felt that his own
ideas were under attack not only from Ashcroft, but from some of his
missionary colleagues.

Apart from his many detailed criticisms, which are not of concern
here, Fraser's 'Remarks on Mr. Ashcroft's Report on his visit to
Livingstonia,' contain several of his main ideas on the mission task
in the 1920s.

First of all he strongly opposed the reduction in numbers of the
village schools, explaining that 'The village schools are not primarily
educational institutions; they are evangelistic agencies, remarkably
cheap and very efficient for the purpose, because they awaken
intelligence, and have been and are the agencies for winning thousands
of souls'. While Fraser's ideas about the methods of village
education undoubtedly developed over the years, his view of the function
of village schools remained remarkably consistent, and was the linchpin
of his whole educational theory which will be discussed below. For
Fraser education should be based on character, 'and character is built
on moral and spiritual foundations'. For this reason, he believed,

15. Ibid.
16. 'Remarks on Mr. Ashcroft's Report on his visit to Livingstonia'
by Donald Fraser; typescript, Livingstonia Papers, Box 1, N.A.M.
17. Ibid.
18. Fraser, New Africa, p.129.
'the hope of Africa is in the mass education which is being given, rather than the intensive education of the few'.\textsuperscript{19}

For Fraser, then, the village school was not primarily a matter of educational efficiency, but of evangelistic responsibility. Any reduction in the number of such schools he regarded as an abandonment of that responsibility. In the 1920s, no less than at earlier stages in his career, he was calling for more rapid expansion of the mission and church than many of his colleagues believed wise or, indeed, possible.\textsuperscript{20}

That is not to say that he was totally unconcerned with the educational standards of the village schools - but he saw these as secondary, rather than primary. For that reason he objected to Ashcroft's idea to set up three training schools for village school teachers, insisting rather, that 'their education be continuous, moving along with their work'.\textsuperscript{21} Fraser's views here bear many parallels to the philosophy underlying the modern Theological Education by Extension movement throughout the world, which seeks to contextualize the training of both ordained and lay church leaders.\textsuperscript{22} In practice, Fraser wanted to continue to develop the system of vacation schools for teachers, held each year at Loudon; and while it may be possible to argue that this was a paternalistic method aimed at greater control of teachers, in practice this was not the case, for in this context it was Ashcroft's scheme to reduce the number of village schools in view of 'the need of

\textsuperscript{19} Ibid., p.163.
\textsuperscript{20} See, for example, Fraser's article, 'Over the Top - or Dig-in?', \textit{U.F.C.S.M.R.}, March 1925, p.113, in which he comments that he may be accused of spreading his work too widely.
\textsuperscript{21} 'Remarks on Mr. Ashcroft's Report', p.3.
\textsuperscript{22} See, for example, Learning in Context: The Search for Innovative Patterns in Theological Education, published by the Theological Education Fund, Bromley, Kent, 1973, and F. Ross Kinsler, \textit{The Extension Movement in Theological Education}, South Pasadena, 1978.
constant supervision by the missionary himself of such schools which would have tended more to restrict the freedom of African teachers.

Fraser's criticisms of Ashcroft's recommendations were not, however, confined to his views on village schools. A large section of Fraser's 'Remarks' was taken up with a discussion of the role and function of the Overtoun Institution in the educational policies of the mission. Though Fraser did not object to the Institution per se he began to have severe reservations about the way in which it had developed, particularly the emphasis on the industrial side in the training of craftsmen to satisfy the European demand for labour.

During his first visit to Khondowe in 1897 he had stressed the importance of the education, as opposed to the industrial or commercial side of the Institution. Its primary function, he argued, was to train teachers and evangelists. This was not an emphasis with which Laws would then have disagreed, but as time went on, more and more of the effort and finance of the Institution went towards the industrial and commercial side of the venture. Such a development with its hydro-electricity scheme, piped water, electric saws, stone-cutting equipment etc., often impressed European visitors, as it had impressed Ashcroft, but, as Fraser remarked of Khondowe on another occasion 'eyes that knew Europe responded to a little bit of Europe rather than to a sublimated Africa, whose genius they could not understand'.

The central question was, Fraser believed, 'Is the Institution a factory or a school?'. The question was brought to a head by

24. E.C.S.M., December 1897, 'A Visit to Livingstoneia Institution' by Donald Fraser, p.287.
26. 'Remarks on Mr. Ashcroft's Report', p.5.
Ashcroft's suggestion that the Institution should become self-supporting - the educational departments, in effect, depending largely on the success of the industrial and commercial departments. Apart from the fact that Fraser believed that such a proposition was not economically viable, he totally opposed the idea on philosophical grounds, arguing that what he called 'the dream of a great industrial centre' would ruin much of the educational value, even of the industrial departments. 'I for one say', added Fraser bluntly, 'that to realize such a dream I would not lift a little finger'.

Fraser himself, while admitting that 'the service that the Institution has given to the country in training skilled artisans has been immense', believed that the training was directed too much at providing artisans for European employment, and that 'a more direct and larger contribution to the social conditions of the people could be made'. He suggested that 'we should specialize in training carpenters and agriculturalists who will be accepted as teachers and leaders in their own village life and will find their livelihood in the service of their own people'. He further suggested that while such training should be limited to the kind of tools and equipment found in the villages, it should nevertheless include a theoretical and technical side and be closely related to the educational code, so that some of the artisans produced could be employed as village teachers. Ten years later Levi Mumba, who had by then become the first African to serve on the Advisory Committee on Education, drew up a memorandum entitled

28. 'Remarks on Mr. Ashcroft's Report', p.5.
29. Ibid., p.7.
30. Ibid.
'Demand for Government Schools'. While criticising the standard of mission education, he included some sections whose arguments were very similar to those used by Fraser in 1923.

We are agreed wrote Mumba that it is the trend of education which requires altering, and not the quantity or quality of it. We are agreed that the policy in education should be based on the fact that the majority of us will have to find means of living in agriculture which has been our industry from time immemorial, to which should be added present day industries to be undertaken by us independently in our villages and in towns. Hitherto the aim in education has been to turn out men and women with abilities to work as employees of Europeans with the result that the supply has exceeded the demand.

In putting forward a similar suggestion in 1923, Fraser was stepping into the mainstream of an educational debate on the nature and aims of African education which was to rage among educated Africans, mission theorists, government officials and European settlers for the whole of the 1920s, and well into the 1930s.

The Educational Debate

The debate on African education in the 1920s was wide-ranging and long-lasting. Insofar as it concerned missions in general, and the Livingstonia Mission in particular, it had two main aspects. The first concerned the aims and methods of missionary education in Africa; the second, the relationship between missions and colonial government in the carrying out of those aims and methods. The first of these two issues was highlighted by the visit to Malawi of the Phelps-Stokes Commission in 1924. The Phelps-Stokes Fund had been formed by the will

31. I have been unable to consult this personally, and rely on Roderick Macdonald's references to it: Macdonald, 'African Education', pp.465-70.
32. Ibid., pp.467-8.
of Caroline Phelps-Stokes, a rich American spinster, in 1910, concerned with 'the education of negroes, both in Africa and the United States'. It carried out two commissions to Africa in the early 1920s - the first to West and South Africa in 1920, the second to East Africa, including Malawi, in 1924.

The chairman of the 1924 commission was Thomas Jesse Jones, the educational director of the Phelps-Stokes Fund, who had been born in Wales, but whose family had emigrated to the United States when he was eleven years old. By the 1920s he had, according to King, gained the reputation of being one of America's foremost experts on the Negro. Jones made much use of the term 'adaptation', arguing that Western education was unsuitable for Africa and had to be adapted to suit African conditions. He outlined the five general objectives of education, which he called 'the simples' as character, health, agricultural (and industrial) skills, family life, and recreation. Rev. J. W. C. Dougall, secretary of the commission, has pointed out that the commission thought that all missions were rather limited in their educational ideas, and that the education provided by many missions was inadequate to the needs of Africa. In brief they thought that most mission education was too academic and should be more related to the actual life of Africans in a village situation. Much more emphasis should be placed on the teaching of health, hygiene and village crafts.

The commission visited Livingstonia in late April and early May 1924, including visits to Khondowe, Ekwendeni and Loudon.

34. Ibid., pp.21-3.
37. Ibid., and Jones, Education in East Africa, p.XXIII
highly praising the Institution at Khondowe, Jones in his official report, had this to say,

With all that has been accomplished there are limitations and omissions. Fortunately they are recognised by the Institution and with the increase of funds and staff they will be corrected. The more important of these are the need of relating the splendid industrial training to village handicrafts and the extension of agricultural influence to the gardens and fields of the people.\[38\]

These comments may be thought to be particularly significant in the light of Fraser's comments of the previous year on Ashcroft's Report.

With regard to Fraser's work Jones commented that

the activities at Loudon are in striking contrast with those of the Livingstonia Institution. Here the stress has been on the extension of the influence of Christianity and civilisation to many communities distributed over miles of territory. While the number of buildings and the plan of organization are notable achievements, they have been subordinated to the extension of character and spiritual influence almost to danger point. Reports indicate, however, that the influence of Loudon on every phase of Native life is real and abiding.\[39\]

Jones went on to quote a long description of work at Loudon, written by Fraser himself, remarking that 'while this procedure is contrary to the usual method of this Report, it seems emphatically justified in this instance'.\[40\] The inclusion of Fraser's report, in the light of the above comment, together with the inclusion of a further long quotation from his writings\[41\] would seem to indicate that Jones was closely in sympathy with Fraser's methods.

Yet beyond the methods of education, and the question of whether a largely literary or a firmly-based community-adapted system was more suitable for Africa, lay the much more fundamental question of the

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38. Ibid., p. 208.
39. Ibid.
40. Ibid.
41. Ibid., pp. 34-5.
ultimate aims of African education — whether, in short, the African was to be educated for a position of supremacy, equality, or inferiority.

Kenneth King has argued forcibly and convincingly that the Phelps-Stokes Commissions were concerned not simply to put forward an educational formula, but to counter-balance the ideas of Marcus Garvey and W. E. B. Du Bois. He has further indicated that the ideas of Jesse Jones contained a strong element of racialism and that some contemporary observers became convinced that they 'presupposed for Negroes a permanent status significantly different from that of whites'. Certainly in both Kenya and South Africa the new theories of educational orthodoxy were interpreted by many Europeans as a way of containing African advancement and retaining white political and economic supremacy. In particular, Helen Ritner has pointed out that J. H. Oldham, Secretary of the International Missionary Council, a friend of Fraser, and one of the leading advocates of the new theories of adaptation, was often cited in D.R.C. mission articles in South Africa in the 1920s and 30s. She has further suggested that

In the nineteen-twenties to apply such theories to colonial territories was progressive .... In the South African context, however, advocacy of cultural relativism could (and did) have quite different implications, synchronising with and reflecting the growing exclusivism and consolidation of the Afrikaner community.

