THE ROLE OF MISSIONARIES IN THE EMANCIPATION OF SLAVES IN ZANZIBAR

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A note at the end of one of the documents in the "Pemba Papers" at the Library of the Society of Friends in London reads: "1000 or more actually recorded as having been freed through the direct assistance of the mission, many more others indirectly." The document is a "Register of Slaves Claiming freedom at Banani, 1898-1909," reverently labelled "That Holy Book." The number in the note refers to the slaves freed with the direct assistance of the Society of Friends (Quakers). The mission was the Friends Industrial Mission in Pemba, one of the two islands that made up the British protectorate of Zanzibar.

The register is of more than passing interest. After leafing through its seemingly dull pages, one might conclude that it is just one more illustration of the traditional Quaker stand against slavery. The curious thing, however, is that the stand represented by the register was taken against a government under the control of a nation which had, during the greater part of the nineteenth century, expended much effort and resources to end the sea-borne slave trade. As late as July 1890, Britain had subscribed to the General Act of the Brussels Conference on the African Slave Trade, a document that has been interpreted by some scholars as the Magna Carta of African freedom, since it was supposedly designed to wipe out the stain of slavery in Africa and to bring to that continent the benefits of "peace" and "civilization." One would have expected the nation that assumed the burden of ending the European slave trade, a country that had exercised "moral suasion" in East and West Africa until the 1880's, would have been

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1 The "Pemba Papers" deal with slavery in the Protectorate of Zanzibar, and bear the reference number Pz(F)/2.


3 Chapter two of Africa and the Victorians: The Official Mind of Imperialism (London, 1961), by Ronald Robinson and John Gallagher With Alice Denny, bears the intriguing title, "Moral Suasion over Guinea and Zanzibar, 1815-1880." According to the authors of this interesting book, the predominating interest of Britain in the two African regions, during the period in question, was neither exclusive economic gain, nor imperial rule, but the breaking up of the slave chains and the "regeneration" of Africa degraded by slavery.

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expected to break at once the chains of slavery from the feet of the slaves living in her protectorates when the European "scramble" for Africa began. Although Zanzibar officially became a British protectorate on November 4, 1890, it was not until 1909, that slavery as an institution was abolished. Why did it take Britain so long to crown her exercise of "moral suasion" with fruitful results? The purpose of this article is to examine the struggle for the emancipation of the slaves in Zanzibar in the period from about 1890 to 1909, and to evaluate the role of the missionary factor, particularly with the part played by the Quakers in the liberation.

About one hundred years ago, a writer asked: "By what fatuity is it . . . that in attempting to deal with the slave-trade, attention should have been wholly devoted to the question of supply, and no attention should have been given to demand?" The person who asked the question knew that the slave trade, like the trade in any other commodity, involved demand and supply, but he believed that demand was the more potent factor. It was demand that called forth supply, or as he put it, it was "property in man" that lay at the root of the slave trade.4 It is clear that Britain was fully aware of the crucial role of demand in the slave trade. It was such awareness that made her cajole, bribe and twist the arms of the slave-importing countries to obtain treaty rights to kill or to limit their slave trade. The role of demand was eloquently stated in 1838 by Lord Palmerston, Britain's Foreign Secretary, in a response to abolitionist Thomas Fowell Buxton's scheme for the end of the slave trade and "regeneration" of Africa through "civilizing" commerce. In a letter dated September 7, 1838, to his friend in the British cabinet, Lord Glenelg, Buxton proposed that the British Government should ask or compel Sayyid Said bin Sultan, the ruler of Oman and of Omani possessions in East Africa, to cede the island of Mombasa to Britain for the purpose of establishing a "commercial settlement" colony.5

Palmerston dismissed at once the idea of compelling Sayyid Said, Britain's ally, to cede a part of his East African inheritance to Britain for "philanthropic" purposes. He considered the idea of building a "commercial settlement" colony "a wild and crude idea," since it would involve political difficulties. Moreover, it would be an expensive way of fighting the slave trade, for it would involve embracing the whole of the African coastline with British "factories." He was con-


vinced that the extension of "legitimate trade" would be the effect rather than the cause of the extinction of the slave trade. "It is Europe and not Africa," he correctly stated, "which takes the lead in the intercourse between these two quarters of the globe. We want to sell our commodities in Africa, and we send them thither. The Africans who want to buy will pay us in whatever we like." He added that what was required was sufficient treaty power to stop the export of slaves from Africa.6

The force of Palmerston's reply applied equally to the slave traffic indulged in by the Arabs in Africa. If Britain realized fully the importance of ending the slave trade by limiting the demand for slaves, the question may be asked why Britain did not exert enough pressure on the Arabs to abolish the slave trade. The answer to this question does not lend itself to a simple explanation, but the key to it may be sought in the Arabs' insistence that slavery was an "immoral custom."7

During the nineteenth century, Britain negotiated two treaties with Sayyid Said for the progressive limitation and eventual strangulation of the Arab slave trade. The Moresby Treaty of September 1882 and the Hamerton Treaty of 1845, were named, respectively, for Captain Fairfax Moresby and Consul Atkins Hamerton, who negotiated them. The Moresby Treaty, designed to prevent the illicit importation of slaves from Omani possessions in East Africa into Britain's possessions in India and in the Indian Ocean, stipulated that Said's subjects were not to engage in slave trade to the east of a line drawn from Cape Delgado to a point sixty miles east of Socotra, and from there to Diu Head in India. East of the line, British warships could seize the ships belonging to the subjects of the Sultan, if they engaged in slave trade. The only ships exempted from seizure were those that strayed beyond the line as a result of adverse circumstances beyond control such as violent storms. The Moresby Treaty also provided for the appointment of a British consul or agent to reside at Zanzibar or on the coast of the East African mainland, in order to observe and report on infractions of the treaty.8

