

**NGONI CULTURE, MISSIONARY CHRISTIANITY, AND THE MODERN
STATE: THE CASE OF MPHEREMBE'S AREA IN MZIMBA DISTRICT,
MALAWI, 1899-1994**

MA (African Social History) Thesis

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University of Malawi

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DECLARATION

I, the undersigned, hereby declare that this thesis is my original work, which has not already been submitted to any other institution for an award. Where other people's work has been used this has been appropriately acknowledged.

Full Legal Name: **JAMU KOLANIKOLANI BEST NYIRENDA**

Signature: _____

Date: _____

DEDICATION

This work is dedicated to my late grandmother, Eddessie Qoma and my late mother, Nwazi Storia Mgemezulu. To my grandmother, I say thank you very much for making your efforts to bring me up until your death in 1992. To my late mother, it is also a vote of thanks for all the maternal love with which you cared for me in tender age.

I also dedicate this thesis to my third born child, Best Nyirenda, who was born on 4th June 2009 while I was away doing field research, in the hope that the good Lord may guide him toward a prosperous future.

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I would like to take this opportunity to thank my principal supervisor, Professor Kings M. Phiri, who made great efforts in guiding me through the writing of this thesis. Indeed without his tireless comments and focused criticisms this work would fall below required standards.

I am also grateful to the Principal of Domasi College of Education, Dr. Elias Chakwera for allowing me to enroll for the MA course at Chancellor College, University of Malawi, and also for providing funds for my field research.

My thanks also go to my family, especially my wife Harriet Mkandawire, my children Chigomezgo Nyirenda, Mervis Nyirenda and Best Nyirenda, for their patience and love while I was moving up and down in pursuit of scholarship. I hope that the fruition of this work will be some comfort for the fatherly love they were forced to miss for long periods.

I am also grateful to all my informants in Mpherembe's area, who despite their busy schedule, allowed me to interview them. Without their cooperation and support, I would have given up.

Lastly but not least, I thank staff at the Malawi National Archives for the dedicated manner in which they attended to my requests for information the time I regularly visited the public archives from April to December 2009.

ABSTRACT

This thesis is an examination of the cultural resilience of the Ngoni under Inkosi Mpherembe in the north-western part of Mzimba District or Northern Ngoniland from late pre-colonial times to the recent post-independence period, in the face of challenges posed by Western Christianity and the Colonial as well as Post-Colonial States.

It argues that unlike other Northern Ngoni groups or chiefdoms which underwent considerable deculturation under the impact of Western influence and the manipulations of the post-independent state in Malawi, the Ngoni of Mpherembe were and have been able to retain and in some respects even reinforce basic elements of their Ngoni-ness. These include Singoni (the language) which is still spoken only in that part of Malawi; the institution of Sangweni (Men's Corner within a village community) as a venue for socialising young males; the Umthimba or Lobola system of marriage; strong etiquette relations between different generations and sexes; and many more.

It explains the factors and agents accounting for the resilience in question in several ways. One of these being that the Ngoni under Mpherembe remained a peregrinating and cohesive community for much longer during the late 19th century than the other Northern Ngoni groups. To this factor was added their relative geographical isolation, following settlement in their present homeland, from the main centres of Missionary Christianity and Colonial State activity in Northern Ngoniland.

Following Christian missionary intrusion, Mpherembe's area was further lucky, culturally, to have been blessed with Ngoni evangelists like Peter Zimema Thole who were Singoni enthusiasts, fully committed to preaching and singing in the Ngoni language. And, in recent post-independence times, the Ngoni of Mpherembe were able to benefit from and capitalise on the cultural policies of Dr. H. Kamuzu Banda, the first head of state. The Ngoni generally and those of Mpherembe in particular profited from the fact that Dr. Banda was keen to promote the Ngoni war dance, Ingoma, and the praise-singing that went with it, for the political uses to which they could be put. Thus, with different motives in mind, the Banda regime and the Ngoni of Mpherembe converged toward the promotion of Ngoni cultural consciousness in the 1970s and 1980s.

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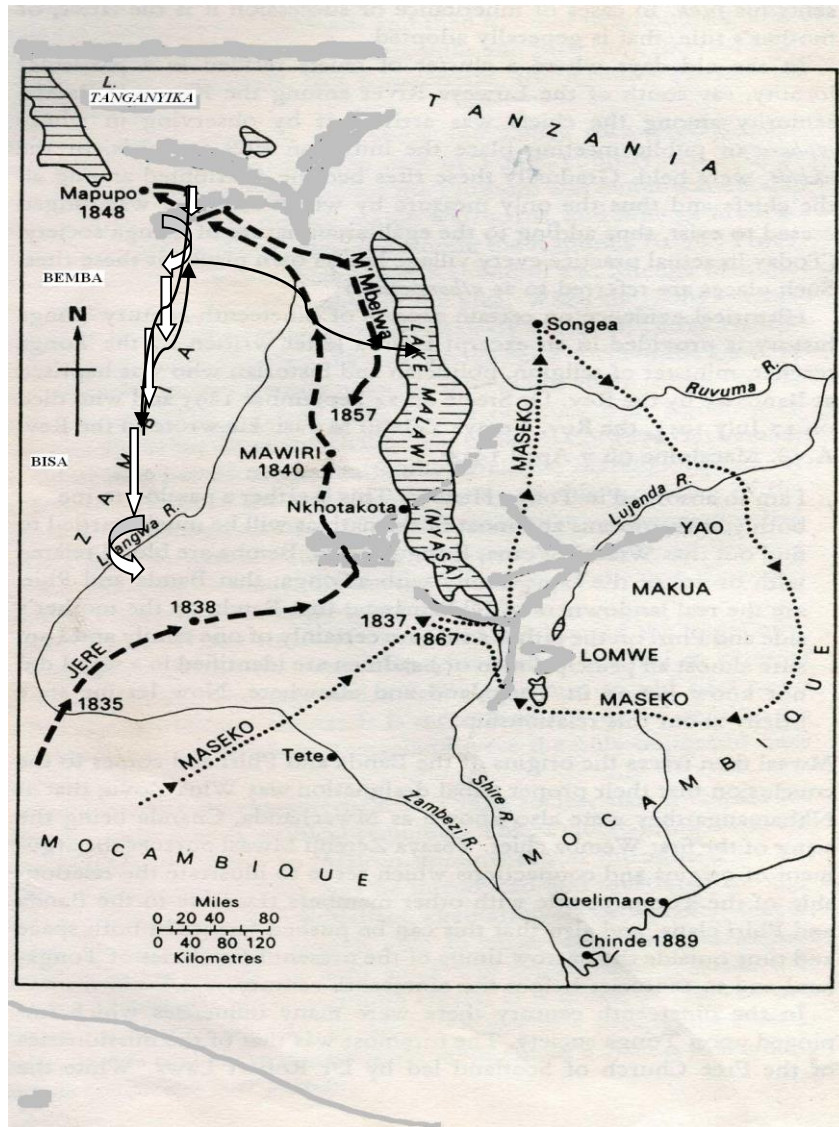
LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS AND ACRONYMS