Furthermore some Afrikaner theologians were by the mid-1920s advocating a policy of ecclesiastical segregation in terms very similar to some of

42. King, Pan-Africanism, p.126.
43. Ibid., p.134. For more details see the whole of King's Chapter Five.
45. Ibid.
46. Ibid., p.159.
those used in Fraser's writings - with emphasis on the episcopal role of the missionary, and the need to avoid denationalising a people.\(^{47}\)

It is in the light of these facts that a further examination of Fraser's views on the aims and methods of mission education must now be attempted.

It has first of all to be realised, that while Livingstonia is usually identified with a highly literary form of education on the non-industrial side, missionary attitudes to African education were beginning to change there well before the First World War. As McCracken has pointed out James Henderson's successors at the Institution after 1905 regarded the educational code as much too ambitious, and in 1909 Mission Council abandoned the Arts Course where the most able of the young students had proceeded before going on to Theological training.\(^{48}\)

Macdonald notices a change in emphasis at the United Missionary Conference of 1910, when Laws pointed out that education must be carefully adapted to the African's requirements, and Hetherwick suggested that the Nyasaland Educational Code was too much modelled on its Scottish counterpart.\(^{49}\)

Elmslie expressed the view that as higher education benefitted only a few, education should be more related to the needs of many.\(^{50}\)

Fraser, therefore, did not stand alone in his general view of the need for reform in the educational policies of the Scottish missions in Malawi. It would be true to say, however, that several of his emphases were different from those of either Laws or Elmslie.

Several of Fraser's ideas on education have already been quoted.


\(^{48}\) McCracken, Politics, p.147.


\(^{50}\) Ibid., p.118.
These include a strong emphasis on the importance of village schools as a method of evangelism, the training of agricultural and industrial teachers, and the encouragement of agriculture and industry as village pursuits, rather than as a means to European employment. To these may be added a strong belief in 'character' as the basis of education, and his encouragement of the idea of community gardens, set up in each district not only as an aid to practical education, but also as a method of financial subsidy for the village schools. Writing in 1925 on the occasion of the fiftieth anniversary of the founding of the Livingstonia Mission he reiterated his belief in the importance of village schools:

We want to see our schools so conducted that when pupils leave they shall not only be able to read and write, but they shall have new ambitions after cleanliness, sanitation, good housing, good agriculture, and, of course, through all that, the schools shall be the training places of good character.52

All this seems very similar to the ideas of Phelps-Stokes, and indeed, as might be expected, Fraser thought highly of the Phelps-Stokes theories of the need to adapt education, and praised them in a chapter on 'Education for Life' in his book the New Africa - published in May 1927.53 Furthermore, partly as a result of his chapter on 'Education for Life', Fraser became regarded as one of the leading exponents of that philosophy, and his book in turn was quoted by, among others, Edgar H. Brookes, a leading South African educationalist, who, in spite of his liberal reputation, was a believer in the necessity of a limited

51. Fraser, New Africa, pp.128-131 and Fraser to Gaunt, 27 May 1927, Box 1209, T.N.C., S.O.A.S.
53. Fraser, New Africa, Ch.VI, 'Education for Life'.
form of segregation in South Africa. The question must therefore be faced whether Fraser shared the racialist ideas of Jesse Jones, and whether the adapted 'education for life' which he advocated was aimed at limiting the political and economic opportunities of Nyasaland Africans in the 1920s.

The answer is an emphatic 'no!', for while Fraser was no revolutionary, his writings and attitudes during the 1920s make it clear that he looked forward to the continued educational and political advance of Nyasaland Africans. Indeed Brookes specifically praises Fraser for recognizing 'the hollow hypocrisy' of many Europeans, who favour 'education for life' in order to keep the African in the place they have assigned to him as a hewer of wood and drawer of water.

In a long and important letter which Fraser wrote in 1927 to R. F. Gaunt, the newly appointed Director of Education for Nyasaland, he makes it clear that it is no part of his educational theory to keep the African 'in his place' either politically or economically. Gaunt in a paper which he had read to the 1926 United Missionary Conference at Blantyre had argued that 'the scheme of education in this country must aim at producing good loyal African citizens'. In a memorandum which he sent to Fraser, and to which Fraser's letter was a reply, he used a similar phrase. Fraser reacted strongly against it:

The 'contented and loyal' phrase is scarcely the purpose. Education must necessarily rouse discontent with poor conditions and the restlessness of awakening natural consciousness. Some might think you desire to create an Africa who will be 'content' with the position

given to him and never be a trouble to Government. 57

Elsewhere in the same letter Fraser urged the need to develop the commercial side of education, 58 explaining that he wanted to see a Nyasaland where

the small trades and industries will be in the hands of the natives and not of Greeks, Indians or Chinese .... A man should not finish his apprenticeship in an industry without knowing how to conduct his trade in his community, not as a servant of the European but as his own master. 59

In these respects Fraser stood in the mainstream of Livingstonia thinking on the aims of education. W. P. Young agreed with the general tone of Fraser’s letter to Gaunt, his brother T. C. Young had long argued against the policy of educating Africans merely as employees of Europeans, and Robert Laws specifically and strongly criticised the view of African education which said ‘the native should be kept in his place’ . 60

What then is to be thought of the strong support of Fraser, W. P. Young, (and to some extent even Dr. Laws), for the Phelps-Stokes philosophy of adaptation in education, assuming, with King, that it was basically racialist in nature? It is possible to argue, as indeed King does, that many missionary leaders were taken-in by the Phelps-Stokes philosophy, and were unaware of its racialist undertones. 61 It is also

57. Fraser to R. F. Gaunt, 25 May 1927, 'Nyasaland-Education', Box 1209, I.M.C., S.O.A.S.
58. This view was not contrary to those expressed in his 'Remarks on Mr. Ashcroft’s Report', where it was the preparation of Africans as employees for Europeans, and Ashcroft’s suggestion that the commercial departments of the Institution should finance the educational departments, to which Fraser objected.
59. Fraser to Gaunt, 25 May 1927.
true that the Livingstonia missionaries greatly admired the educational achievements of institutions such as Tuskegee and Hampton, which had close connections with Phelps-Stokes.

One must, however, clearly distinguish between methods and aims. Fraser, and those of his colleagues who agreed with him, did not come to the ideas of Phelps-Stokes like new-born babes. They had been arguing such ideas for years. What concerned them as it still concerns educationalists in independent African countries to-day, was to create a method of education relevant to the needs of the country. Unfortunately white settlers in places like Kenya and South Africa interpreted those needs in terms of their own supremacy, but this was not a view shared by Fraser or most of his colleagues. Where the Livingstonia Mission in general may be open to criticism is not that it turned to such methods of education, but that it turned to them a quarter of a century too late, and at a time when many Africans were beginning to demand the very type of literary education for which Livingstonia had earlier been famous.

The educational debate of the 1920s was not confined, however, to the method, or even the aims of African mission education. It included the question of the relationship between European missions and colonial governments in the provision and financing of education. In Malawi this controversy came to a head in May 1927, with the attempt of the government to introduce 'An Ordinance to provide for the management of education in the Protectorate of Nyasaland'. The proposed ordinance proved highly unpopular with the Foreign Mission Committees in Scotland, and Fraser, as one of the F.M.C. secretaries, and an ex-missionary with

62. Extracts of the Ordinance are printed in the Scots Observer, 24 December 1927.
extensive educational experience in Malawi, became deeply involved in the controversy.

The origins of the ordinance might be traced back to government attempts to control the missions more effectively in the wake of the Chilembwe Rising, but its immediate antecedents were the Phelps-Stokes suggestion to establish a Department of Education, and its institution in 1925. The 1927 Ordinance was an attempt by the colonial government to gain overall control of education in the Protectorate, while leaving the practical running of almost all the schools in the hands of the missions. It would have given the government the right to close down schools it thought inefficient and control the opening of new schools. In addition it would have meant that only those teachers who had passed a government examination would be able to teach— even in mission schools. These and other provisions proved highly unpopular with the Scottish churches, who around September 1927 set up a committee on 'Education in Nyasaland' of which Fraser was the convenor.

Fraser's position as convenor of the committee on 'Education in Nyasaland' kept him in the centre of the debate for the rest of 1927, and produced a detailed correspondence with J. H. Oldham. In addition Fraser, in co-operation with Dr. Stevenson, his Church of Scotland counterpart, helped draw up a memorial to the Secretary of State for the Colonies, outlining the position of the Scottish churches.

The controversy showed Fraser in a remarkably determined mood. Some of the Scottish missionaries on the spot, including Laws, (in the

63. Jones, Education in East Africa, p.216.
64. Protest against Ordinance, drawn up by U.F.C., Box 1209, I.M.C., S.O.A.S. Quoted in Macdonald, 'African Education', p.289.
65. 'Memorial by F.M.C.s of C. of S. and U.F.C. of S. to Secretary of State for the Colonies concerning financial grant for Education in Nyasaland'. 'Nyasaland-Education' Box 1209, I.M.C., S.O.A.S.
last few months of his fifty-two years service in Malawi), were prepared, reluctantly, to accept the government proposals. Laws explained to Oldham that

If we did not meet the Director of Education in trying to work his scheme, we ran the risk of challenging the Director of Education to take up Education for the government alone, and so have an entirely secular education in Nyasaland, which would be a thing we do not want, and to be deplored.66

Fraser, on the other hand, speaking on behalf of the Foreign Mission Committees, made it clear to Oldham that 'we do not intend in any way to yield the point, that we shall control what education we wish to give when Government provides no subsidy'.67 Fraser’s main objections to the ordinance were that the government wanted to control all the schools, while providing only ten per cent of the expenditure, that the composition of the proposed Advisory Board, giving missions a minority voice, was unjust68 and that the threat of legal action against school managers who failed to make clerical returns to the government was unnecessarily draconian.69

In addition, however, some of his other comments, both to Oldham and to Gaunt, throw more light on Fraser’s overall views of the purpose of mission education, and, in particular, on his views of the relationship between village schools and higher education.

Fraser believed, first of all, that the government should greatly
extend its financial contribution to education in the Protectorate. In addition, he argued that the percentage of the proposed £10,000 p.a. grant spent on administration was much too high, and that more should go directly to the development of schools in the country. (Of the £10,000 p.a. grant proposed, only £4,500 would have gone in aid to local schools; the rest would be taken up in salaries and administration). Furthermore, in spite of his own great emphasis on village schools, he disagreed with Gaunt's contention that the first priority was to improve education at this level. He urged the government to leave the village schools alone for the time being, and to spend the limited amount of cash available on improving the central schools and teacher training institutions.

In addition Fraser disagreed with the government insistence on the absolute need for European supervision. As pointed out elsewhere, Fraser, while insisting on the need for supervision, did not identify that supervision with the European missionary alone. Now he renewed the same emphasis — pointing out to Oldham the physical impossibility of European missionaries adequately supervising all the U.F.C. schools, and elaborating the point to Gaunt:

I hope that while seeking to create the best possible supervision you will recognize that Africans themselves, trained to it, can do it well, and that adequate supervision does not mean frequent supervision by a European, whether he be a trained educationalist or not, but close and constant and helpful supervision by Africans of character, trained in methods of education, who act with the European.