Unlike the British anti-slave trade treaties with Christian states, the Moresby Treaty gave the Omani Arabs a free hand west of the prohibited line. Said's subjects were expressly permitted to carry slaves from Said's possessions in East Africa to Oman; implicitly, they could sell slaves to the non-Omani Muslim states west of the line. The omission of a ban on the Muslim aspect of the "external" slave trade was

6 Palmerston to Glenelg, September 24, 1838, F.O.54/2.
7 Britain's official policy and attitude towards the Arab slave trade in East Africa are discussed in considerable detail in my manuscript, Britain and Slavery in East Africa. Coupland, East Africa and Its Invaders (New York, 1965), p. 215.
questioned by the Governor of Bombay. Moresby explained that the instructions given to him by the Governor of Mauritius were to secure a treaty prohibition of only the Christian aspect of the Omani slave trade and to refrain from interfering with Omani slave trade to Muslim countries. The Bombay Government accepted Moresby’s explanation. On September 27, 1822, J. Tarish, Secretary to the Bombay Government, explained the reason for the concurrence as follows:

The Governor in Council now clearly understands that, it is not intended to interfere with the Mahometan Countries to the West of the line specified in the Treaty. He entirely concurs in your opinion, that any such interference would have been a constant source of misunderstanding, and he begs to state the conviction that the consent of the Imaum to the captures of his Ships to the East of the line in question, is as great a concession, as could possibly have been expected from a Prince in his circumstances.

During the 1820’s and 1830’s the Moresby Treaty was not strictly enforced. Said issued orders to his Arab officials in East Africa, instructing them to prevent the export of slaves to the forbidden lands, but neither he, nor his officials, who were keenly interested and participated extensively in the slave trade, were in a position to enforce the orders. His authority was recognized and was fairly effective in Zanzibar, Pemba and a few isolated spots on the coast of the mainland. Elsewhere, there were signs of his authority in terms of Arab governors, small military garrisons and customs-posts, but he had no illusions about his power. A shrewd ruler and a keen businessman, he was more interested in the exercise of political overlordship to maximize his economic exploitation of East Africa than in exercising power for its own sake. His naval force was also very limited. Given the political exigencies of the time and his subjects’ vigorous involvement in slave trading, he decided to issue “desist” orders, which his British friends knew he could not effectively enforce. From the Cape of Good Hope (the “Cape”) two or three ships cruised around the southwestern Indian Ocean and, occasionally, went as far north as Zanzibar to interfere momentarily with illegal slave running, but the British officers were more interested in monitoring and reporting French naval and colonial activities in the Indian Ocean than they were in energetically hunting down slave ships. In addition, the commanders of the British

10 Tarish to Moresby, September 27, 1822, Adm. I/69.
11 Rear Admiral Lambert, Commander in Chief of the St. Helena Station, to Sir John Wilson Croker, Secretary to the Admiralty, April 15, 1821, Adm. I/69; Commodore Nourse to Croker, September 7 and November 16, 1822, January 5, 1823, Adm. I/69.
squadron at the Cape ignored the French slave trading in Said’s territories and even instructed their junior officers not to interfere with French slave ships.12

With very limited power on Said’s side, with little exertion on Britain’s side to check the Arab slave trade, the Arabs carried slaves, not only to Oman, but also to Madagascar, to the French and British possessions in the Indian Ocean, and to the British “protected” states in India. Preoccupied in the 1820’s and 1830’s with watching French movements in the Indian Ocean, Britain’s attention primarily focused on keeping the sea and land approaches to India safe. Britain’s eyes were practically averted from the Arab slave trade. During the time the mighty “Russian Bear” was pressing relentlessly to the warm waters of the Mediterranean Sea, Turkey’s nominal vassal in Egypt, was scheming for a new and vigorous Muslim Empire which would stretch from the Nile eastwards to the gates of India.13 Therefore, any gain at a critical period was certainly much more valuable than a future moral dividend.

In December 1839, small additions to the Moresby Treaty were agreed upon by Said. One addition shifted the line marking the limits of the “internal” Omani slave trade slightly westward so as to insulate the British “protected” states in India from the virus of the Arab slave trade. Another clause was designed to protect the “caucasoid” Somalis from enslavement. Said agreed that the Somalis, being “free men,” i.e. Muslims, were not to be carried away from Africa as slaves.14 By implication, non-Muslims were suitable objects of enslavement.

By 1841, the Middle Eastern crises—from the point of view of the imperialist grabbers of other peoples’ lands—had subsided sufficiently for the British Government to pay more attention to the growing volume of Oman’s “external” slave trade. Late in that year, the British Government informed Said, through imperial authorities in India, of its determination to eliminate the Arab slave trade by sea.15 After receiving the message, Said sent a delegation to Britain to plead for British compassion and forbearance. Among other things, the envoy was in-

12 Captain C.D. Arland to Commodore Christian, September 8, 1826, Adm. 1/70; Commodore Schomberg to Croker, November 28, 1829, Adm. 1/72.
13 For a fuller discussion of Britain’s reactions to the so-called Middle Eastern crises of the 1830’s when one of Britain’s “life-lines” to India appeared threatened, see halford L. Hoskins, British Routes to India (New York, 1966), pp. 196-284, passim; Gerald S. Graham, Great Britain in the Indian Ocean (Oxford, 1967), pp. 264-273, 280-282.
14 Great Britain, Slave Trade Correspondence Presented to Parliament in 1842 and 1843, F.O. 54/5.
15 Lord Leveson to the India Board, June 8, 1841; Hamerton to the India Board, February 9, 1842, Slave Trade Correspondence, F.P. 54/5.
structured to express Said’s willingness to comply with Britain’s demands. He made a gentle warning that an abrupt cessation of the Arab slave trade would adversely affect European and British Indian trade in East Africa, as Arab and African middlemen would cease to bring Africa’s produce from the interior to the east coast if they were forbidden to deal in slaves.\(^{16}\)

For a while, the British Government insisted on carrying out its proposal.\(^{17}\) Consequently, however, the British Government altered its position and granted the forbearance that Said had requested. The Hamerton Treaty was signed in 1845, but it did not come effective until January 1, 1847. The treaty reduced the “internal” Omani slave trade to slave trading between the African interior and Said’s East African possession.\(^{18}\) After affirming its determination to crush the Arab slave trade by sea, the British Government settled for a curtailment of the trade.