BOMA	British Overseas Military Administration
LIM	Livingstonia Mission
M. N. A.	Malawi National Archives.
O. T.	Oral Testimony
T. A.	Traditional Authority

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Map 1: Northern Malawi and Eastern Zambia, tracing the Migrations of Mpherembe's Ngoni following the death of Zwangendaba

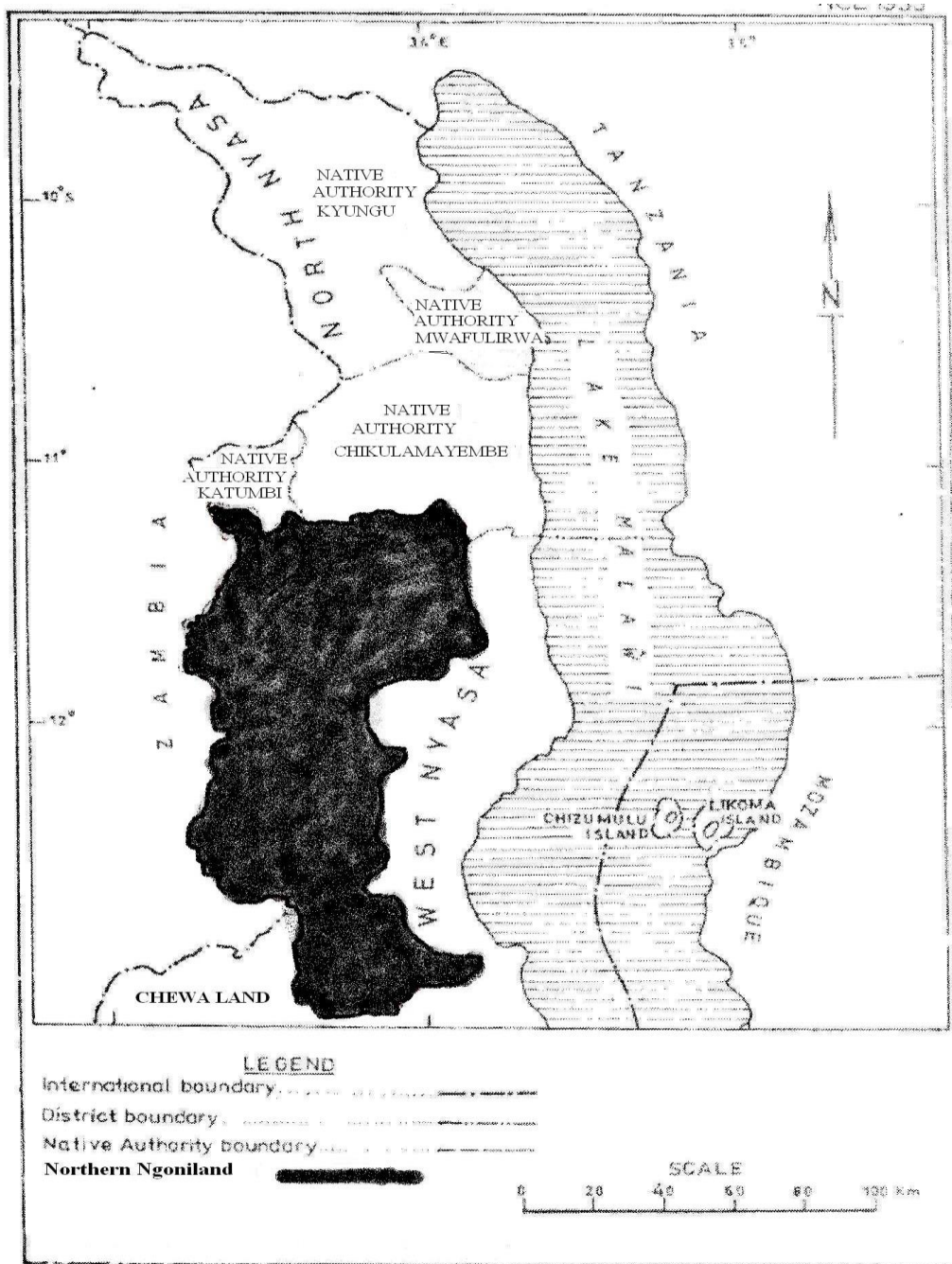


LEGEND

- ⇨ Mpezeni Ngoni Migratory Route