70. Fraser to Gaunt, 25 May 1927, Box 1209, I.M.C., S.O.A.S.
71. 'Notes of Conversation, J. H. Oldham with members of Scottish Foreign Missions Committee', 7 October 1927, Box 1209, I.M.C., S.O.A.S.
72. See above, Ch. 5, 'Livingstonia and the Chilembwe Commission of Enquiry'.
73. 'Notes of Conversation, J. H. Oldham/Scottish F.M.C., 7 October 1927, Box 1209, I.M.C., S.O.A.S.
74. Ibid., Fraser to Gaunt, 25 May 1927.
The controversy showed Fraser, somewhat surprisingly perhaps, as occupying a position of what might almost be seen as extreme concern to safeguard the rights of the missions against government interference. This position is shown clearly not only in his opposition to many of the provisions of the proposed ordinance, but also in his insistence on guarantees of the rights of the long-established missions. In reply to Oldham's suggestion that the government was probably not intending to close down all 'sub-standard' schools, in spite of having the power to do so in the ordinance, Fraser replied,

We are not prepared to accept private assurances which do not guarantee the future and protect us from any reactionary attitude on the part of future Governors or colonists. ..... We do not wish legislation to be set up which would be an instrument of evil in the hands of reactionary men.

Fraser also became involved briefly in a controversy with Dr. Norman Leys, (staunch supporter of African rights against those of white settlers in Kenya), about the relationship of missions to government, raised by the 1927 Nyasaland Education Ordinance. Leys had earlier been involved in a similar controversy with J. H. Oldham, carried on in the pages of the recently established Scottish religious weekly the Scots Observer, in which he had argued that the new trend to closer educational co-operation between missions on the one hand, and governments and settlers on the other, was a dangerous shift in policy, likely to prevent African educational advancement, and lead to African alienation from Christian missions. In December 1927 Leys wrote an

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75. Ibid., Oldham to Fraser, 19 December 1927.
76. Ibid., Fraser to Oldham, 23 December 1927.
77. Dr. Norman Leys, 'Christianity and Race' in Scots Observer, 13 November 1926, p.4.
article for the Scots Observer on what he saw as the threat to mission schools posed by the 1927 ordinance. He included a description of the village schools of the Livingstonia Mission, which might well have been written by Fraser himself:

They, rather than the largely selected groups living at the stations where the European missionaries live, are the African Church .... In official circles and among so-called educational experts it is the fashion to refer to them as bush schools. The teachers in them are certainly very ignorant. What else could be expected of men paid 6 shillings to 12 shillings a month, who, as a rule, have to cultivate their own food gardens as well as to teach? But these school-churches are alive.78

Leys went on to criticise the 1927 ordinance and the apparent missionary willingness to accept its presuppositions of government control.

On the same page Fraser, who had been shown a draft of Leys' article, commented briefly on it. His comments make it clear that in some respects his position on this particular issue was closer to that of Leys than to that of Oldham. 'With the substance of his remarks on the Ordinance', Fraser commented, 'my only complaint is that he does not state fully the seriousness of the effect it may have on education, and on the creation of an intelligent Christianity in Nyasaland if its powers are used with unsympathetic authority.'79 Where Fraser disagreed with Leys was on the tactics to be adopted in the situation. Partly as a matter of personality, and partly because of his official position as a Foreign Mission Secretary, Fraser argued that only when the official F.M.C. policy of friendly and private negotiations with the government had failed, was a public agitation justified. Nevertheless, the way in

78. Ibid., 'Church and State in East Africa' by Dr. Norman Leys, p.13.
79. Ibid., 'Comment by Dr. Donald Fraser'.
which he conducted such negotiations, and in particular his insistence on written guarantees about the right of missions to operate their own schools, shows clearly that, like Leys, he was fully aware of the implications of the 1927 Ordinance.

In the course of these continuing negotiations Oldham, on behalf of the Conference of British Missionary Societies, visited Malawi early in 1928. As a result of the discussions he held there, a new ordinance was drawn up. Though delayed by the death of Gaunt, it was eventually put into operation in 1930. With this ordinance Fraser professed himself very satisfied, and gave most of the credit for its achievement to Oldham. Yet a good deal of the responsibility for the changes was due to the determination of Fraser himself, who had been largely responsible for setting out the position of the Scottish churches, and for arguing that position against the more moderate views of Oldham.

The controversy showed Fraser as particularly jealous of the rights of the missions in education. Such a position stemmed from two distinct, though not wholly unconnected concerns. The first was to safeguard what Fraser saw as the vital and central place of character and religion in education; the second, (which indicates Fraser's clear awareness of the reactionary potential of the Phelps-Stokes philosophy), was to ensure that educational legislation did not become what he called 'an instrument of evil in the hands of reactionary men'.

80. Fraser to Oldham, 17 October 1928, Box 1209, I.M.C., S.O.A.S.
81. See, for example, Oldham to Fraser, 19 December 1927 and Fraser to Oldham, 23 December 1927, Box 1209, I.M.C., S.O.A.S.
82. Ibid.
The Le Zoute Conference

The whole educational controversy of the 1920s, involving the aims and methods of mission education in Africa, and the relationship between missions and governments, was central to the discussions of the Le Zoute conference of September 1926, of which Fraser was chairman. To a large extent Le Zoute represented the mainstream of European missionary strategy for Africa in the 1920s, and indeed well into the 1930s. It is important, therefore, to examine its conclusions, as well as looking at some criticisms of Le Zoute made from various quarters, both at the time, and more recently.

The idea of an international conference on missions in Africa had been discussed at a missionary conference at High Leigh in England in September 1924, but in practice the impetus which led to Le Zoute originated with a meeting of the International Missionary Council at Atlantic City, New Jersey, in January 1925. Two months later an informal meeting in London of representatives of British Missionary Societies agreed to pursue the matter, and a series of parallel meetings in the U.S.A. and Britain followed. By June 1925 a list of subjects for discussion had been approved, and by October 1925 the decision had been taken, on the initiative of the British committee, to ask Fraser to be chairman of the conference. Eight months later, it was on the suggestion of the American Committee that Fraser was also appointed chairman of the sectional meeting on 'Evangelism and the Church'.

The American origins of the conference are particularly significant in the light of King's arguments about the close connections between

Le Zoute and the Phelps-Stokes philosophy. King has pointed out that 'every major fund that worked in the American South was represented at the highest level' at Le Zoute, and that 'the conference was an endorsement of Jones's overall vision of education'. This might be thought to imply a deliberate attempt to impose on Africa an educational system designed to limit African educational advancement, though as King himself has pointed out, for Oldham 'adaptation' was a purely educational term, and in the late twenties and early thirties relations between Oldham and Jones became progressively more strained, as Oldham became more aware of the political intentions of white settlers in East Africa.

In terms of the conference itself, and of the relationship of the rank and file membership to the educational views expressed, there is evidence that, far from opposing them as being too educationally limiting, some delegates regarded the whole trend towards emphasizing education as being undesirable. They feared that what they saw as an undue emphasis on education might lead to a deterioration in the quantity and quality of evangelization; some were unconvinced by Edwin W. Smith's contention that 'indiscriminate denunciation of African customs in preaching is merely mischievous and foolish'. There were present at the Le Zoute conference, in fact, groups of various theological and political viewpoints, and though the official 'Phelps-Stokes' view was clearly represented in the eventual resolutions, it is clear that for some it was too radical, rather than not radical enough.

84. King, Pan-Africanism, p.145.
85. Ibid., p.146.
87. Ibid., p.40.
The main preoccupations of the conference were with the nature of African mission education, the training of new missionaries, the attitude of missionaries towards traditional African culture, land and labour, and evangelism. With regard to the recommendations on education, as Edwin Smith himself admits, Jesse Jones's influence was conspicuously manifest. Nevertheless, the conference felt that Jones's ideas did not lay sufficient stress on the importance of religion in education, and the eventual recommendations put special emphasis on this. 88 Apart from this the educational ideas of the conference closely followed those of Phelps-Stokes, stressing the need to relate education to the needs of the community and to promote the health and well-being of the people. Schools of the Jeanes type 89 were encouraged and missions were urged to concentrate on village, intermediate and secondary schools, and teacher-training colleges, leaving higher college education, and advanced industrial, agricultural and medical institutions to the government. 90

It was perhaps in its comments on political affairs that the conference failed most conspicuously. Its comments on the racial situation in South Africa was very vague and non-committal, and Smith thought that the section on African land rights should have been much stronger - instead of merely accepting the fait accompli of European settlement in many parts of the Continent. 91 It could well be argued,

88. Ibid., pp. 63 and 112.
89. Jeanes' schools, (named after Miss Emily Jeanes who had established the Jeanes' Fund to encourage black education in America), were primarily concerned with community-based education, and stressed the importance of health, sanitation, agriculture, and crafts in African village education. For a discussion of their role in the development of education in Malawi, see Macdonald, 'African Education', Chapter VI, 'The Jeanes Experiment'.
91. Ibid., pp. 89 and 124-5.
however, that over and above any short-comings of policy, the most serious short-coming of Le Zoute was in the composition of its delegates. With the exception of a few American negroes, and about four black Africans, Le Zoute was basically a conference of Europeans, talking about Africa; that this was so in the mid-1920s could in itself be seen as an indication of failure.

Apart from his chairmanship of the conference, Fraser's major contribution came on the topic of 'Evangelism'. Though his theological perspectives had changed somewhat since Liverpool in 1896, he was still concerned, as then, with the need for prayer, personal dedication, and evangelism, and these concerns are reflected in the series of addresses which he gave to the conference. Nevertheless, Fraser's thinking was by 1926, more concerned with the methods of Christian mission, and his priorities are clearly visible in his major article 'the Evangelistic Approach to the African' which was written in draft form while still in Africa in 1925, sent out as a pre-conference paper to selected groups in Africa, America, Britain, and Europe, published in July 1926 in a special Le Zoute edition of the International Review of Missions, and finally delivered as a conference address in September. More than any other single piece of writing this article epitomizes Fraser's thinking on the missionary task. Amongst the points made by Fraser was the danger of presenting Christianity in a Europeanised or denominational form, the importance of the missionary's character as a force for change, the need to relate Christian doctrines such as the atonement to historical African concepts of man and God, and to accept African

customs such as lobola and circumcision which were not essentially anti-Christian, the need to use African music in worship, and the recognition by the missionary of the importance of dreams and visions in the religious life of Africa. 93

Several of these emphases are again present in the 'Recommendations and Resolutions' of the sub-committee on evangelism of which Fraser was chairman at Le Zoute. The original draft of these recommendations was written in Fraser's own handwriting, and it is at least possible that he prepared it himself, rather than simply transcribing the views of his section of the conference. 94 Certainly much of the document is in a style very reminiscent of Fraser, particularly, perhaps, the following long 'suggestion on evangelism':

The life of the African is essentially social and based on tribal conditions and customs. Therefore everything that is good in the African heritage should be conserved, enriched and ennobled by contact with the spirit of Christ. While the Church cannot sanction any custom which is evil, it should not condemn customs which are not incompatible with the Christian life. Customs whose accidents are evil but whose substance is valuable may be purified and used. Where in the light of more comprehensive knowledge a change of practice is suggested it should be made with due care not to wound the feelings of the African Christian. In all questions regarding indigenous custom the counsel of mature well-instructed African Christians should be sought; and care should be taken not to create artificial sins. It is our hope that the African Christians will build up a body of Christian custom, true to their genius, and covering the whole of their life. 95

Amongst the other recommendations, one, in particular, stands out as being true both to the thinking and practice of Fraser. This is the insistence that 'discipline should make for edification and not for

93. Fraser, 'Evangelistic Approach'.
94. 'Resolutions and Draft Resolutions', Le Zoute Conference, Box 217, I.M.C., S.O.A.S.
destruction'.