Britain was forced to do so because of the allegedly active acquisitive glance that the “territorially hungry” French directed at Said’s African territories. The British representative in Paris, the commander of the British forces at the Cape, and Consul Hamerton in Zanzibar worked hard to ensure that the French did not encroach on the territory of Britain’s protege who ineffectively administered the African coast opposite India.\(^{19}\)

Britain’s fear of French “aggressive” designs subsided in the 1840’s, but it was sufficiently strong thereafter to account partially for her ineffective enforcement of the Hamerton Treaty. There was a brief energetic crackdown between 1849 and 1851, on the export of slaves from East Africa by both Arabs and Europeans, but between 1851 and 1858, British warships were a rarity in Zanzibar.\(^{20}\) Christopher Rigby, British Consul and Political Agent in Zanzibar (1858-1861) displayed greater energy than did his predecessor in fighting the slave trade, but he too was forced to divert a part of his attention to protect Zanzibar from non-British intervention and to defeat enemies within the state.\(^{21}\)

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\(^{17}\) Lord Aberdeen to Naser, July 12, 1842, *Slave Trade Correspondence*, F.O. 54/5.

\(^{18}\) “Agreement between Her Majesty and the Sultan of Muskat,” F.O. 54/5.

\(^{19}\) Hamerton to the Bombay Government, August 20, 1841, F.P. 54/5; Hamerton to the Foreign Office, April 27 and August 31, 1843, F.O. 54/5; Foreign Office Memorandum, April 10, 1845, F.O. 54/8; Hamerton to Aberdeen, February 13, 1846. F.O. 54/10.


\(^{21}\) Sultan Said died in 1856. He was succeeded in Zanzibar by Majid (his younger son), and by Thuwain (his elder son) in Oman. For a while, Majid paid Thuwain 40,000 German crowns (dollars), but later refused to do so. Thuwain, who regarded the pay-
The threat of French "aggressive" designs on Zanzibar was removed in 1862, when the British and French Governments jointly declared that they would recognize Zanzibar's separation from Oman, and that they would not undermine the territorial integrity of both states.

Since strategic and imperial interests were insured, Britain's energies were now focused on the problem of the expanded East African slave trade.22 During the 1860's the British Government considered ways of effecting a further reduction of the trade. A committee appointed by the British Foreign Office recommended "controlled" reduction and regulation of the trade. The committee counselled against an "abrupt" end to the slave traffic without previously providing for an alternate labour supply to sustain the Zanzibar economy so heavily dependent on slave labour. A "precipitate" abolition of the slave trade, it warned, would destroy the economy of the sultanate.23

The British Government endorsed the recommendations and drafted a new treaty designed to implement them. Majid, Said's successor refused to accept the new treaty. Moreover, Barghash who was Majid's successor, was even more adamant in his refusal to accept the new treaty.24 The British Government still pursued a policy of "controlled" reduction of the slave trade until Barghash and the biting criticisms of abolitionists forced Britain's hands. In 1873, after protracted attempts to make Barghash less unreasonable had failed, Britain forced an abolition treaty on him. As of June 5, 1873, slave exports from the coast of the mainland possession of Zanzibar and from the twin-island sultanate itself became illegal.25

The Arab slave trade did not end until several decades later. The last verified slave export from East Africa was in 1899. Meanwhile, de-

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22 The slaves annually exported from East Africa in the 1840's were estimated at that time to be 11,000; the estimated export in the 1860's rose to 20,000 slaves annually.
23 Great Britain, Report Addressed to the Earl of Clarendon by the Committee on the East African Slave Trade, Dated January 24, 1870, LXII (1871), 30-32.
24 The details of the protracted negotiations between Majid and British consuls in Zanzibar, and between the latter and Barghash, are found in the relevant official despatches in F.O.84/1325, F.O.84/1344, and in India Office, Political and Secret Department, Secret Letters Received (Various), Vol. 49.
25 Kirk to the Foreign Office, July 2, 1873, F.O.84/1375; Great Britain, Correspondence Respecting Sir Bartle Frere's Mission to the East Coast of Africa, 1872-73, Parliamentary Paper, LXI (1873), 154.
Role of Missionaries in Zanzibar

The first break in the Arab slave edifice was produced by a decade and half of triumphant missionary intransigence. By 1875, the following Protestant missionary societies were operating in Zanzibar and the mainland: The United Methodist Free Churches, the Universities Mission to Central Africa (U.M.C.A.) and the Church Missionary Society (C.M.S.). The first organization began work in East Africa in 1862. At first it catered exclusively to the displaced in East African societies. Later it expanded its work to include the harbouring of slaves fleeing from Arab and Swahili exploitation. In 1861, the organizers of the U.M.C.A. dispatched a party, headed by Bishop Mackenzie to work in the Shire Highlands, but several members of the party, including Mackenzie, died as a result of fever. Those who survived engaged a group of Yao slave traders in a fight. After being defeated, W.G. Tozer, the new leader of the mission, withdrew to Zanzibar. Tozer and his colleagues along with the five slaves rescued from the Yao slave traders opened a mission in 1864.\(^{26}\) The U.M.C.A. later expanded its activities to include the opening of a new station on the African mainland. It cautiously refrained from interfering with Arab slavery by not harbouring fugitive slaves.