- Mpherembe Ngoni migratory Route

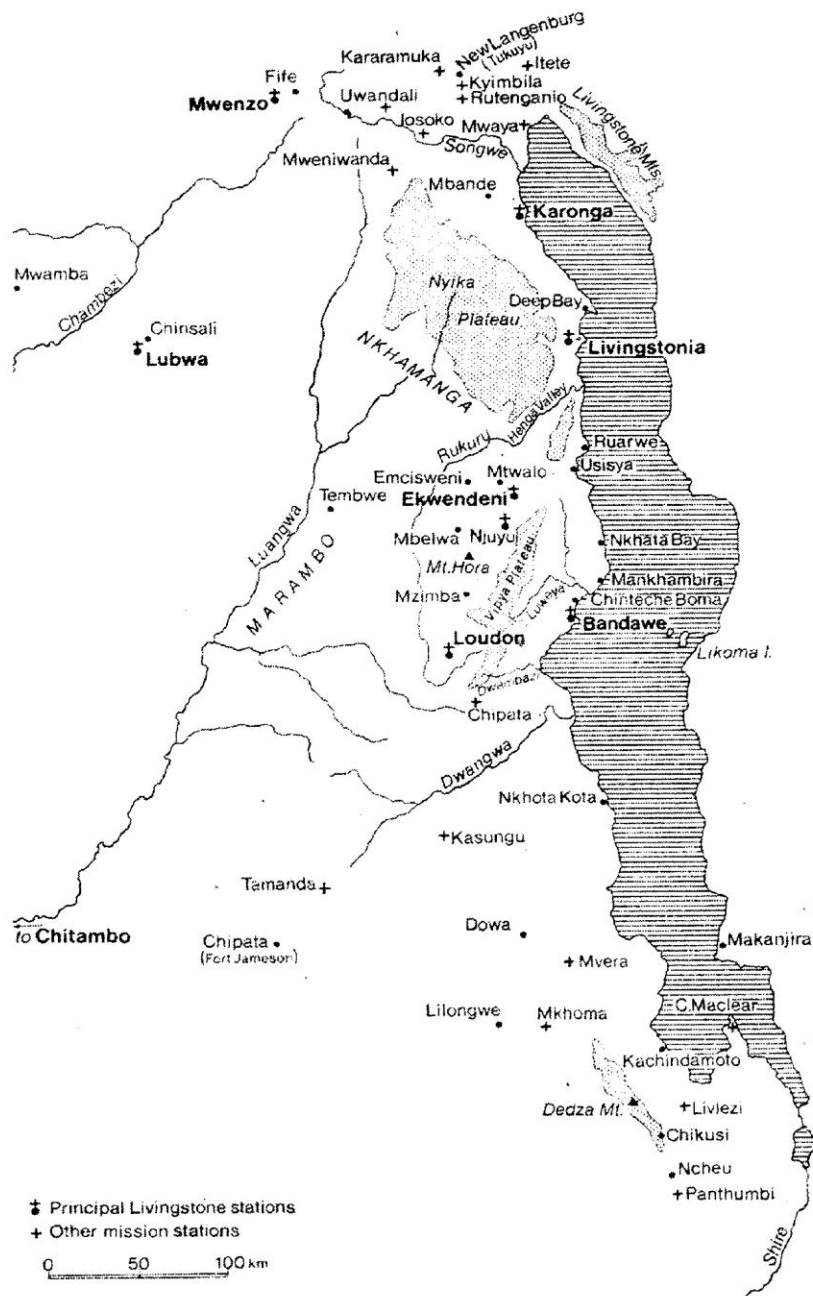
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Map 2: Northern Malawi and adjacent parts of Zambia and Tanzania, indicating the position of Northern Ngoniland as of the 1930s



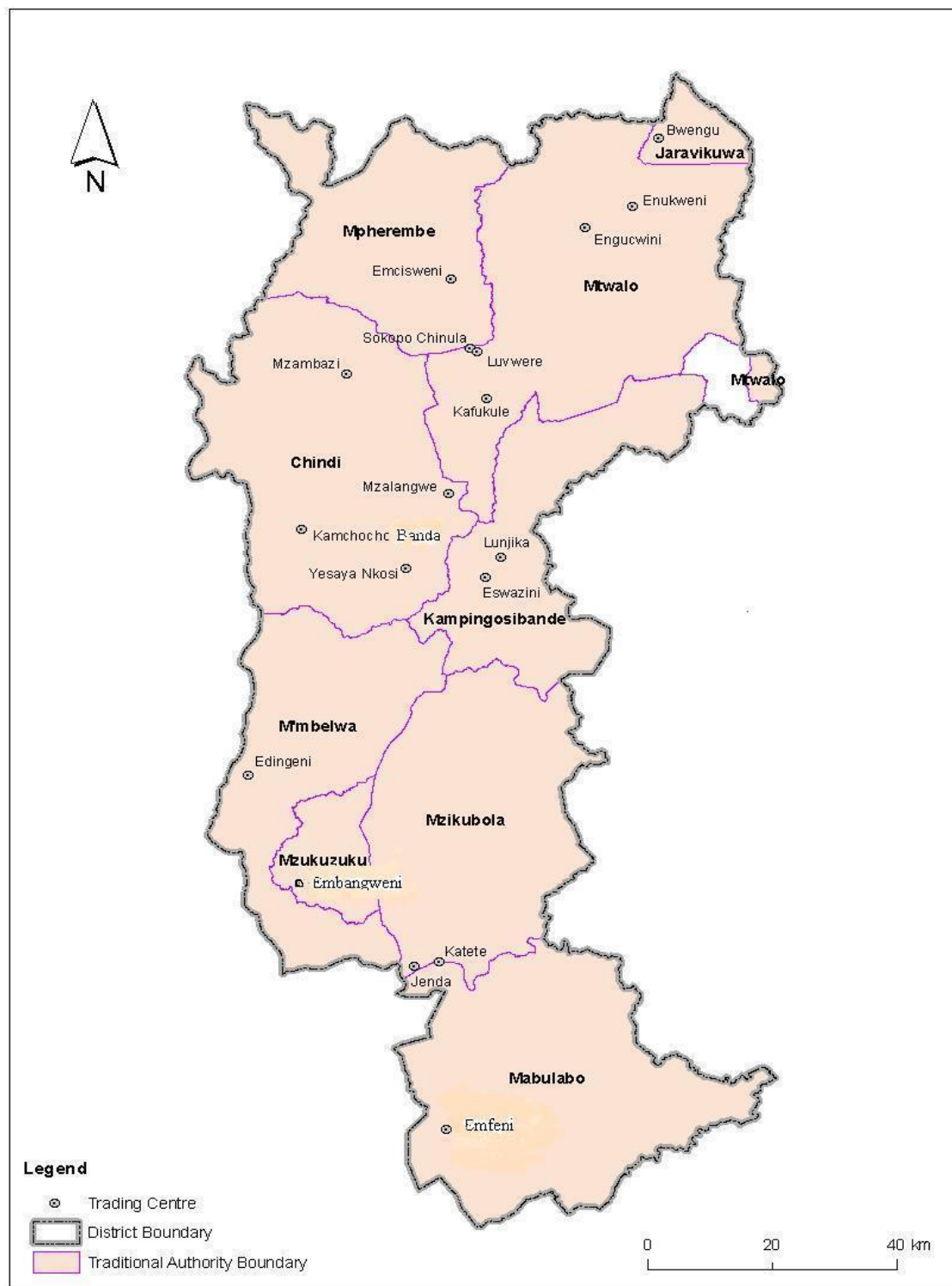
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Adapted from John McCracken (2000 edition) p.28.