Though the Le Zoute conference may be said to represent a position of orthodoxy in terms of mid-1920s missiology, it was not without its critics. The Anglican missiologist Roland Allen sharply criticised, and totally rejected, the alliance of missions and government in education, in a book written specifically to challenge the presuppositions of Le Zoute.

Roland Allen argued that missionary societies were not founded to undertake general educational work, but to preach the Gospel. He accepted the fact that simple village schools had an evangelistic role to play – preparing candidates for baptism – but objected to the whole idea of missionary societies running schools which were primarily educational. In particular, he argued that any co-operation with government in education would be on the government's terms, and that their main concern would be with the efficiency of secular education. Co-operation with the government, he suggested, would make missions agents of the government and of western civilisation. He rejected the inference of Le Zoute that missionaries should become involved in politics to see that justice was done. Finally, he complained that in the deliberations of Le Zoute the local church had been largely ignored – the conference had been concerned mainly with missionaries and missions.

In a later part of the book he expanded the views for which he had become famous in his earlier book, *Missionary Methods: St. Paul's or Ours?*, arguing that modern missionary methods were neglecting 'the

96. Ibid., p.109.
98. Ibid., pp.6, 7, 18, 19, 20 and 22.
one function of a Missionary Society which is distinctive, namely, the function of propagating the Gospel in the regions beyond, where the Church does not exist'. Allen believed strongly that the function of the missionary was to preach the Gospel, establish the infant church, and then move quickly on, leaving the young church to develop in its own way. His was not simply a conservative reaction to the spread of education; it was rather an extremely radical approach to the questions of evangelization and indigenization.

From a very different angle came the criticisms of men like Marcus Garvey and W. E. B. Dubois, writing just before the conference about the educational philosophy of the Phelps-Stokes Reports. In June 1926 Dubois criticised Jones's dislike of African higher education, fear of undue Negro independence, and accommodation to the commercial needs of white minorities in Africa. The following month Garvey was arguing in Negro World that Africans 'need the same sort of education that Europeans need'.

What was Fraser's position with regard to these two areas of criticism - what may be termed the theological, from Allen, and the basically political from Garvey and Dubois. There is no doubt, to begin with, that Fraser accepted the general methods of the Phelps-Stokes' philosophy. He was a great admirer of Tuskegee, and indeed had invited Dr. Moton, the black president of Tuskegee, to speak at the Glasgow Missionary Congress in October 1922 on 'Problems and Development

100. Allen, Le Zoute, p.27.
101. The following short paragraph is based on King, Pan-Africanism, pp.144-5.
yet there are echoes of both Allen's and Dubois' criticisms in some of Fraser's attitudes. Throughout his career Fraser continued to emphasize the need for extension and evangelization, sometimes, as has been seen, to the despair of some of his colleagues who thought his schemes far too ambitious and impracticable. His continuing insistence on the evangelistic role of the village schools parallels Allen's concerns; so too does his stress on the episcopal role of the missionary. There, however, the parallel ends, for though Fraser may have stressed the need for more African power in the Church at grass-roots level, he also believed in the importance of supervision. In this respect, though more radical than many of his colleagues, he remained essentially a gradualist.

Like Dubois, Fraser objected to the education of Africans merely to satisfy a need for labour on the part of European settlers. Amongst Livingstonia missionaries this objection to educating for the European market was not confined to Fraser. Its shortcomings were forcibly argued on more than one occasion by Cullen Young, notably in his evidence to the Chilembwe Commission of Enquiry. He was, at the time, working at Loudon. Fraser's views on higher education are not very specific. It was to be left to Cullen Young's brother, W. P. Young, to suggest the establishment of a secondary school in Malawi in 1930. Yet Fraser's general comments make it clear that while he

103. King, Pan-Africanism, p.135.
104. See, for example, Chapter 4, 'Extension', pp.193-9, and U.E.C.M.R., Fraser, 'Over the Top - or Dig in?', March 1925, p.113, and 'Following-On', October 1925, pp.451-2.
105. See Chapter 4, pp.197-9.
106. See above, p.334.
personally favoured 'mass education .... rather than the intensive education of the few', he nevertheless recognised that Christian teaching, as he understood it, compelled the missionary movement 'to open every opportunity for the fullest development of the African'.

Furthermore, he was not, as many missionaries were, and as Jesse Jones certainly was, totally opposed to the Pan-Africanism of W. E. B. DuBois, describing the 1919 Pan-African Congress in Paris as 'the natural expression of a people awakening not only to the desire for greater responsibility in the control of their own affairs, but also to a consciousness of power to exercise political functions'.

By the mid-1920s, in fact, it was becoming obvious to many missiologists, including Fraser, that this desire to exercise political functions on the part of educated Africans, was one of which missionaries must take account in determining their overall strategy. It is for that reason that it is necessary now to look at Fraser's political views and their relevance to his thinking on missions.

Fraser's Political Views

In the increasingly complicated interaction between missionary societies, colonial government and educated Africans in the 1920s, no strategy of mission could totally avoid the question of the relationship between missions and African political development - if only to reject missionary involvement in politics, as Roland Allen did.

Fraser's earlier career had included its fair share of socio-political involvement, leaving him with the reputation of being

110. Ibid., p. 161.
111. See above, Chapter 3, 'The Ziehl Case', and 'The Coming of the Administration'. 
something of an anti-administration firebrand. By the time of the First World War, as has been shown above, he had come to occupy a much more pro-government stance. By the 1920s his priorities were once again changing, reflecting his wider knowledge of the racial problems of South Africa, (as a result of his two visits in 1925), his increasing involvement, both literary and administrative, with the wider world of African politics, (as a consequence of his position as Foreign Mission Secretary), and a deeply genuine if somewhat sentimental affection for Africa and the Ngoni, particularly after his return to Scotland in 1925.

By political inclination Fraser was a Liberal, with a great admiration for Lloyd George. Given Fraser's evangelistic connections with Afrikaners, and his later expressions of sympathy for their suffering during the Boer War, his admiration may have stemmed originally from Lloyd George's South African views at the turn of the century. Within the confines of his own political philosophy, he was clearly more radical than most of his Livingstonia colleagues.

His general attitude to African political activity may be summed up as one of general support and interest, providing that the activity was conducted in what he saw as a responsible and law-abiding fashion; even then, he recognised that deep and genuine grievances would sometimes lead inevitably to more extreme expression. Like Laws he approved of the organization of Native Associations, seeing them as 'schools of training in national self-responsibility', since, as he recognised, the day is rapidly dawning when educated Africans will not be content with the paternal government of chiefs.

112. See above, Chapter 5, pp.254-61.
114. See above, Chapter 2, 'Fraser's South African Tour'; the Scots Observer, 1 January 1927, p.9, and Agnes Fraser, Fraser, p.78.
or Europeans, where they have no share in bearing the burdens of administration or of shaping its policies. Social and economic injustices will be resented with more and more articulate force.\footnote{116}

Beyond the Native Associations of Malawi, Fraser gave a general welcome to the formation of African trade unions such as the Industrial and Commercial Workers' Union, formed by the Malawian Clements Kadalie in January 1919 in South Africa, and pointed out that 'the European, who believes so much in the value of collective bargaining, is scarcely in a position to condemn the purpose of the Union'.\footnote{117}

The connections between Kadalie and Fraser are worth examining briefly. Kadalie, though a Tonga, (and related both to Y. Z. Msasi and to Yakobi Msusa Manzamba, the first Livingstonia graduate to complete the theological course), had spent part of his childhood at Loudon where his father was helping to build the church.\footnote{118} Fraser had met him again at Cape Town in 1920, while on his way home to Scotland on furlough, and, indeed began his book the New Africa with an account of that meeting and a sympathetic reference to the formation of the I.C.U.\footnote{119} This account obviously pleased Kadalie, who quoted it verbatim and without comment in his own autobiography.\footnote{120} In 1927 Kadalie visited Britain during a trip to Europe to attend the International Labour Conference at Geneva. While in Britain he was the guest of the Independent Labour Party. His trip included a visit to Scotland where he visited both Glasgow and Edinburgh. In Glasgow he once again met Fraser, and in Edinburgh was entertained by Cullen Young.\footnote{121} Fraser's

\footnotesize
\begin{itemize}
\item \textit{Ibid.}, p.162.
\item \textit{Ibid.}
\item Clements Kadalie, \textit{My Life and the I.C.U.}, London 1970, pp.31-33. In this passage the name LOUDON is mis-spelt as LONDON.
\item Fraser, \textit{New Africa}, pp.9-10.
\item Kadalie, \textit{My Life}, p.120.
\item \textit{Ibid.}, pp.104, 114 and 117.
\end{itemize}
references to Kadzie in print, and his meeting with him in Glasgow, clearly indicate a general approval of the work he was doing.

Throughout his African career, but particularly at the beginning and the end, Fraser had close connections with South Africa. In 1896 he had carried out an evangelistic campaign there which was partly responsible for the formation of the S.V.M.U. in South Africa. In 1925 he paid two working visits to South Africa - the first to carry out a missionary campaign similar to the Scottish Churches' Missionary Campaign of the early 1920s, the second to visit and report on the stations of the U.F.C. in South Africa. It is, therefore, not surprising that he should have become particularly interested in the 1920s in the racial situation in South Africa, making several references to it in his articles and books during the period. In addition he was inevitably forced to take some sort of stance during his South African campaign early in 1925. Fraser's comments, both literary and personal, on the racial situation in South Africa are important, not only for the views they express, but also for the light they throw on Fraser's personality.