The third mission was the oldest one in East Africa. It began work there as early as 1844. After decades of missionary reconnaissance and proselytization, its converts, however, numbered only about half a dozen in 1873. In 1873, the C.M.S. strengthened the mission by sending two pastors and some captives from India to Mombasa. In 1874, the C.M.S. decided to establish a settlement for freed slaves near Mombasa.\(^ {27}\)

There was also another mission operating in East Africa at that time. That mission was an outgrowth of the extension of the French Roman Catholic mission at Reunion to Zanzibar in 1860. At first it consisted of


\(^{27}\) \textit{The Church Missionary Intelligencer}, X(1874), p. 329; Kirk to Price, April 14, 1872, F/22, part 2 (Church Missionary Society Library, London). Kirk invited the C.M.S. to establish a settlement that would teach young recaptives to appreciate the "dignity" of labour. He did not see much use in the U.M.C.A. establishment which tended to concentrate on theological instruction.
secular priests, but, because of insufficient funds, Holy Ghost Fathers operated it. The French mission cared for all types of rescued slaves. By the 1870's, the mission boasted of a large settlement at Bagamoyo on the mainland as well as the minor establishment on Zanzibar island. Visitors such as H.M. Stanley and Sir Bartle Frere were greatly impressed by its work. Sir Bartle Frere recommended it as a model for the English missions.28

Of the two missionary bodies that harboured fugitive slaves, the C.M.S. mission was the greater offender, from the slave-owners' point of view, because of its persistent disregard of Muslim law that pertained to slavery. After making unsuccessful attempts to found a freed-slave settlement in the Seychelles—a failure because of the lack of funds and partly because of the reluctance of the planters of the islands to free the captives assigned to them by British colonial officials—the Central Committee of the Society in London decided to found a settlement at Mombasa.29 A party, headed by Reverend W. S. Price, formerly of the C.M.S. freed-slave settlement at Nassick, near Bombay, was dispatched to East Africa in the autumn of 1874.

Price and his colleagues arrived at Mombasa on November 15, 1874. After paying a brief visit to Zanzibar, they went to Rabai where they were accorded a warm reception by the Christian community, composed largely of the Nassick Africans ("Bombays"). More reinforcements came from Bombay. By the middle of 1875, the "Bombays" numbered eighty and provided the nucleus for the freed-slave settlement.30 Price looked for a suitable site for the captives. After a few weeks stay at Rabai, he shifted the base of his operations to Mombasa and then to Freretown, named after Sir Bartle Frere. In September, Freretown received its first consignment of captives who were the 240 slaves rescued by H.M.S. Thetis from a slave ship running them from Mozambique to Madagascar.31 The size of the settlement grew as more captives were landed from time to time.

The Arab slave owners indicated their hostility to the work of the C.M.S. mission. As early as February 28, 1875, Price noted in his diary that the Acting Governor of Mombasa, accompanied by a score

29 Minutes of the C.M.S. Committee, March 3, 1868, F/Z2, part 2; *The Church Missionary Intelligencer*, VIII(1872), 89; Tozer to the Secretary, C.M.S., October 16, 1872, F/Z2, part 1.
31 Euan-Smith to Derby, September 20, 1875, in India Office, Political and Secret Dept., Political and Secret Letters Received (Various), Vol. 1; *The Church Missionary Intelligencer*, I(1876), 205-220, VI(1881), 33-34.
of soldiers, reprimanded a Mombasa Muslim for renting houses to Price and his colleagues. The landlord was said to have explained himself with "much gesticulation and power of voice." Afterwards, Price learned that there was an uneasy feeling among the Arabs who feared that the object of his mission was to liberate their slaves.\(^{32}\) Arab suspicion changed to resentment when Freretown began to grant asylum to fugitive slaves. In May, about 400 Arabs and Swahilis threatened to attack Freretown for "enticing" away their slaves. The settlement was saved only by a timely despatch of Mombasa troops and by the friendly assistance of some residents of Mombasa.\(^{33}\) Price returned to England in July 1879, although he visited twice in the 1880's in connection with the fugitive slave question.

The lesson of 1876 did not last long because in 1879 and 1880, there were problems over the issue of harbouring runaway slaves at the missions. In 1879, several slave owners from the Giriama country went to Rabai to claim the fugitives in the C.M.S. mission. The missionaries were apprehensive. Luckily for them, the Masai launched one of their customary raids in the Giriama country at about the same time that the Giriama slave proprietors were at Rabai. When the news of the Masai attack reached them, the slave owners went home, without recovering their slaves, in order to defend their land and cattle. It was later reported that the missionaries hailed the turn of events as God's answer to their prayers.\(^{34}\) During the following year, the Arabs of Mombasa declared their determination to attack the missionaries for harbouring their slaves. The missionaries braced for the attack. There were no God-send Masai to avert Arab anger, but, luckily again, the missionaries were saved by a white imperialist "Masai," Dr. Kirk. The latter kept the Arabs back with soothing words and then warned his countrymen never to flout the law of their hosts. The slaves belonging to the Muslim Arabs were released to their owners, but the African slaves were retained.\(^{35}\) The crisis was over, but the lessons learned did not prove valuable. In 1883, there was some trouble, but the greatest crisis occurred in 1888. By now the Methodists had become offenders and objects of Arab distrust.