Map 4: Present day Administrative Map of Mzimba District, showing Traditional Authority Boundaries and Main Trading Centres



Chapter One

INTRODUCTION

1. Statement of the Research Problem

Despite their dominance in the political arena for a long period of time among the indigenous Tumbuka even after the advent of the missionaries and then colonial administrators, Ngoni interaction with the said indigenous peoples brought social-cultural differentiation within Ngoni society at large. One such differentiation was the degree of retention of Ngoni culture, especially language, among the predominant Tumbuka citizens of their state. For example, by the early 1900's the Scottish missionaries operating in the northern part of Malawi had already noted the decline of the Ngoni language and hence swiftly shifted their mode of communication from the Zulu-related language of that time to Chitumbuka which was the language of the majority of inhabitants in Northern Ngoniland.¹ But this situation did not apply to the whole Ngoni society, for one section of it managed to retain most aspects of the Ngoni culture especially at the language level, and this was the Mpherembe Ngoni.

¹ D. Fraser Winning a Primitive People, (London: Seeley Service and Company, 1922) p.195.

There is a section of Northern Ngoniland which deserves special attention and study, if only because Ngoni culture has been a unifying force in Mzimba District, which is the largest in terms of territory, and one which continues to be an influential factor in nation-building and development in Malawi.²

The higher degree of survival of Ngoni culture in Mpherembe's area, however, needs to be explained historically, especially in relation to the forces of change which had great impact on indigenous society and culture. These included the introduction and spread of Western Christianity, and the imposition of a colonial administrative system. The resilience with which the Ngoni of Mpherembe adapted culturally to these forces of modernization and change is the key issue which this thesis tries to address.

2. Justification of the Study

The history of the Ngoni in general and of the Northern Ngoni in particular has attracted the attention of several scholars including historians, anthropologists, political scientists and sociologists. This might be the case due to the socio-political changes which are attributed to them in areas they once passed through and in those where they ended up settling.

Indeed, there have been considerable studies of the Ngoni in terms of their ethnic composition, migration, settlement and interaction with the indigenous people they found, their cultural system, and the impact which Western intrusion had on it.

² K.M. Phiri "Something for which to Remember them: the Concepts of Political Unity and Cultural Identity in the History of the Ngoni in Mzimba District since 1904" (a Paper presented to a Conference on Local History and Culture, Mzuzu University, 28-30 August 2007). Introductory notes, p3.

In the case of the Northern or M'mbelwa Ngoni the writers focused on the changes that took place at national or paramount chieftainship level and not at local or chiefdom level. This can be attributed to the general assumption that theirs was a centralized system of administration which applied to all of them even though there were divergences at local, sub-kingdom level.

In view of the above scenario, one issue that has not been fully tackled academically is the process of Ngoni cultural evolution and participation in the making of the Malawian society at large which has brought differentiations amongst the Ngoni themselves. The Ngoni of Mpherembe constitute a most suitable unit for a case study of the process in question because they have registered a higher degree of cultural retentivity than any other Ngoni groups and can therefore be regarded as model custodians of Ngoni culture. Their cultural experience over time thus needs to be explained and historicized in relation to the role that was played by their interaction with Christian missionaries, colonial administration, and Malawi's first post-colonial regime.

This thesis does this, with special focus on the period between 1899 and 1994. It begins with developments of around 1899, the year when the Livingstonia missionaries, who contributed a lot to the development of Northern Malawi socio-economically, were finally allowed to carry out their missionary work such as establishing mission stations and schools in Mpherembe's area.³

Incidentally, the Mpherembe Ngoni were the last of the Northern Ngoni chiefdoms to be brought under the Livingstonia Mission's influence. The year 1994, on the other hand, marked the end of Malawi's First Republic, under which the Northern Ngoni had a clearly defined sphere of influence- one which defined them as a "super" tribe among the other peoples of Malawi. This was shown by the Head of State at that time, Dr. Hastings Kamuzu Banda, who actively promoted the historical Ngoni war dance, Ingoma, during political rallies and also constructed houses for all the Ngoni chiefs in Mzimba District. What emerged then was an alliance of some sort between the Banda Regime and the Northern Ngoni - an alliance which ended with the collapse of the Banda regime in 1994.

3. Aims and Objectives of the Study

This study aims at unveiling and re-conceptualising the historical processes that have generated differentiation among the Northern or M'mbelwa Ngoni in the course of their cultural contributions to the Malawian society and culture at large.

³ Y.M. Chibambo, My Ngoni of Nyasaland (London: Macmillan, 1952) p.59

More specifically, the study intends to:

- examine the history and culture of the Mpherembe Ngoni prior to the advent of the Livingstonia missionaries.
- highlight the changes that the Livingstonia missionaries brought to the whole M'mbelwa Ngoni area.
- assess the impact of colonial administration on Ngoni culture as a whole and on the culture of the Mpherembe Ngoni in particular.
- explain the prominence with which Ngoni culture (and language in particular) has survived in Mpherembe's area.
- examine the manner in which the Mpherembe Ngoni participated in the making of Malawian national life and culture during Dr. Banda's rule.

4. Review of Key Theoretical Literature

A number of scholars have contributed to the debate about the way Christianity and Colonialism impacted on the Ngoni of northern Malawi. They include Read, Rennie, Pachai, McCracken, Thompson and Vail. Some of these maintain that the Ngoni culture on the whole remained intact until the time of contacts with the Europeans. For example, Rennie argues that the Ngoni were not in the state of decline before the arrival of the Europeans.