Though Fraser could speak out fearlessly and bluntly in situations in which he was directly concerned - witness, for example, the Jonathan Chirwa case - he personally disliked controversy and was above all interested in reconciliation. In addition, partly because of these personal factors, and partly because of advice from South Africans like Edgar Brookes, Fraser adopted a fairly low-key approach to the problem

122. See above, Chapter 2, 'Fraser's South African Tour'.
124. See above, Chapter 6, 'the Jonathan Chirwa Case'.
125. Agnes R. Fraser, Fraser, p.278.
of race relations during his 1925 campaign. This is not to say that he did not speak out against what he saw to be wrong. He apparently did, but almost always in terms of the need for racial reconciliation and the application of Christian principles to racial relations, rather than of direct confrontation. 126

No objective assessment of his approach is possible without being able to see the overall impact of his speeches. It is at least possible that Fraser’s influence was to some extent present in the three conferences on racial affairs called by the D.R.C. in 1926 and early 1927, and whose recommendations show some signs of liberal influence. 127 On the other hand, Fraser, by toning down his real views, may perhaps have missed a real opportunity to influence the thinking of South African Christians — though if this was the case, it was a question of tactics, rather than beliefs, of personality, rather than conviction.

Fraser’s writings on the racial problems of Africa bear traces of his deep desire to be fair to both sides of a case — to represent generously the views of the poor white as well as the South African black. 128 In spite of this, his writings in the 1920s clearly condemn many aspects of the African racial situation which he found unacceptable.

Though he did not object to European settlement in Africa per se, he condemned ‘native reserves’ on the grounds that ‘the best land is apt to be set apart for European cultivator, and far too little land

given to the increasing native population'.

To some extent, at least, his views on labour relations in South Africa were conditioned not only by the high rate of migration from Umtini in particular and Malawi in general, but by the high unemployment rate among Malawian workers resident in South Africa. He condemned the 'Colour Bar' Act of 1925, as 'legislation dictated by fear and selfishness', 'false to the spirit of Christ, economically stupid'. He continued, 'No man has the right to save his own interests by hurting others. When we deny men the right to rise to the highest, we do them injury'.

Yet the 'Colour Bar Act' was opposed by many white Christians in South Africa, (including the D.R.C.), who nevertheless accepted as inevitable and even desirable some sort of social segregation. Where did Fraser stand on the bigger issues of segregation in South Africa and African advancement towards political independence in the continent as a whole?

Fraser's writings make it clear that while not unaware of the pressures making for segregation in South Africa, he was nevertheless opposed to it in principle. During a service he was conducting in South Africa, he had complained to the local minister when two black clergymen had been removed from the front pew, with the result that they were reinstated in good seats. He regarded the question of mixed marriages and miscegenation as a 'red herring', arguing that the real problem there arose from illicit unions and that mixed marriages would remain comparatively few, even in a fully integrated society.

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131. Ibid.
133. Ibid.
134. Scots Observer, 8 January 1927, p.3.
135. Ibid., 29 January 1927, p.5.
He summed up his own view in the observation that 'most people will say that the key to social intercourse should not be anything but genuine worth, and that Robert Burns, the ploughman, honoured the nobleman's drawing-room when he was received there'. Nevertheless, there remains a basic short-coming in Fraser's view of South African society, in that he appeared to feel that 'the real grievance running throughout is not discrimination but discourtesy'. While there is an element of deep psychological truth in the statement, it may be said to have been unrealistically optimistic about the causes and cures of racial tensions in South Africa.

His views on African independence were predictably gradualist. Nevertheless, although he argued that Africans were not yet ready to govern by themselves, he recognised and welcomed expressions of growing political aspirations.

We cannot keep a people for ever in a state of tutelage, nor should we look with alarm on their growing desire for self-expression in helping to control their own government. We must recognise that they too have right (sic) to manage their own affairs, and it is better to prepare a people to exercise the right, and willingly concede it when they are ready, than to have them force it from us with bitterness and resentment.

Fraser in 1927 totally opposed white settler calls for self-government in Kenya, arguing that Kenya was an African country, occupied by Africans long before white men ever came on the scene. He does not seem to have been over-keen on Indirect Rule, realising that it was

136. Ibid.
137. Ibid.
138. Fraser, New Africa, p. 190. Fraser also expressed similar views about the need to devolve power to the Bantu Presbyterian Church in South Africa - Fraser to R. H. W. Shepherd, 6 January 1931, Ms. 7690, N.L.S.
139. Scots Observer, 12 November 1927, p. 11.
opposed by many educated Africans as merely 'bolstering up the power of the chiefs' and discouraging initiative and progress. He was, in this context, writing in the mid-1920s, just after the death of Chimtunga, before Lazaro Jere had assumed the power of inkosi, and well before the introduction of Indirect Rule in Malawi. Yet his comments here, and his view of the future of the Zansi-Ngoni expressed to Cullen Young in 1929, would seem to indicate clearly that he saw the future as lying neither with traditional tribal authorities, nor indeed solely with a new élite, but with a broad spectrum of the population being involved in increasing political responsibility.

All this means that a poor government with the goodwill of the people is better than good government with their resentment. The hope of Africa is in the mass education which is being given rather than the intensive education of the few, and the open ways for development which are free alike to rich and poor, to chief and serf.

Fraser's Impact on Scottish Missionary Thinking.

If Fraser's views on African independence were, in practical terms, matters of little immediate relevance to the church in uNgoni, his impact on Scottish missionary thinking was of rather more immediate significance. In one sense it had been of significance right from the beginning of his career. It has already been pointed out in Chapter 2 that Fraser, because of his Student Volunteer reputation and experience, was a respected and influential missionary even in his first few years of service. One practical effect of this was to enable him to encourage policies, such as faster church growth, wider extension and a far higher than average number of village schools, which might well have

140. Fraser, New Africa, p.160.
141. Fraser, to Cullen Young, 19 October 1929, Ms.7690, N.L.S.
142. Fraser, New Africa, p.163.
been blocked either by Mission Council, or by the Livingstonia Committee in Scotland, had his early reputation not been so well established.

The Livingstonia Mission began life very much dependant on the support of a limited number of Glasgow businessmen. One of Fraser's obvious contributions was to widen the support for Livingstonia in Scotland. He was to some extent caught up himself in the tradition of philanthropic support. For his entire missionary career his salary was paid by Dr. and Mrs. Loudon, of Hamilton. 143 After the death of Dr. Loudon in February 1902 Mrs. Loudon not only continued to pay Fraser's salary, but provided a donation of £1000, as a result of which Fraser's new station at Kakoma was named Loudon. 144 In addition he attracted numerous large donations - one of £5000 from a Glasgow businessman, as pointed out in Chapter 6, being used to help run Kasungu for several years after 1912. 145

Nevertheless, in spite of these private donations it remains true that Fraser did succeed in widening support for and interest in Livingstonia. He achieved this in two ways - first by his unusually high literary output, and secondly by both the quantity and quality of his deputation work in Scotland, during his furloughs of 1900-01, 1905-07, 1912-13, 1914-15, and 1920-23.

Fraser was by far the most frequent literary writer of any Livingstonia missionary - in sharp contrast to Laws, who contributed very infrequently to church publications. In addition to his six major books, Fraser contributed around eighty articles to the Missionary Record alone, between 1897 and 1925, and after 1925 for a number of

143. 'Letters from Dr. and Mrs. Loudon', Deed Box 1/2, C.S.A.
144. Agnes Fraser, Fraser, p.100.
145. U.F.C.M.R., April 1913, p.162.
years had his own page in the Record every month. He also contributed to the children's church magazine *Greatheart*, as well as to the U.F.C. overseas magazine *Other Fields*. When the *Scots Observer* was launched in October 1926 as 'a weekly journal of religious and national interest' he contributed an article on the Le Zoute conference to the first issue, and in the next fifteen months contributed at least twenty articles on topics including race relations in South Africa and Kenya, the Prophet Harris, the Keswick Convention, and Indian Christianity, as well as several specifically on Malawi. All these writings, but especially those in the *Missionary Record* pre-1925, served greatly to widen the interest in and knowledge of Livingstonia among members of the United Free Church.

So too did many of the schemes which Fraser undertook during his furloughs in Scotland. It was not simply that he spoke frequently at meetings, as most missionaries did while on leave. (Between August 1900 and February 1901, for example, Fraser addressed nearly 190 meetings). His impact was based more on the fact that during practically every furlough he was engaged in some special scheme to extend interest in, or support for, Livingstonia, or overseas work in general.

In 1905, for example, he undertook a financial campaign, aimed at broadening the base of Livingstonia support, during which he called for an increase of £5000 per annum in Livingstonia's income, and the establishment of a Livingstonia collector in every congregation of the

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146. Statistics based on study of *Free Church Monthly*, and *United Free Church Missionary Record* 1897-1919.
147. This was the sub-title, which appeared on the title page.
149. Fraser to Smith, 5 February 1901, Ms.7884, N.L.S.
United Free Church. During the same furlough he was asked to stay on in Scotland for an extra year to organise the Mission Study Movement, which he had suggested in an article in June 1906. It is likely that he got the idea from the Young People's Foreign Missionary Movement in America, during his visit to the Nashville conference of the American Student Volunteers early in 1906. At any rate a conference to discuss the idea was held in Glasgow in October 1906, where the speakers included Fraser, his father-in-law George Robson, (editor of the Missionary Record), J. H. Oldham and Annie Small, first principal of the U.F.C. Women's Missionary College, (now St. Colm's College). As a result of this conference the Mission Study Movement was established - studying Africa in the first year of its existence. The first secretary of the movement was J. H. Oldham, thus renewing an association with Fraser, which had begun in the Student Volunteer Movement in the 1890s and was to last until Fraser's death in 1933. The Mission Study Movement was still flourishing by the end of the First World War, but by 1930 had almost died out. Nevertheless, it did much, particularly in its earlier years, to inform young people of the overseas work of the U.F.C.