For many years the Arabs had been concerned about the double "assault" of the "infidel" missionaries on their cherished institution and on their economy. Their fugitive slaves were given asylum at the missions, and allocated lands to cultivate, in return for an "expecta-

\(^{34}\) J.S. Knight to the C.M.S., November, 1879, *The Church Missionary Intelligencer*, V (1880), 167-169.
tion” of conversion to Christianity. By 1888, they could no longer endure the missionary “attack.” Taking advantage of a Swahili uprising in what is now mainland Tanzania against German rule, the Mombasa Arabs fired shots into the house of the Acting Administrator of the newly formed Imperial British East Africa Company (I.B.E.A.C.), the privately owned imperialist agency. The armed disturbance was suppressed by the troops of the Governor of Mombasa, but a determined bid was now made for the recovery of the slaves at Rabai and Ribe. At this critical juncture, George Mackenzie, the Administrator of the I.B.E.A.C. stepped in to avert disaster, both to the Christian missionaries and to the newly established British imperial agency. A compromise was worked out. The Arabs agreed to regard their fugitive slaves as lost property; in return, they would receive monetary compensation. On January 1, 1889, some 900 fugitive slaves, 600 at Rabai and 300 at Ribe, received their papers of freedom.36 The worst of the crisis over the question of missionary “enticement” of Arab slaves was over. The Arabs received monetary compensation for their lost human cargoes. In a sense, their “rightful” claims over the slaves had been vindicated. The British Foreign Office subsequently warned the missionaries not to harbour fugitive slaves. The missionaries were told: “No legal right to do so can be claimed, and when a refuge and asylum are granted in extreme cases of peril and out of humanity it is done at the risk of the person giving the shelter.”37 But never before in the history of Anglo-Zanzibari relations had missionary intransigence borne such a deliciously liberating fruit.

Subsequent immediate attacks on the Arab Institution did not produce results as satisfying as the result of the 1888-1889 crisis. In 1884, Kirk had recommended non-legal recognition of slavery in the Zanzibar sultanate. The recommendation was based on the belief that only wage-paid labour would ensure permanently the prosperity of the sultanate. Lord Granville, British Foreign Secretary at that time, instructed Kirk to take advantage of a suitable opportunity to raise the matter with the sultan. Kirk retired from his post in 1886 without raising the matter with the sultan; perhaps he did not have the opportunity to do so. Captain MacDonald acted as British Consul and Agent at Zanzibar, but in 1888 Charles Euan-Smith was appointed as the substantive holder of the post. In March 1889, the British and Foreign Anti-Slavery Society drew the attention of Lord Salisbury, the Conservative Foreign Secretary, to Kirk’s dispatch and to Granville’s in-


STRUCTION. Salisbury promised that the new British Agent in Zanzibar would not fail to avail himself of any favourable opportunity to urge the sultan to adopt "a policy so desirable in the interests of humanity and civilization." 38

British officials in Zanzibar extracted one agreement in 1889, and a decree in 1890, from the rulers of Zanzibar. The Agreement of 1889 declared that all children born to slave parents after January 1, 1890, were to be free. The Decree of August 1, 1890, declared as unlawful the exchange or sale of slaves after that date. It provided for the emancipation of certain categories of slaves: such as the slaves belonging to persons who "legally" held their slaves, but who died without legal heirs; the slaves owned by the subjects of the sultan, who married British subjects, and the off-spring of such marital unions; and the slaves owned by people who had once been slaves but were now free. People who were found guilty of buying, procuring or selling slaves were to forfeit their slaves. The Decree provided also for the man- umission of slaves by self-redemption. The last provision was repealed by the sultan on August 20 on the ground that its implementation might endanger the peace and cost the sultan his crown. 39

The enforcement of the two measures was not satisfactory. The Agreement was kept secret by non-promulgation and was not enforced until after 1896, because local officials feared that its enforcement would cost the state much money to support slave children who might be turned out of home by their masters on the excuse that the children were now free. The enforcement of the Decree depended on the good-will of the ruling elite in a slave-owning society, and on the "attrition" rate at which the slave owners died without leaving behind legal heirs. It also depended on the rate at which the courts of law could convict those who disobeyed the Decree and divest them of their slaves.

The slow rate of emancipation may be illustrated by an analysis of the slaves freed in the Lamu district—comprising Lamu, Manda, Pate, Faza and Siu—between March 1891 and August 1895. Two hundred and forty-seven slaves were freed during the period. Of this number, forty-one slaves were freed by the courts or on the order of the Adminis-trator of the I.B.E.A.C.; eleven purchased their freedom; thirty-one were freed by their owners; and one hundred sixty-four were

38 Great Britain, Correspondence respecting Slavery in Zanzibar, Parliamentary Paper, LXXI (1895), 1-2.
freed as a result of their owners dying without legal heirs. The I.B.E.A.C. ceased to operate as Britain’s colonial agent on July 1, 1895, at which time Britain assumed direct control of what is now Kenya. For a number of years thereafter, colonial affairs in both Zanzibar and Kenya were directed by Sir Arthur H. Hardinge, Consul-General at Zanzibar. As we shall see below, Hardinge and his immediate predecessor, Rennell Rodd, adopted the pro-slavery views of the Arabs. The slow-operating courts and the pro-slavery officials, both Arab and British, meant that the rate of emancipation would be slow.

Meanwhile, the Anti-Slavery Society officials had addressed a letter to Lord Rosebery, the Liberal Foreign Secretary and successor to Prime Minister William Gladstone on his retirement. The letter, dated August 9, 1893, called upon the British Government to clear Britain’s name of the stigma of recognizing the institution of slavery in Zanzibar by withdrawing legal recognition from it. The Society expressed conviction that the abolition of the legal recognition of slavery would not violently disrupt the “ordinary domestic life” of Zanzibar. Rosebery promised a careful consideration of the matter and instructed Rodd to investigate and write a report on the subject.