He maintains that it was the advent of the European missionaries which upset the balance of power in Ngoniland whereby their subordinates became very influential thereafter.⁴

This view is also shared by Read who focussed on the social –cultural ways of the Ngoni and attributed the decline of Ngoni culture in general to the influence of Christianity and Western Education.⁵ This view is further corroborated by Pachai who sees the series of revolts staged by Ngoni subjects between 1877 and 1881 as a process of consolidation of Ngoni position in their sphere of influence. To some extent he also shows how the Ngoni were able to manipulate the colonial political setting to their advantage so as to benefit from the colonial dispensation. He concludes that the Ngoni lived through the colonial interlude with greater adaptability due to the variety and vitality of their politics and consequently remained powerful.⁶

⁴ Rennie, K.J. “Ngoni States and European Intrusion” in E. Stokes and R. Brown (eds), The Zambezian Past (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1965). pp. 303-311.

⁵ Read, M. The Ngoni of Nyasaland (London: Oxford University Press, 1956). This book deals with social- cultural issues of both, the M’Mbelwa Ngoni and the Maseko Ngoni.

⁶ Pachai, B. “African Initiatives in Local Administration: The Case of the M’mbelwa African Administrative Council”, in R.J. MacDonald (ed) From Nyasaland to Malawi, (Nairobi: EAPH, 1975). in this article Pachai shows how the M’Mbelwa Ngoni were incorporated into colonial administration without losing much of their political authority. The Ngoni political prowess has been fully discussed in the article entitled, “Ngoni Politics and Diplomacy in Malawi, 1848-1904, in Pachai, B (ed) Early History of Malawi (London: Longman, 1972), pp.179-207.

Apart from the above perspective, there are other scholars who argue that Ngoni culture and political authority were on the verge of collapsing at the time of European intrusion. But here scholars disagree on the influence of Europeans especially the Christian Missionaries on the process of Ngoni cultural consolidation.

On one hand McCracken for example, argues that during the time of missionary intrusion, the Ngoni were subjected to internal and external pressures which made them particularly receptive to missionary advances. He further maintains that the acceptance of the Livingstonia Missionaries contributed to the further dilution of Ngoni culture in that Church membership and education disrupted the African social setting and resulted in labour migration and acquisition of poorly understood western values.⁷

Thompson on the other hand, argues that the Ngoni's sour relations with their neighbours and assimilated people made them to be conscious about their culture and influence. He therefore maintains that at the time of the Scottish missionary penetration of Ngoniland, the Ngoni State was no longer expanding but there was consolidation process of Ngoni political power within their sphere of influence.

⁷ McCracken, J "Religion and Politics in Northern Ngoniland, 1881-1904," in Pachai, B, (ed) Early History of Malawi, pp. 216-231. In this article McCracken shows how the acquisition of fire arms by the Ngoni neighbours and the revolts by their subjects plus even tensions within the ruling family posed danger to the Ngoni state's survival. The missionary and colonial impact on the Ngoni has also been highlighted in McCracken, J. Politics and Christianity in Malawi: Impact of Livingstonia Mission in the Northern Province, 1875-1940 (Blantyre: CLAIM, 2000).

According to him, the intrusion of the Livingstonia Missionaries was a blessing to the Ngoni in that some missionaries such as Donald Frazer revitalized the Ngoni culture by mixing it with Christianity through the use of Ngoni hymns and large conventions which gave the Ngoni a sense of dignity. He concludes by arguing that the Ngoni used their political and religious adaptation to survive the transition from pre-colonial to colonial patterns of governance.⁸

The last view championed by Leroy Vail attributes the decline of the Ngoni to their failure to adapt to their new environment. He argues that the Ngoni kingdom failed to grow due to a number of problems such as their ignorance of the local environment which led to the declining fertility of the land, the growing power of the Tumbuka which reached its peak in the 1880s and the outbreak of the rinderpest disease in 1894 which decimated the cattle herds they had accumulated. The Ngoni were weakened further due to their failure to be integrated into western capitalism at the time of European penetration of the area. He therefore, concludes that colonialism facilitated the disintegration of the Ngoni Society.⁹

⁸ Thompson, J.T. "Donald Fraser and the Ngoni" (PhD. Thesis, Edinburgh University, 1982) and also in Thompson, J. T. "The Origins, Migration and Settlement of the Northern Ngoni", Society of Malawi Journal, vol.34, No.1 (1981),pp6-28.

⁹ Vail, L.H., "The Making of the Dead North: A Study of Ngoni Rule in Northern Malawi, 1855-1907" in J.B. Peires(ed), Before and After Shaka: Papers in Nguni History (Grahamstown: Rhodes University Press, 1981),pp 230-255.

Despite the different arguments these scholars present, there is one common feature to all of them. Whether the Ngoni lost their political power and cultural identity due to internal, external or ecological factors, these writers assume that this was done homogenously. Although some noted differences in the way sections of Ngoni society adapted culturally, little attention was given to accounting for such differences.

Their focus was at the paramountcy level with an assumption that a change at that level would replicate itself at local level, which was clearly not the case- as Mpherembe's area will reveal.

This study underlines the need to focus on the experiences of particular sections of Ngoni society relative to their cultural participation in the making of the Malawian Society and culture at large.

5. Research Methodology

This is a longitudinal study, as it looks at the Mpherembe area through three distinct phases: the missionary influence phase; the colonial administration phase; and the first African regime phase of the history of Northern Malawi.

The study is based on both oral and written sources. Oral interviews have been used to get the experiences of the people in the area. This has involved getting life histories about people's cultural identity and the changes that have taken place over time.

Ideally, the research targeted both the “traditionalists” and the “neutralists”; however due to time limitation more emphasis was placed on the traditionalists or those who seem to be the guardians of culture as opposed to the ordinary Ngoni people.

Therefore, people such as traditional leaders or members of the royal family and other influential people like the counsellors of Inkosi Mpherembe, the mission educated such as teachers and church elders of Livingstonia Mission, local historians (Wamidauko), and elderly women who are regarded as custodians of marital traditions, were interviewed. As far as the oral sources are concerned, I was fortunate enough because many of the informants interviewed were really knowledgeable about the history of the area (and were quite willing to share what they know).