Such special efforts became a normal part of Fraser's furloughs. In 1912-13 it was again a fund-raising effort, in 1921-22 the Scottish Churches' Missionary Campaign. The latter had a much wider significance than Livingstona, indeed Africa. It had begun as the suggestion that Fraser should remain a little longer in Scotland to enlist fresh

151. Ibid., September 1906, p.419.
recruits for U.F.C. work overseas. It had soon broadened to include ten different denominations in Scotland, reaching its climax in the Glasgow Missionary Congress of October 1922.\textsuperscript{154} In spite of Fraser's strong missionary appeals throughout the campaign at venues all over Scotland, it is likely that its greatest impact was on denominational divisions in Scotland, rather than on the overseas work of the U.F.C. Rev. J. M. E. Ross, a student Friend of Fraser's, described the Glasgow Congress as 'supported and prepared for by a degree of brotherly co-operation probably without parallel in the history of the Scottish Church',\textsuperscript{155} and it has also been claimed that Fraser's leadership of the whole campaign prepared the way for the union of the United Free Church and the Church of Scotland in 1929.\textsuperscript{156}

Nevertheless Fraser's impact on the missionary thinking of the Scottish churches through the missionary campaign should not be underestimated. His speeches at the Glasgow Congress contain many of the main themes of his missionary strategy - themes common enough to other missionaries but often largely unheard of by church members at congregational level. Included in his opening and closing addresses to the Congress were references to demands of colonial peoples for independence, (and for equal industrial opportunities with European settlers), the need to appreciate the truth in other religions, the need to remove the distinction between 'home' and 'foreign' missions, and the need for better education on racial attitudes in Scotland, to create 'a sense of brotherhood for the whole earth ..... respect for

\textsuperscript{155} Ibid., p.viii.
\textsuperscript{156} Sermon by Rev. Dr. R. W. Stewart, 27 August 1933, privately held by Miss Evelyn Stewart.
men of all races, a sense of sacredness of human personality no matter in what skin it is or what language it speaks. 157 Yet beyond these emphases, he retained his central emphasis on the need to Christianize society as a whole, both in Scotland and Africa: 'I shall not make my plea for evangelism by making the sin of Africa more horrible than the sin of Scotland, but in recognising this: that there is sin in the world, in Africa and in Scotland, and there is but one Saviour for sin, Jesus Christ, the Son of God'. 158 Nor should Fraser’s influence on individual young people in the twenties be neglected. Bishop Stephen Neill has commented that 'he was very highly regarded in student circles in the distant days when I was at Cambridge', 159 and Rev. Dr. J. W. C. Dougall, secretary of the Phelps-Stokes Commission in 1924, has admitted that he became a Student Volunteer in the 1920s ‘very largely through Fraser’s influence. His influence was very strong in the summer conferences at Swanwick’. 160

Fraser’s year as Moderator of the General Assembly of the United Free Church, and his call soon afterwards to be Home Organization Secretary of the F.M.C. served to broaden his influence in the church as a whole, and thus, paradoxically, to reduce his particular emphasis on Livingstonia. He retained to the end of his life a special regard for Africa in general, and the Ngoni in particular - 'I speak', he told the Glasgow Missionary Congress in 1922, 'as a man caught with the romance and wonder of Africa'. 162 Nevertheless, with the exception of

158. Ibid., p. 258.
161. Vision of the Kingdom, p. 258.
a few occasions such as the controversy over the 1927 Education Ordinance, his influence was to be more general and wide-ranging. In April 1928 he began the first of a series of joint meetings for ministers of the Church of Scotland and the United Free Church as a preparation for union. One of his colleagues later estimated that 'the rapidity with which the ministry of the United Church has drawn together has been largely due to Fraser's preparatory work'.

Not all his undertakings were so successful. The Forward Movement, which he led from 1931 to 1933 was diverted from Fraser's call for a new dedication to work overseas, to a more general call to renewal, aimed at the re-united Church of Scotland. By the time of his death some of his colleagues were already looking upon it as a failure. Underlying social and economic conditions militated against such a general call to renewal; the Church of Scotland did not appear ready for the sacrifices involved.

Conclusion

Throughout the 1920s while others were calling for a trimming of the sails, Fraser kept arguing for financial and geographic advance. Such an approach can be seen in his 'Remarks on Mr. Ashcroft's Report'. It is also more obviously apparent in an article he wrote in 1925 shortly before he left Africa, protesting against the need to curtail world-wide work, and, increasingly, in his page in the Record, after 1925, where he was often concerned with the need for expansion. On one level such calls reveal Fraser as an idealist, rather than a man

163. Rev. Dr. Millar Patrick, 'Donald Fraser - Knight-Errant of Christ', in Life and Work, October 1933, pp. 392-5.
164. Ibid., and Sermon by Dr. R. W. Stewart, 27 August 1933.
165. U.F.C.S.M.R., Donald Fraser, 'Over the Top - or Dig-in?', March 1925, p. 113.
of practical detail. Such an assessment is true to the pattern of his earlier career where he was criticised both for the extent of his expansion and the apparent casualness of his accountancy.\footnote{See, for example, Elmslie to Laws, 1 and 22 January, and 2 February 1906, Elmslie File, C.S.A.} He was a man who could not be bothered with statistics, but was more interested in people. His comment - 'What content will you put on one hundred baptisms, when each soul has its own history, and each is beyond price?'\footnote{U.F.C.S.M.R., May 1918, p.88.} - reveals this; but it suggests also a second, theological level on which Fraser's calls for expansion were based, and against which his missiological impact in the 1920s must be seen.

David Paton, writing of Roland Allen's theology, argues that Allen's polemic against the International Missionary Council in the 1920s and 30s was based on a perception that those who were keenest on the institutional work of the church, such as schools and hospitals, were often those who had doubts about its evangelistic work.\footnote{Reform of the Ministry: A Study in the Work of Roland Allen, edited by David N. Paton, London, 1968, pp.43-4.} Such a statement could never have been made about Fraser, for while the methods he advocated in the 1920s were very similar to those of Oldham, they sprang essentially from a continuing belief that evangelism was at the very core of the church's work. Three of the main planks of the Liverpool Conference of 1896 - evangelism, prayer and personal dedication - remained central to Fraser's thinking on the missionary task right into the 1920s. That is not to say that his thinking remained static; rather, these early emphases were like a scaffolding, around which his detailed views on education, politics, the role of the missionary etc., were constructed.
Roland Allen commented on the full-time professional missionary movement that "The characteristic of the missionary leadership of the Church is a paternalism which inhibits both the internal and external growth of the Church: this paternalism is integral to the structure of the Church as we have planted it, even where the individual missionary personally may abjure it."169 There is a good deal of truth in such a criticism, from which Fraser is not by any means totally exempt. Yet Allen himself, though an ex-missionary, criticised the system from outside. Fraser chose to work within it, and while accepting many of its presuppositions, fought hard to change others. Ross's comment on Hetherick's attitude to the colonial administration in Malawi after the First World War - that he accepted the system but insisted on justice for Africans within it170 - could well be applied to Fraser's mission strategy in the 1920s. Within the missionary movement and among its supporters, his extensive influence in the 1920s was based as much on his reputation as a dedicated and compassionate missionary, as it was on the views he expressed. To what extent the Ngoni church, as it emerged in the 1930s, had been influenced by Fraser's qualities and views, and to what extent it was a product of the traditional values of Ngoni society, is a question which needs finally, to be examined.

169. Ibid., p. 32.
CONCLUSION

By the 1930s, an Ngoni church had grown up in the north of Malawi, which, while not fundamentally different from the Presbyterianism of the neighbouring areas in which the Livingstonia Mission worked, had, nevertheless, a distinct character of its own.

That character could most clearly be seen in its patterns of worship — characterized by large sacramental conventions and the widespread use of indigenous Ngoni hymns. The sacramental conventions were particularly associated with the Loudon district, and were still common in the early 1930s. A missionary at Loudon at that period has described the situation there as 'a sacramentarian, liturgical, set-up; very frequent Communions, enormous post-Communion mass maungano'.

Though the Ngoni language had largely died out as a vehicle of everyday speech, (except in a few isolated areas such as Mpherembe's district), it remained a distinctive part of the Ngoni church. During her research among the northern Ngoni in the 1930s, Margaret Read noticed that during church services Ngoni ministers often used traditional Ngoni proverbs in their sermons, and Ngoni tunes, while usually sung with new words, sometimes were used with traditional words in a new context. Though many of the Ngoni hymns had been translated into chiTumbuka, the re-issue of a chiNgoni hymn-book in 1937 helped, at least temporarily, to perpetuate the use of the Ngoni language in worship.

2. Rev. Dr. W. H. Watson, written communication, 8 October 1974.
3. Read, 'Western Education', pp. 360-1.
4. Izingoma zo Bokristu, Blantyre 1937.
In addition, though operating within the general parameters of the church structures originated by the Scottish missionaries, the Ngoni church made special use of several groups of local Christians in a way which may be considered distinctive. It has already been pointed out\(^5\) that in the years prior to the First World War the ratio of elders to church members was lower in uNgoni than in most other areas of Livingstonia's work. Though, by 1930, the ratios for uNgoni and the mission as a whole were practically identical, (uNgoni 1:40, mission as a whole 1:41),\(^6\) the widespread, if unofficial use of balalakazi in uNgoni, which had been begun by Fraser in 1901 and continued right up into the 1930s,\(^7\) made available there a powerful additional force of elders for pastoral oversight. Thus, for most of the period under discussion it would appear that the church in uNgoni was better able to provide pastoral care at congregational level.

Nor was this simply a matter of numbers, especially in the Loudon area, for the existence, (albeit temporary), of sub-sessions and catechists, provided for a more de-centralised use of available church leaders.\(^8\) Certainly, the faster rate of church growth at Loudon during the First World War was almost certainly due to the existence there of balalakazi and bafumbiriri (female elders and catechists).\(^9\)

In short, within the overall structures of Presbyterianism, the Ngoni church, especially in the Loudon group of congregations, operated a system which allowed for a greater degree of local control.

\(^5\) Chapter 4, p.227.
\(^7\) Chapter 4, pp.229-31.
\(^8\) Ibid., pp.228-9, and Chapter 5, pp.255-8.
\(^9\) Chapter 5, pp.264-5.
Partly as a result of its distinctive character, and partly due to its size, the Ngoni church was able to make a significant contribution to the overall development of what is now the Livingstonia synod of the C.C.A.P. From the very early years of the century the Ngoni church had made up a sizeable proportion of the whole of Livingstonia's converts. Indeed, in 1905 more than half of all Livingstonia members—53% to be precise—were members of the Ngoni church. Though this figure was to become proportionately smaller over the years, as new areas of work began to expand, it was still 38% in 1930. One indirect result of the numerical strength of the Ngoni church, was a very strong representation of Ngoni elders in Presbytery when, particularly in the years prior to the First World War, they sometimes constituted fully half of the African elders present. In the years after 1920, the comparative decline in the numerical strength of Ngoni elders on Presbytery was to some extent compensated for by the small yet significant number of Ngoni ministers there. By 1930 they constituted just under half of all Livingstonia's ordained ministers.

Yet the Ngoni contribution to the development of the church in northern Malawi was not primarily one of size. To some extent the nature of the Presbyterian church at large was influenced by the pattern of the Ngoni church. The most obvious example is, once again, in the field of church music. Though the African contribution to the hymn-book of Livingstonia was predominantly Ngoni, the book itself, *Sumu za Ukristu*, was used throughout the Livingstonia area, and many of the

12. Chapter 4, footnote 143, p.219.
13. Chapter 6, p.320.
Ngoni hymns it contained were translated and used even further afield. The wider literary compositions of Ngoni Christian, written in chiTumbuka, were also used throughout the Livingstonia area.

Though by the 1930s a narrow Ngoni identity was giving way, in religious as well as political affairs, to a wider proto-nationalism, a recognizably Ngoni church could still be discerned. The question still remains to what extent that church was the product of Fraser's missionary policies, and to what extent the result of traditional Ngoni values?