Rodd consulted Lloyd William Mathews, the Sultan’s First Minister since 1890, a British subject who was sympathetic to Arab arguments about slavery. A report was produced which dealt indirectly with the burden of slavery. Rodd argued that the abolition of slavery in Zanzibar and on the coastal zone of Kenya would, without concurrent abolition in German East Africa, drive Arab slave owners and their slaves into German territory. If that happened, the German territory would gain economically at the expense of the British possessions. He argued that abolition would cripple the economy of those parts of the British possessions which depended heavily on slave labor. He did not even think that the slaves would gain from liberation: the “lazy” and “improvident” rural slaves would desert their “kind” masters for independent employment. Lastly, Rodd argued that there was an important distinction between a protectorate and a colony. Zanzibar was a protectorate and not a colony; as a protectorate Britain was powerless to enforce an abolition law contrary to Muslim law.

Rodd’s report was sympathetically received at the British Foreign Office. On May 5, 1894, Lord Kimberley, the Liberal Foreign Secretary, “liberally” instructed Hardinge to consider and recommend

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41 Great Britain, Correspondence respecting Slavery in Zanzibar, Parliamentary Paper, LXXI (1895), 1-2, 8.
42 Ibid., pp. 12-17.
"any further measures which may seem to you feasible for facilitating the total abolition of slavery, without injustice to the Mohommedan owners." On November 27, he wrote a despatch to Hardinge, stating that the "general rule of policy" followed by Britain was "to use all legitimate means, even at considerable sacrifice, for complete and prompt suppression of slavery and the Slave Trade." In countries, such as Zanzibar, "where the institution of domestic slavery has grown up with and forms part of the social life of its inhabitants," the policy was "to resort only to such measures for its abolition as, being gradual in their operation, may effect the change without unnecessary interference." Hardinge was instructed to consider the cost and likely impact of an act, such as the India Act of April 1843, which withdrew legal recognition from slavery. Finally, he was to bear in mind all the points raised in the dispatch in recommending measures that would enable the British Government to reach a decision "as to the expediency of taking any step in the direction" indicated.

Hardinge's reports recapitulated and elaborated the arguments already advanced by Rodd. He argued that abolition would cripple the agriculture of Zanzibar, which yielded two-thirds of the revenue of the state. He foresaw grave social changes arising as a result of abolition. First, there would be a pauperization of the free men, as "nearly every householder . . . is also a slave-holder, and is quite unaccustomed to the idea of employing free servants or workmen, whose wages . . . would be far beyond his means. . . ." Second, there would be a large influx of "idle" freedmen into Zanzibar town, whose wants were so simple and "primitive" that they would not engage in long, sustained labor. Third, impecunious masters would release their slave concubines into the streets; "incapable of work," the concubines would drift into prostitution. He argued that the time, when the Arab planters were heavily indebted to Indian "usurious" money-lenders, was not the best time to carry out an abolition law of a "revolutionary" character. He pleaded for an "equitable" measure: "We have, I would respectfully suggest, not only to destroy, but to construct; not merely to sweep away old and barbarous institutions, but to make sure that we are building up, on those ruins, a better and more solid social fabric."

The pro-slavery views of the colonial officials in Zanzibar and of the highest men in the British Foreign Office elicited a spirited verbal war. Missionary societies in Britain denounced a policy that made the slaves captives of the economy of a British possession. Some C.M.S. critics stated their preference for an economic crash rather than the

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43 Ibid., pp. 24-26.
destruction of Britain’s good name. The Society of Friends held that delayed freedom for the slaves was inherently unjust. It was also argued that a well-paid wage labor would be a greater inducement to work than to be slaves. No less a political pragmatist than Dr. Kirk saw the obvious inconsistency in the British position, he pointed out that British Indian forces were engaged in Central Africa in stamping out the slave trade which nourished the very institution that Britain was contemporarily upholding in Zanzibar. The British colonial officials in East Africa, with occasional feeble dissent, countered with every available argument: the slave was “kindly” treated by his master; “precipitate” abolition would ruin both the master and the slave, disturb social equilibrium, and reduce the supply of slave caravan porters, which was essential for keeping up imperial overland communications, and for ensuring mobile “pacification” work. “Pacification” was the euphemism for military conquest of people who would not meekly submit to alien rule.

The debate was also joined in the British Parliament. In March 1896, “Christian politicians,” like J.A. Pease, strongly criticized the British Government for not pursuing a satisfactory anti-slavery policy in East Africa. Her Majesty’s Loyal Opposition, the Liberals, took up the moral issue and criticized the Government. The Conservative M.P.’s mocked the “holier than thou” position of their critics and lectured the latter on the necessity of maintaining imperial “order.” Lord Curzon, the Under-Secretary of State for foreign affairs, the chief spokesman for the government during the debate, stated that Britain’s policy was “to win the confidence of the natives, allay their suspicions, and to familiarize them with British intentions.

The Government had no desire, in redressing an admitted wrong, or to create a serious revolution.” The “natives” were the Arabs and did not, in this instance, include their slaves.

After months of debate in Britain and in East Africa, the British Government agreed to abolish the legal status of slavery, but not of slavery itself. The “Abolition” Decree was issued by the Sultan of Zanzibar on April 6, 1897. It withdrew “legal” recognition from the “status” of slavery; provided for the compensation of slave owners

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45 The Church Missionary Intelligencer, XLVIII (1897), 81-94.
47 Loc. cit.
49 The Parliamentary Debate of March 27, 1896 was reported in the Standard, March 28. The newspaper clipping is included in Newman Papers, Ms. Vol 205. See also, Hansard, Parliamentary Debates, 1892-1908 (4th Series), Vol. XXXIX, 1896 (March 26-April 27), columns 311-336.
who could show satisfactorily in court that they had suffered losses as a result of the operation of the "Abolition" Decree; and stipulated that a slave concubine could only be released from the harem if she could prove cruelty in court. On the same day that the Sultan issued the "Abolition" Decree, he created a legal machinery for its enforcement. Zanzibar island was divided into new administrative-judicial districts. An Arab official, with the rank of Wali (governor) was placed in charge of each district; he was given the power to constitute a court of general jurisdiction, subject to the general process of appeal, and to supervise the enforcement of the new law. The Arab Walis of the existing districts in Pemba were given similar powers. Two British Slavery Commissioners, one for Zanzibar, the other for Pemba, were appointed to oversee the execution of the decree. The issue of the "Abolition" Decree marked the end of one phase and the beginning of another phase of missionary agitation for the full liberation of the slaves.