To a lesser extent Random Sampling was also used whereby every member of Ngoni descent as well as those non-Ngoni who have been assimilated into Ngoni culture had a chance or probability of being included in the interviews. Once an individual was sampled, he or she was asked to identify another possible respondent. There was content analysis of each interview in relation to the others in order to determine consistent messages as well as differences. In other words, there was a consideration of views of both the majority and minority.

The oral fieldwork in question was directed at mapping out the historical traditions of an area that is geographically estimated to encompass about 1,000square kilometres and is the homeland of over 30,000 people. For according to the national population census of 1987, there were then 22,936 people in Traditional Authority Mpherembe' area.¹⁰

The questionnaire I used was divided into four parts, the first part of which dealt with open-ended questions on general Ngoni culture, Missionary Christianity and the Modern State. This part focused on the history of the Mpherembe Ngoni in relation to the other Zwangendaba Ngoni groups. It then proceeded to find out the general Ngoni way of life-the traditions and practices which were central to them originally. It ended by asking questions concerning the Ngoni's interaction first, with the captives or indigenous people prior to the coming of Europeans, then their interaction with Christian Missionaries from Livingstonia and lastly their interaction with colonial administrators and the post-colonial regime of Dr. Banda.

The second part of the questionnaire dealt with specific issues concerning the Mpherembe Ngoni. Here structured or semi-structured questions were asked. The first issue was to find out why the Mpherembe Ngoni parted ways with Mpezeni in Zambia only to return to be under M'Mbelwa in Malawi.

Then there was particular interest in getting respondents to account for the preservation of Singoni language in Mpherembe's area, in contrast to other parts of

¹⁰ Malawi Government: Malawi Population and Housing Census 1987 Vol II, Population Characteristics, (National Statistical Office, Zomba, 1993).pages, 18 and73.

Mzimba district where the language has died a natural death. This part also asked a number of questions on the importance of certain cultural aspects of the Ngoni way of life, such as marriage (Umuthimba) ceremony, Ingoma dance, cattle-keeping and the institution of Chihalo or Chokolo (Widow) inheritance that seem to be central to them.

The third part focused on the impact of Missionary Christianity on Ngoni culture with special reference to the Mpherembe Ngoni. In this part structured and semi-structured questions were asked firstly, with the aim of trying to find out when and where the Mpherembe Ngoni first established relations with the Livingstonia missionaries. Then the questionnaire tried to find out changes in the Ngoni way of life, such as dances, traditional healing/medicines, and language which were induced by interaction with Missionary Christianity. The research also wanted to know if there were some Ngoni traditions that influenced the Livingstonia Mission in its operations.

The fourth and last part took a keen interest in the impact of the Modern State on Ngoni culture. Structured and semi-structured questions were asked in order to find out how the Mpherembe Ngoni established their relations with the Colonial Administrators. Then there was also an enquiry into whether Ngoni customs/traditions and system of government were affected by interaction with the Colonial government.

The study is also substantially based on library and archival research, in which the data was gathered from secondary works like books, newspapers, seminar papers from Chancellor College Library and History Department Library. This involved examining the different contributions made by previous writers on African culture and the modern state generally, and on Ngoni culture and how it was affected by early Christian missionaries, colonial administrators and the first nationalist government in particular.

Written primary sources were accessed through the Malawi National Archives Headquarters in Zomba. Of particular interest was the data on colonial relations with Ngoni society as a whole and the interaction between the early Christian missionaries and colonial administrators on the one hand, and various strata of Ngoni society, on the other. The research focused much on the colonial administration files especially those for Mzimba District and the records of the Livingstonia Mission stations especially those that were(are) near Mpherembe's area, such as Njuyu and Ekwendeni. The data collected was subjected to qualitative analysis. This was achieved by coding the data according to themes generated during the research as well as the specific objectives with which the research started.

6. Layout of the Study

The study is developed around six chapters. The first of these is the introduction which aims at stating the research problem, providing a select literature review, outlining the aim and objectives of the study and explaining the research methodology that has been employed.

Chapter Two presents the history and culture of the Mpherembe Ngoni prior to the advent of the Livingstonia Missionaries. It describes the emergence of the Mpherembe Ngoni after the death of Zwangendaba around 1848 and then proceeds to look at the migration of these Ngoni up to their settlement in Tumbuka-land.

The last two parts examine the interactions between the Mpherembe Ngoni and the earlier Tumbuka inhabitants, and the Northern Ngoni cultural outlook at the time of settlement in Malawi.

Chapter Three is a review of debate about the influence of Missionary Christianity and the Modern State on African Culture. Three main perspectives or lines of debate appear to emerge about how African societies and cultures were impacted by Missionary Christianity and Colonial Rule. The first perspective is that African societies and cultures on the whole survived the disruptions of Western intrusion. The second argues along related lines that although generally harsh in their impact on African culture, Christianity and Colonialism also had a liberal face which made it possible for certain missionaries and colonial administrators to promote the development of some African traditions and institutions.

Lastly, there is a third school of thought which maintains that Christianity and Colonialism were destructive or adulterative in their impact on African culture in that they viewed an African as a person without history. The chapter then discusses some case studies of Christian penetration in Africa, its motives and impact and then the impact of Western colonisation. This chapter ends with an examination of cultural change in Africa in the face of Western intrusion and African reaction to colonialism and Western imperialism.

The fourth Chapter discusses the impact the Livingstonia Mission and the Colonial State had on Northern Ngoni culture, with special focus on Mpherembe's area.

It begins by describing the Livingstonia's missionary penetration of Northern Ngoniland. It then discusses Ngoni reactions to the missionary presence. Thereafter, the Livingstonia Mission's impact on Ngoni culture is highlighted. This chapter ends with an examination of Ngoni cultural adaptation in the face of Christianisation and Colonialism.

Chapter Five deals with the way the Mpherembe Ngoni participated in the making of Malawian Culture during the regime of Dr. Hastings Kamuzu Banda from 1964 to 1994. Firstly, it examines the cultural policy of post-independence Malawi. It then analyses Dr. Banda's attitude towards Ngoni culture as a whole. Thirdly, there is highlighting of how the Northern Ngoni tried to search for cultural space within Malawian national culture at large.