It has been shown that some of the policies traditionally associated with Fraser, such as encouragement of indigenous church music and, to some extent, the large conventions, in fact pre-dated his arrival in uNgoni. Furthermore, it is undoubtedly true that many of the distinctive features of the Ngoni church reflected traditional Ngoni values. The parallels between the sacramental conventions and the incwala have been examined at some length. Apart from these, the conventions also gave rise to traditional patterns of behaviour such as the prevalence of religious dreams, and prayer and meditation in the bush. The acceptance of balalakazi by the Ngoni church may have been due, as Margaret Read points out, to the similarities between the Presbyterian system of church elders and the traditional madoda and manina groups in Ngoni society. It is even possible that the prevalent custom in Presbyterian worship in the north of Malawi of the

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15. Chapter 6, pp.325-6.
16. See, for example, Read, 'Western Education', p.376.
17. Chapter 1, p.51, Chapter 2, pp.129-30 and Chapter 4, pp.209-11.
19. Fraser, Primitive People, pp.93 and 284; Autobiography, p.143.
20. 'The Ngoni and Adjustments to Social Change', unpublished typescript, Read Papers, L.S.E.
men sitting on the right of the church, (as they face the minister), and the women on the left, dates back to traditional Ngoni seating patterns at funerals and other social gatherings.21

Speaking specifically of M'mbelwa's Ngoni, Margaret Read makes the point that between 1904 and 1933 'the schools, and to some extent the churches, were deliberately built into the fabric of their social life by the Ngoni themselves'.22 This thesis has argued that from the very early days of contact with the missionaries, the Ngoni used and adapted Christianity to satisfy their traditional needs, rather than, (at first), accepting or rejecting it in toto.23

Nevertheless, given the European-dominated structures within which the Ngoni church grew, it is clear that missionary policies in general, and Fraser's contribution in particular, played an important part in shaping the structures which emerged. (On the other hand it is also important to realise that individual missionaries themselves were subject to the constraints of overall Livingstonia policy. No Livingstonia missionary, for example, could have initiated a policy of baptising polygamists, or abandoning the catechumenate in favour of immediate baptism on profession of faith).

Fraser's influence on the Ngoni church may be seen in two distinct ways: first, the impact of specific policies initiated, or supported by him; secondly, his general attitudes towards what he was to call in 1926 'the Evangelistic Approach to the African'. (To some extent both topics have been dealt with in Chapter 4,24 but it is worthwhile attempting a

21. Ibid., 'Tribal ritual and political consciousness in Nyasaland illustrated in the funeral rites of an Ngoni Royal Princess', unpublished manuscript and typescript. Read, Ngoni of Nyasaland, p.82.
22. Read, 'Western Education', p.360.
23. Chapter 1, pp.50-1.
24. See the whole of Chapter 4.
brief reassessment here).

While it is true that several of Fraser's policies followed Ngoni initiatives in the same field, this in no way detracts from their overall importance in the growth of the Ngoni church. Undoubtedly many Ngoni hymns would have been written and sung even if Fraser had shown little interest in the phenomenon. It is unlikely, however, that their impact would have been so deep or so wide, had he not organised and encouraged the movement, particularly in connection with the sacramental conventions.

A similar point can be made with regard to the conventions themselves. It is clear that they met a deep need in Ngoni society. Several factors point to this. First the huge attendances, especially in relation to the comparatively limited numbers directly involved in the sacraments. Secondly, the strenuous efforts made by the Ngoni to prevent missionary limitation of the conventions in the early years of the century. Thirdly the fact that they survived for so long, and fourthly, the fact that other groups of Ngoni seemed keen to have similar conventions in their own areas. Nevertheless, in spite of their obvious popularity among the Ngoni, it is extremely doubtful if such conventions could have survived within the structures of the church without the support of Fraser. Elmslie's opposition to them has already been noted, and, in spite of strong Ngoni objections, he was able, eventually, to limit them severely at Mwendeni.

In some cases, policies initiated by Fraser, such as the use of

26. Chapter 4, pp.200-1.
27. Dr. A. C. Ross recalls that in the early 1960s Ngoni in the Ncheu area asked why they couldn't have large gatherings as in the north,
28. Chapter 4, p.200.
bafumbiriri, met with opposition from some of his missionary colleagues. Since this issue was apparently dealt with entirely in Mission Council, Fraser had to rely largely on the support of missionary colleagues to argue his policy through. In this case, his success in preventing the prohibition of catechists enabled a faster rate of church growth during the war than would probably have been the case otherwise. More often, especially at Presbytery, it was a case of Fraser lending his support to issues supported by the Ngoni church in general, or sometimes the Loudon Session in particular. Outstanding among such cases was that of Jonathan Chirwa between 1917 and 1924.

To a large extent Fraser's importance lies in the fact that he often pursued policies which allowed the Ngoni church greater scope to be itself. In this connection the rate at which he baptised candidates—significantly faster than in some other areas of the mission—might be mentioned; so too might his initiation of balalakazi and mesessioni shacoko (sub-sessions).

While it is true that Fraser held the same basic presuppositions as many of his colleagues about the need for European supervision and control, and for gradual devolution of authority to African Christians, it is more significant that, in practice, he was almost always more willing to devolve responsibility to African Christians than either Laws or Elmslie were. This willingness to trust arose largely from his general attitudes to the mission task, which can best be seen concisely in his article 'The Evangelistic Approach to the African'.

Reference

30. Ibid.
32. Chapter 4, pp. 190-1.
33. Chapter 4, pp. 229-31 and Chapter 5, pp. 265-8.
to some of its main points has already been made in passing. 35 Here a brief attempt will be made to relate some of these ideas to Fraser's practical contribution to the growth of the Ngoni church.

Fraser's article begins with the statement that the missionary must be clear about two things, 'What is the essence of the Gospel he brings? and, What is the mental attitude of the people whom he would evangelize?'; 36 He rejects an initial approach which involves 'the full doctrinal elaboration of the Gospel' arguing that for the African 'it would be quite unrelated to his past and to the common thought of himself and his people'. 37 Fraser opposes this as leading to a Europeanized form of Christianity, which might even express itself in dress and customs, 'which are not of the necessary essence of the Gospel', and make pride in nationality appear as anti-Christian. 38 It is interesting that, at the very end of his active missionary career he should stress this point about dress and nationality, for it was one he had argued strongly at the very beginning of his work in Africa.

it would be a pity if with this inrush of new life the old tribal characteristics were lost in a wretched caricature of European methods. There is nothing more slovenly than a lithe athletic African dressed in European cast off clothing, or more repulsive than a lad trying to be an Englishman when he should be an Ngoni proud of his nationality. 39

In the whole of the first section of his article 'The Evangelistic Approach to the African' Fraser is arguing for two things: what may be called 'the simple Gospel', and the relating of Christianity to traditional African beliefs and values. These were emphases which he

37. Ibid.
38. Ibid.
39. Fraser, 'The Zulu of Nyasaland', p.75.
had stressed throughout his career, and both can be seen in his reactions to missionary colleagues who took an opposite course. On one occasion, shortly before he left Africa, Fraser clashed with MacAlpine about the way in which the latter had been training some of his students. According to one missionary colleague of the period, Fraser, in an uncharacteristic burst of personal bluntness, remarked, 'Alexander Gillon MacAlpine, as a brother in Christ I love you; as a theologian I loathe you'.

For MacAlpine, according to the same colleague, 'every "i" had to be dotted, every "t" crossed. Fraser believed the simple Gospel was enough. They couldn't see eye to eye'. Similarly, Fraser had severe reservations about the training of Daniel Mhlane as an evangelist at Khondowe, because

His attractive naturalness was crushed by his conscientious efforts to adhere to the formal exposition of his subject, and his illustrations, instead of being drawn from the familiar things of everyday life and the old history of the tribe, were unearthed from lectures he had heard on Church History and from the puzzling incidents of European life.

In several other of his emphases in 'the Evangelistic Approach to the African', Fraser highlighted attitudes with which he had been concerned throughout his career. One was the importance of the missionary's character as a force for evangelism. The characteristics he cited in this respect obviously reflected his own concerns: 'industry, self-restraint, purity of life, friendliness, patience and forgiveness, justice, tidiness and cleanliness, quiet service for others, faithfulness, persistence'. Later on in the article he estimated that 'the spirit of sympathy is the greatest evangelist of all'.

41. Ibid.
42. Fraser, Autobiography, p.192.
43. Fraser, 'Evangelistic Approach', p.440
44. Ibid., p.448.
friendliness, sympathy and justice are widely remembered throughout uNgoni, and in 1925 were among the characteristics particularly stressed by both the Mombera Native Association and the Loudon Kirk Session in their minutes of appreciation to Fraser.\(^{45}\) As the Loudon Session minute put it, 'By showing a heart of love he drew many to Christ'.\(^{46}\)

Another emphasis was on the need for positive rather than negative preaching, a section which included his famous passage beginning, 'I fear the evangel which denationalizes, which refuses to recognise the power of the Gospel to purify what is not essentially wrong .....\(^{47}\) This led on to a plea to distinguish between customs which were essentially wrong, and those which, while perhaps unpalatable to the European, were not wrong in themselves. Among the latter group he included polygamy, the payment of dowry and circumcision - all controversial topics among African Christians and missionaries. In practice his attitude to such customs may be summed up in a motion he proposed to the Livingstonia Presbytery in 1911 with regard to the Ngoni custom of marrying a deceased brother's widow: 'considering that marriage with a deceased brother's widow is common native custom, and is not clearly contrary to Biblical law, the Presbytery, while discouraging the custom, do not think such a marriage sufficient cause for discipline'.\(^{48}\) His concern at the Le Zoute conference to seek the advice of African Christians on 'all questions regarding indigenous custom',\(^{49}\) was no mere lip-service to an ideal, but is reflected again and again in his relationship with the Loudon Session, for example, in the detailed

\(^{45}\) See Appendix A, and Agnes Fraser, Fraser, pp.272-4.
\(^{46}\) Ibid., p.273.
\(^{47}\) Fraser, 'Evangelistic Approach', pp.445-6, quoted more fully in Chapter 4, pp.214-5.
\(^{48}\) Livingstonia Presbytery Minutes, 20 October 1911, N.A.M.
discussion in 1912 on the question of how to deal with prospective husbands who wanted church marriage but were too poor to afford to pay the traditional lobola.\footnote{50}

Fraser’s concern with a Christianity which reflected traditional African values can be seen in several of the other points he made in his 1926 article. These include the importance of African music in the worship of the church, the need to recognise group loyalty as a positive force in evangelism, and the importance of dreams in the religious life of the African.\footnote{51} Fraser’s attitude to African music has already been discussed in some detail above, and need not be further elaborated. His willingness to use group loyalty as a stimulus towards Christianity can best be seen in his initiation for the sacramental conventions, for, (as has been pointed out), though he was almost certainly unaware of any connection with the incwala, he did realise that the large conventions, paralleled earlier national gatherings of the Ngoni.\footnote{52}

In the olden days, he wrote, the unity of the tribe used to be expressed in the national gatherings for raiding. Such meetings could no longer be held. Now the unity of the tribe was to be expressed in the national Christian Conventions, and that very act seemed in some fashion to claim Christ as the dominant Power among us.\footnote{53}

Fraser’s attitude to dreams and visions as valid forms of religious experience seems to have developed gradually. In 1898 he met the phenomenon with a certain degree of scepticism.\footnote{54} By 1925 he was emphasizing the parallels between such experiences and those of the

\footnote{50. Loudon Kirk Session Minutes, 24 February and 5 March 1912, N.A.M. Discussed in detail in Chapter 4, pp.225-6.}
\footnote{51. Fraser, 'Evangelistic Approach', pp.447 and 449.}
\footnote{52. Chapter 2, pp.130-1.}
\footnote{53. Fraser, Autobiography, p.143.}
\footnote{54. Fraser, Primitive People, p.93.}
The Grave of Donald Fraser and Jonathan Chirwa
Christian mystics of Europe.\textsuperscript{55}\footnote{55. Fraser, \textit{Autobiography}, p.143.} Almost certainly his change of attitude was encouraged by his friendship with Daniel Mhlane.