The "Abolition" Decree had serious defects from the point of view of its vocal critics in Britain and in East Africa. In the first place, its provisions applied to Zanzibar and Pemba only, and did not apply to the coastal zone of Kenya, a region that once belonged to the Sultan of Zanzibar but was now administered as an integral part of Kenya. Second, the new law provided for "permissive" as opposed to compulsory freedom. A slave desiring freedom had to take his case to the court before he could secure his freedom. In the third place, Arab courts, manned by Muslim judges who were expected to be sympathetic to a continuation of slavery, did not inspire much confidence in the hearts of the critics. Some critics regarded the compensation clause of the "Abolition" Decree as equivalent to a provision for the bribing of a criminal to induce him to give up his criminal acts. Another strongly criticized feature of the "emancipation" law was the sanction of the existing harem which included female slaves. Critics repeatedly lashed at the defects as they saw them. On the mainland of East Africa, the most vocal and influential critic was the C.M.S. Bishop of Uganda, the ardent and irrepressible Christian idealist and reformer, the great Alfred R. Tucker. In the islands, the very hotbed of Arab slavery, no group rivalled the Friends Industrial Mission in the intensity of emotions and the steadfast delivery of critical jabs.

The Friends Industrial Mission was, ironically, suggested by a racist editorial in the December 25, 1895 issue of the Spectator. In a letter to the editor, which appeared on one of the pages of the issue, a correspondent, Mary H. Kingsley, expressed faith in the capacity of the

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50 Great Britain, Abolition of the Legal Status of Slavery in Zanzibar and Pemba, C.8433 (1897), pp. 4-6; Correspondence respecting the Abolition of the Legal Status of Slavery in Zanzibar and Pemba, C.8858 (1898), pp. 49-50.
Negro to improve himself, and optimism in his future. In reply, the editor described the Negro as "the 'little sweep' of the human race; and suggested an elaborate educational program for the freed slaves. He suggested that the Quakers should buy out the Arabs of Pemba and establish on the island a Quaker governing council to train the freed slaves continuously in "civilization" for thirty years, so that "a second generation [of the black men] might have time to grow up without memories either of unbearable suffering or one barbaric freedom."  

The English Quakers accepted the challenge. On December 30, 1896, they instructed two of their members, Henry Stanley Newman and Theodore Burtt, to proceed to Pemba and explore the possibility of establishing an "industrial" mission to train freedmen in useful crafts and to educate them to be useful members of their own communities. Newman and Burtt arrived in Zanzibar on January 20, 1897. Lloyd William Mathews received them warmly, gave them provisions and arranged a lodging for them in Pemba. After touring Pemba, they decided to locate the Friends Industrial Mission at Banani, near Chaki Chaki Bay. Newman returned to England, leaving Burtt behind to make arrangements for the Mission. In May, the Friends sent another Quaker, Herbert Armitage, to join Burtt. The Banani estate was purchased in August for the use of the Mission. More Quakers later joined the Mission.

The Friends Industrial Mission accepted slaves of all types. According to the enumeration made on March 1, 1899, there were two hundred forty-seven African slaves living on its estate. Of this number, ninety-four were men of working age, one hundred five were women of working age, while the children numbered forty-eight. The Mission maintained orphanages, provided medical assistance to the needy, imparted elementary education, mainly of a religious character, to the young and old, and provided jobs on the estate to the able-bodied. By 1916, the actual residents on the estate had declined to one hundred forty (fifty-nine men, forty-five women and thirty-six children), although the estate provided jobs for some sixty-six non-resident workers.

The work of the Friends at Banani was not limited to giving practical assistance and training to the slaves. Burtt and his friends excelled even more in agitation. In fact, no sooner was the Mission established

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52 Mathews to Edib, January 21, 1897, Pemba Files, PZ(F)/1 (Library of the Society of Friends, London); Burtt, H. Lister, and Newman to the Friends Anti-Slavery Committee, Pemba Papers, PZ(F)/2; Burtt to E.W. Brooks, August 12, 1897, Newman Papers, Ms. Vol. 212.
53 Newman Papers, Ms. Vol. 213.
54 Pemba Files, file marked "Pemba: Annual Reports, 1916-44," PZ(F)/1.
than they began to attack the Arab Institution. As early as August 1897, Burtt wrote to Edmund Wright Brooks, his friend and Secretary of the Friends Anti-Slavery Committee, that the sooner the British Government and the British public realized "the fact that these Arab officials are utterly incapable of administering justice the better." In September, he denounced "concubinage" as "a cloak to cover up slavery, kidnapping, outrage and cruelty."\(^{55}\) Armitage dispatched to his Society a photograph of domestic female slaves with chains on their ankles—a kind of "Yellow journalism" from the official point of view, since the chaining of free and slave offenders was a common practice among the Arabs.