The chapter ends with a demonstration of how the Mpherembe Ngoni tried to use the situation to enhance the persistence of linguistic and other features of Ngoni culture in their sphere of influence. The sixth and last chapter is the conclusion. This part is mainly an effort to summarise the main findings of the research for the thesis. It also draws attention to the limitations of the study.

Chapter Two

THE NGONI OF MPHEREMBE: THEIR HISTORY AND CULTURE PRIOR TO THE ADVENT OF THE LIVINGSTONIA MISSIONARIES

The general history of Northern Ngoni settlement in Malawi and Ngoni relations with such neighbouring groups as the Tumbuka, the Chewa and the Tonga has been dealt with by many authorities including Keith Rennie(1965), Bridglal Pachai(1972), Jack Thompson(1981), Margaret Read(1956) and Leroy Vail(1981). This chapter therefore focuses on that dimension of the story in the nineteenth century which relates to the movements, settlement, interactions and cultural impact of the Mpherembe Ngoni prior to their contact with the Livingstonia Missionaries.

1. Emergence of the Mpherembe Ngoni following the death of Zwangendaba

The Ngoni under Mpherembe, who today control the north-western part of Mzimba District in the northern part of Malawi, were originally one of the several branches of Zwangendaba's followers formed out of a motley gathering of many ethnic groupings. The name Ngoni was derived from Nguni, a term of salutation [isithokozelo] common to many agnatic clans in Natal.¹¹

¹¹ J. A. Barnes, Politics in a Changing Society: A Political History of the Fort Jameson Ngoni (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1967), p.9.

They emerged as a distinct group from the succession crisis that erupted after the death of Zwangendaba in 1848 in the Ufipa area in the south western part of modern Tanzania. This followed the long trek from Zululand and Swaziland through modern Mozambique, Zimbabwe and Zambia where they were fleeing the wars of Shaka, the Zulu empire-builder in the 1820s. During their trek northwards, Zwangendaba and his followers assimilated many people from the tribes they encountered and thereby expanded themselves as a tribe.¹²

Mpherembe was one of Zwangendaba's sons from his wife Mkunhlane or Mwahabose who belonged to the 'Emtyiseni' house which was later coined as 'Emcisweni' by the Tumbuka, due to pronunciation problems. Ngoni men then used to marry several wives each of whom occupied a distinct social status and bore specific responsibilities within the household. In the case of Mpherembe's mother, her house was responsible for the funeral services hence the name Emtyiseni.¹³ The death of Zwangendaba at Mapupo forced the Ngoni to shift to Chidhlokhlo also in Fipa country. Here tension and succession disputes erupted, and these led to several tribal splits one of which gave rise to the ultimate emergence of the Mpherembe group as a distinct sub-ethnic entity.

¹² J.K. Rennie, "The Ngoni States and European Intrusion" in E. Stokes and R. Brown (eds) The Zambesian Past: Studies in Central African History (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1965), p.303; B. Pachai, "Ngoni Politics and Diplomacy in Malawi 1848-1904" in B. Pachai (ed), Early History of Malawi, (London: Longman, 1972), p.179.

¹³ Oral Testimony (hereafter O.T.): Shadreck Madhlopa, Group Village Chimnyama Madhlopa, T.A. Mpherembe, Mzimba, 10 June 2009.

Ngodoyi, son of Ntabeni, the regent to Zwangendaba's leadership, was the first to move out soon after the death of his father. He led his followers northwards to the northern shores of Lake Tanganyika where they became known as the Tuta. Zulu Gama was the next, and he led his followers eastwards to Songeya in Southern Tanzania. They were followed by Gwaza Jere who led the main group that looked to M'mbelwa for leadership, southward to Tumbuka country. Their move was followed by that of Mpezeni and Matchumi Jere (a regent to Mpherembe), who led their followers into eastern Zambia where they later clashed with the Lungu, Bisa and Bemba. They went on to fight a fierce battle against the Bemba at Chisenga around 1850 where they killed two Bemba chiefs. Despite this effort, their victory was not a decisive one; so they continued their migration southwards.¹⁴

During their further migration, the Mpezeni and Mpherembe Ngoni once again encountered the Bemba warriors who had guns and as result the Ngoni were defeated in 1856. After the defeat, the Mpezeni and Mpherembe Ngoni went to Bisa country where they separated. But before they parted ways, Mpherembe and Mpezeni together caused havoc among the Bisa to the extent that some of them were forced to migrate as far as the shores of Lake Malawi.

¹⁴ Y.M. Chibambo, My Ngoni of Nyasaland, (London: Macmillan, 1952), pp. 31-35.

For example, Dr. David Livingstone first heard of the Ngoni in September 1861, when he spoke with some Bisa immigrants such as Marenga then living on the shores of Lake Malawi (in the southern part of Nkhota-kota) who mentioned both Mpezeni and Mpherembe, as those responsible for their flight eastwards.¹⁵

The separation of Mpherembe and Mpezeni is often presented in two versions: one written and the other oral. The written version maintains that Matchumi Jere, a regent to Emcisweni house, caused Mpezeni and Mpherembe to quarrel hence the separation.¹⁶ The oral one, on the other hand, stipulates that there was no quarrel of any kind and that the two leaders, Mpezeni and Mpherembe, merely agreed to separate ways in order to have adequate living space for each one and his followers.¹⁷

However, it should be noted that it was within the nature of the evolving Ngoni community for leaders to part ways. In most cases when a Ngoni man married, he was expected to live with his parents for some time and thereafter move to find his own settlement. It was also a tradition for a newly installed chief to find a new village whereby the old one would belong to the old members of the royal family. So in this case it can be assumed that Mpherembe and Mpezeni parted ways because each wanted to be autonomous.

¹⁵ W.E. Rau, "Mpezeni Ngoni of Eastern Zambia, 1870-1920." (PhD Thesis, Los Angeles, University of California, 1974) p.3

¹⁶ D.D. Phiri, From Nguni to Ngoni, (Limbe: Popular Publications, 1982), p. 95.