The key to understanding the comparative importance of Fraser's policies and traditional Ngoni values in the growth of the church in uNgoni, lies in Fraser's concern to create a genuinely African church. Fraser succeeded because, and insofar as, his policies and attitudes corresponded with the concerns of Ngoni Christians. That such a correspondence was imperfect goes without saying. Its importance lies, not in its imperfections, but in the fact that it existed at all and that its existence was recognised both by Fraser and the Ngoni.

Though Ngoni society was basically conservative, aimed at retaining those elements in their culture which assured the survival of the Zansi-Ngoni as a distinct people, their migration and settlement had shown their ability to change and adapt, where necessary. Just as, in political terms, the northern Ngoni survived the transition to colonial government and then to Indirect Rule arguably better than most other groups in Malawi, so, in religious terms, they survived the transition to Christianity.

They did this partly by rationalising the change - Chibambo, for example, arguing that Ngoni religion was the forerunner of Christianity in Malawi\textsuperscript{56}\footnote{56. Chibambo, \textit{My Ngoni}, p.52, and Read, 'Western Education', p.365.} - and partly by helping to create a religion with which they could feel at home. It has been argued in this thesis that Fraser's part in that process was more considerable than that of any other Scottish missionary to the Ngoni.

In 1935 Fraser's ashes were buried in the cattle Kraal at Loudon amid 'a simply enormous concourse of people, mourning, yet rejoicing'.\textsuperscript{57}\footnote{57. Rev. Dr. W. H. Watson, written communication, 8 October 1974.}
That he was buried there, not only at the centre of his own work, but in the traditional place of burial of an Ngoni chief, is an indication not only of the mutual respect and love between Fraser and the Ngoni, but also of their joint success in creating a church, which, for all its limitations, may nevertheless be regarded as genuinely African.
A Tribute to "Chisekeseko" (Dr. Fraser)

Readers will be interested to see the following extracts from a long address, which was presented to Dr. Donald Fraser on his leaving Loudon.

We, as members of the Mombere Native Association, have heard with deep regret that you have received a call from the Home Church to leave your post here for ever that you may serve God in another noble work in Scotland.

As by God's grace our eyes have been opened, we must frankly say that we have observed the following things in your long and blessed service:

1. The people among whom you came were utterly lost, so that their spiritual life was uncared for; but you, with your care for the salvation of souls, proved yourself an earnest follower of Christ's Gospel by preaching and by opening schools in very many villages, so that people in these villages might be redeemed from sin and its consequences. As the result of your preaching and opening of schools there to-day many a saved soul. These are the crown of your ceaseless activities.

2. Your heart, which was full of compassion for the unsaved, was restless and unsatisfied in spite of many conversions, and so you resolved to hold Annual Conventions for the following reasons: (a) to deepen Christian truths in those already converted; (b) to bring to the Light those who were still in spiritual darkness. These Conventions have been the means of salvation to hundreds of souls in Angoniland.

3. On the day when you first left Scotland you had only English music in your mind, but, after you lived among the Ngoni here, you drew very sweet music out of the native mind by encouraging us to sing praises to God in purely native tunes, and now Ngoni tunes are sung in many languages in and outside Ngoniland. Our Ngoni and Tumbuka hymn-books are rich in native hymns, which to-day are another means of spreading the Gospel.

4. As you saw a Christian Church forming in Ngoniland, you resolved to teach the infant Church that a Church that is sympathetic with the unsaved is a Church that is blessed and that grows strong within itself, and so you sent teachers to Marambo and Usena to make Christ known to those far-away lands. Glory be to God that you did not only send teachers to Marambo, but yourself went there constantly, preaching, teaching, baptizing, celebrating Communions, organizing the Church, opening and inspecting schools. We admit that sometimes, owing to the great heat in Marambo, you were not able to do as much work as you wished, because of severe attacks of illness; but you continued to do your best for Marambo until you were recently relieved by the Rev. Alex Macdonald, who is now supervising the work at Chafu and in Marambo.

5. Many of those who had the opportunity of understanding you have found in you a passion for winning souls for Christ, as you have again and again been found pleading with headmen and

infidels to come to Christ. Your study was ever open to those who came to you for spiritual help, and you, in turn, have visited many a hut to teach and plead for Christ in the individual home.

6. Through God's grace and help your intellectual powers have been a great store out of which new and helpful ideas and plans have come from time to time to feed and nourish the infant Church of the Ngoni, and those who are spiritually minded will never forget you in this.

7. In 1915 the Ngoni learned something new from you—that you did not come from Scotland simply for the redemption of men's souls, but for the redemption of their bodies as well. We remember when the Boma wished to punish some parts of Ngoniland because of the chiefs' unwillingness to lend a hand in the Great War, you were the man who encouraged the Ngoni to go and take their share in that War. We must never forget that memorable day when, at your word, hundreds of men, with hearts, hands, and minds, went to the Boma at Mzimba offering themselves for service in the Great War. Chiefs and Indunas have always found in you a great and sympathetic helper in political matters.

8. In difficult circumstances, both spiritual and physical, you have stood firm in faith and hope for brighter days. Surely you have proved yourself a real optimist; and your encouragement to us in many dark times has put new life in us. We admit that on the part of the people you came to help there have been ingratitude, disappointment, sin, and apostasies from the Christian faith, but amid all these you have been found faithful to them. Hence many love you dearly, and call you a father who has begotten them through forbearance and sympathy.

We feel we must say a word about Mrs. Fraser, whose service among and for us has been richly blessed by God. As a doctor she has helped innumerable men, women, and children; as a teacher she, knowing the need of our women, has taught lessons which have been a great assistance to the women who could attend her classes; as a philanthropist she has helped many an aged woman who came to her in rags and hunger. We thank God for giving us such a helpful lady.

Being witnesses of all this, we feel we must say frankly that we greatly appreciate your work among and for us, and so your departure creates sorrow in our hearts. It is a great loss to the Church, to the native church, and to the whole of us, for you have been our teacher, turned over to us by God. We feel that we have few words to express our appreciation of what you have done for us, and pray God to bless you in all your work and in all the places where you have been called to go.

Minute of Mombere Native Association on retirement of Fraser

(reprinted in U.F.C.S.M.R. November 1925, p.524)
APPENDIX B

A NOTE ON FRASER'S AFRICAN NAMES

Like most missionaries Fraser was given nick-names by the Ngoni. Among these were included FRASARA, FRANO, KALIBANGO and CHISEKESEKE.

FRASARA: an Africanization of the name Fraser.

FRANO: Agnes Fraser gives this as 'a native form of Fraser'. (Fraser, p.317). She uses it several other times in her book, (pp.64, 124, 154-5 and 190), mentioning that the war induna Ng'onomo used it of Fraser, whom he believed 'was the reincarnation of Koyi'.

The name is not remembered of Fraser to-day in the Embangweni area; nor does it appear to be a normal chiTumbuka word. It does not seem to be an obvious Africanization of the name Fraser, (as, for example, 'Trasara' is), but in the absence of any other evidence, Agnes Fraser's explanation may be correct.

KALIBANGO: The word Kalibango (or Kaliwango) is contained in a song sung by Fraser's porters as they carried him on tours of inspection. (See Chapter 2, p.123). Though there are several versions of the song, the most common seems to be:

Wafika Kalibango he! Wafika Kalibango chenjera!
Hey Kalibango is coming! Be careful, Kalibango is coming!

Fraser's wife has a curious variation in Fraser, p.170. Here she uses the word 'Kaluwongwe' in place of 'Kaliwango', stating that this name, meaning 'little springing green leaves', was applied to Fraser because of his habit of tying fresh green leaves to the back of his hat to protect his neck from the sun. This would appear to be a romantic piece of fiction.

In fact, the song was one sung quite generally by porters carrying a white man on any errand of inspection. Its origin is not entirely clear. Various informants have suggested Tumbuka, Tonga or even Senga linguistic origin. Rev. Dr. Wyson Jere, present parish minister at Embangweni (Loudon) suggests that the word may be linked to the verb kuliwa - to repair a broken basket: hence a 'kalibango' was 'a repaireur of faults at work' i.e., an inspector. (I am grateful to
Dr. Jere for enquiring at length about the origins of Kalibango in the Embangweni area. It could also be linked to the noun chiliwa - a wattled or plastered wall.

At any rate, it would appear that the term was not a particularly complimentary one. It was used to warn teachers or workers of the imminent arrival of a European who might, as one informant suggests, catch them asleep or sitting-down, and beat them with a chikoti. (Note on Kalivango by Nelson Tembo, ex-Ngoni teacher). While it was sung by Fraser's carriers, it would appear that it was not applied particularly to him, but was a more general marching song.

CHISEKESEKE: This name is specifically used of Fraser in the minutes of appreciation of both the Loudon Kirk Session and the Mombera Native Association at his retirement in 1925. (See Agnes Fraser, Fraser, p.273, and Appendix A, last sentence). Its meaning in those minutes is given as 'one who is always smiling' and 'one who smiles with any'. It is derived from the verb kuseka, to laugh, or more directly, from kusekerera, to rejoice, to be happy. A modern informant has translated it 'a person friendly to all'. (Rev. Dr. Wyson Jere, written communication 2 January 1980).

In spite of its definite association with Fraser there is some evidence that it was not very widely known of him. Zakeo Soko, a former cook of Fraser's, seemed not to recognise the name as one applied to Fraser, (personal interview, 5 October 1974), and Dr. W. H. Watson asked several people about it at Fraser's funeral 'but never got instant recognition'. (written communication, 8 October 1974). In addition, like Kalibango, it is a word which can be used more widely of anyone of a particularly friendly temperament.

Nevertheless, its specific written use by both the Loudon Session and the Mombera Native Association in 1925 points to its being a name for Fraser, which, (if not universally used or known), was at least seen by those Ngoni closest to him, as summing-up his essential characteristics.
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