The materials furnished by Burtt and Armitage were enthusiastically circulated by Brooks in London. Brooks, a kind of "one-track-minded" abolitionist, called for more. In December 1897, he asked for a detailed flow of anti-slavery news from East Africa, for "we intend to make the Government at home 'sit up' too." He regarded the question of slave emancipation as a contest which could not be won with "rose water," but with "much stiffer and sterner materials." In February 1898, when it appeared that the colonial officials had convinced Newman that the "emancipation" law was producing "beneficial" results for the slaves, Brooks told Burtt: "My part is to preach the doctrine, that we are not a Committee for the amelioration of the condition of the slaves but to procure their manumission. I think the less we say about the alleged improvement of their condition in slavery, the better."\(^{56}\)

Burtt welcomed his friend's letters, but he did not need any urging to do his work, as his performance in October 1897, indicated. On October 11 of that year, he sent a letter to Archdeacon J.P. Farler, a former missionary on the mainland of East Africa, now Slavery Commissioner for Pemba, asking for an interview to discuss the manner to liberate the fugitive slaves on the Banani estate. The interview was granted and took place on the same day, October 11. Ten days later, Burtt submitted the following report:

We were told [by Farler] that slaves would have to go before the Wali, and give full information as to why they wished to be free—whether they had any complaint against their master, how, when, and where they became his slaves. All this information must be taken down by the Wali, with a full description of each person, his or her height, colour, length of arm, age, tribe, and any marks upon the body, or other peculiarities. The slave must then be sent to Zanzibar, where

\(^{55}\) Burtt to Brooks, August 30 and September 8, 1897, Newman Papers, Ms. Vol. 212.

\(^{56}\) Brooks to Burtt, December 24, 1897 and February 18, 1898, Pemba Files, PZ(F)/1.
he will be again subjected to examination, and valued for the benefit of his owner. If every detail has been carried out, he may expect to receive papers of freedom, and some time later be returned to Pemba. We were also informed that the owner has a right to seize his slaves if working on another shamba [garden or farm], and that such an act would be supported by the Wali.57

The above report and others stirred up more animated agitation among the critics of British Government’s policy.

The anti-slavery agitation aroused angry responses from the British officials in Zanzibar, particularly from Hardinge and Mathews. Hardinge accused Burtt of provoking a rebellion among the slaves by his actions and of overlooking, in his impatience, the distinction between the abolition of slavery and the abolition of the “legal status” of slavery. He attacked Burtt and Armitage for their “sensational” reports and accused them of “undercutting” the Arab employers by paying the workers at Banani wages higher than the prevailing rate.58

Mathews was even more displeased by the controversy stirred up in England. In a long letter to Newman, dated January 27, 1898, Mathews complained of the biting criticisms of Burtt and Armitage. He accused them of being “furious crusaders” who would be satisfied with nothing except a “revolutionary” abolition, a measure that would “carry with it the detestation of the Arabs towards Europeans and a possible rising of the slaves against their masters.” He was all the more enraged by the “base ingratitude” of the two Friends. Instead of being grateful for the assistance he gave to the Friends in the establishment of their mission, they told him that he was obliged to render the assistance under the obligation which Britain incurred under the Brussels Act.59

The reactions of the colonial officials in Zanzibar increased the abolition controversy. Salisbury was forced to act. At the end of the first year of the enforcement of the “Abolition” Decree, some four thousand slaves in both Zanzibar and Pemba had been granted their freedom.60 In a dispatch to Hardinge, dated June 29, 1898, Salisbury expressed satisfaction with the working of the “emancipation” law. He expressed his belief that it was “due to the character of the slave population and to the contentment of a large portion of their number with the conditions of their existing lot that the more rapid progress expected in some quarters has not been attained.” He did, however,

57 Burtt to Brooks, October 21, 1897, Newman Papers, Ms. Vol. 212.
58 Great Britain, Correspondence respecting the Abolition of the Legal Status of Slavery in Zanzibar and Pemba, C.8858 (1898), pp. 33, 75.
60 C.8858 (1898), pp. 4-7, 68-69.
urge Hardinge to accelerate "gradual emancipation.""\(^{61}\)

"Gradual emancipation" was "accelerated" during 1898 and 1899. The degree of "acceleration" may be measured by the information contained in a brochure that the Friends Anti-Slavery Committee issued in September 1899. Of the estimated 30,000 slaves in Pemba, "more than 2,500 had been officially freed up to the 1st of June last."\(^{62}\) At this rate of emancipation, unless a drastic change took place, it would have taken many decades to free all the slaves in Pemba. The rate of emancipation in Zanzibar was only somewhat higher.

The slow pace of emancipation kept the fires of agitation burning. While the agitation was going on, some slaves, particularly those in Pemba where the Arabs were more unreasonable, took their own freedom in their hands by escaping to the inaccessible areas of the Protectorate. The celebrated, notorious from the point of view of the officials, Burtt and Armitage, were elated. Brooks also expressed satisfaction. The combined results were probably the decisive factors in the response of Sultan Ali bin Hamoud to the address of welcome presented to him on January 18, 1908, by the Friends in Pemba. The Friends regretted the fact that slavery still existed in the Zanzibar Protectorate, in fact and in name, ten years after the issue of the "emancipation" law. The Sultan promised quick action. His action came as a big surprise. On June 9, 1909, he issued a decree abolishing slavery as of July 6, 1909.

A delayed stroke of the pen of officialdom had at least conferred freedom on the slaves of Zanzibar. In light of the events that transpired before June 1909, it is reasonable to infer that emancipation would have been delayed much longer if the missionaries and others, had not been activists in the abolitionist agitation.

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\(^{62}\) Pemba Files, PZ(F)/1.

\(^{63}\) Brooks to Burtt, November 23, 1904, Pemba Files, PZ(F)/1.

\(^{64}\) Ali bin Hamoud to the Friends Industrial Mission, January 19, 1898, Pemba Files, PZ(F)/1.