¹⁷ O.T.: Wilson Moyo, Joel Moyo Village(Group Samala Nqumayo) , T. A. Mpherembe, Mzimba, 1 June 2009

After this separation, Mpherembe went off eastward passing through Chinsali and the present Chama North in modern Zambia to raid the Bemba once again.¹⁸ This was probably the time when Mpherembe got his distinct royal name and status. According to oral testimony Mpherembe's first name was Ndindane. The names Mpherembe and Mwamba were derived from the Bemba after the havoc which Mpherembe warriors caused in Bemba country. The name Mpherembe was coined from the Bemba word Chimperembe meaning a 'fierce rhino.'¹⁹ However it is not clear how Ndindane got the name of Mwamba because this name was one of the titles of influential Bemba chiefs.²⁰ Ndindane probably got his name during the clashes with Bemba hence some regarded him as their Mwamba (chief) or it was because he incorporated many Bemba into his group as evidenced by the presence of many clans such as Mumba, Ngulube, Ng'ona, Ngoma, and Mbeba.

What is clear in all this is that Mpherembe's Ngoni stayed in north-east Zambia from 1856 to around 1870, when they were expelled from the area by the Bemba Chief Chitapankwa, with the help of firearms from the Swahili-Arab warlord Tippu Tip, following a battle at Chipekeni.

¹⁸ Y. Chondoka and Bota F., A History of the Tumbuka From 1400 to 1900, (Lusaka: Academic Press, 2007), pp 191-193

¹⁹ O. T.: Henderson Hara, Inkosana Mwamba Village, T. A. Mpherembe, Mzimba, 9 June 2009.

²⁰ A. Tweedie, "History of the Bemba from Oral Tradition," in E. Stokes and R. Brown (eds), The Zambezian Past: Studies in Central African History, (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1966), pp 197-220.

This defeat forced Mpherembe to flee to the northeast where he found sanctuary with the Namwanga chief Chikanamuluo, from where he later moved south to reunite with M'Mbelwa in Malawi.²¹ In other words, this group of Ngoni remained strong and invincible in what is now eastern Zambia for about fourteen years. Upon returning to Northern Malawi to rejoin the Ngoni host there that had remained under M'mbelwa and Mtwaro, Mpherembe brought with him many people who were of Bemba and Bisa stock.

2. Mpherembe's settlement in Tumbuka-land

From Bemba country, Mpherembe led his followers eastwards into Tumbuka country where they first settled at Mwazisi in western Rumphi. They met no resistance from the Tumbuka of Nkhamanga because by this time, Tumbuka country had already experienced the plundering habits of the M'mbelwa Ngoni at Choma, Henga valley and Luhomelo areas. The Ngoni under Mpherembe then proceeded on until they met their fellow Ngoni under M'mbelwa at Choma where Mpherembe recognized the paramountcy of M'Mbelwa and pledged to be loyal to him. From that point onwards, Mpherembe's salutation changed from Ba-eti to "Eti Baba", as only M'mbelwa could be saluted as a "Baeti" in recognition of his paramount status whereas other Jere chiefs continued to be saluted as "E-jere."²²

²¹ Rau, "Mpezeni Ngoni of Eastern Zambia, 1870-1920." (PhD Thesis, Los Angeles, University of California, 1974) , p.48

²² O.T.: Peterson Nkuna, Zyawela Nkuna Village, T. A. Mpherembe, Mzimba, 13 June 2009.

Following the reunion, M'mbelwa led his followers southwards to Njuyu while Mpherembe initially settled at Muyobe but later on led his people to the area along the Tchesamu River and finally settled along the Jombo River where he built his headquarters called Emtyiseni where he died in 1909. Following his death, his son Chigagu ascended to the throne and as it was the custom of the Ngoni that a new chief should move away from his old father's village, so he founded a new village between the South Rukulu River and the Matimba River in 1911 in the area of Mkosana Nsere. Chigagu remained there until his death on 18th March 1914 when he was succeeded by his brother Chinombo who acted as regent to Pickford (Chigagu's son) who was very young to lead this branch of Ngoni by this time. Chinombo then decided to shift Mpherembe's headquarters to the old Emcisweni near Enkondhlweni along that Jombo River for permanent settlement, and his followers have been in occupation of that area to the present.²³

The Jombo and not Matimba area was preferred because the river (i.e. Jombo) provided perennial water for domestic purposes and cattle, as many of Mpherembe's leading followers were cattle keepers whereas the Matimba area was situated along the tsetse fly belt and was also infested with mosquitoes. Another reason for the choice of Jombo rather than Matimba was its nearness to their other fellow Ngoni of Mtwalo for easier communication with them. The last probable reason was that Chinombo, being a product of Livingstonia Mission in terms of education, wanted to be in constant contact with these missionaries at Enkondhleni.

²³ O. T.: Leckson Jere, Yobe Jere Village, T. A. Mpherembe, Mzimba, 1 June 2009.

So this made Chinombo and other Mpherembe Ngoni to change the name of Emtyiseni established by Chigagu to “Maole”, meaning “the place where the chief died”.²⁴ Despite this, some of the relatives of Mpherembe I including one of his widows remained in the Matimba area and were later on joined by Esau Jere in 1931. Esau Jere succeeded Chinombo after his death in 1921 as regent to Pickford for 10 years but refused to hand over the throne as earlier agreed in 1931. After some interventions by the colonial administration through the Mzimba District Resident, Esau was later moved to the abandoned Emtyiseni situated along the Matimba River so as to stop him from interfering with Pickford.²⁵ Esau led this group to reject the name Maole and insisted on calling their own location as Emtyiseni to the extent that the actual Mpherembe’s Emtyiseni became mistakenly known as Enkondhlweni. Enkondhlweni was a village which had the first school and church under the Livingstonia Mission in Mpherembe area after a long resistance by Mpherembe the First. Following a resolution by the Livingstonia Mission in 1980s to break the Emcisweni congregation into two due to large membership, the Maole or Malidadi area is now called “Emcisweni Two” so as to distinguish it from the old Emcisweni which is “Emcisweni One” the present headquarters of Chief Mpherembe.²⁶

²⁴ O.T.: Herbert P. Jere, Chigagu Village, T. A. Mpherembe, Mzimba, 10 June 2009.

²⁵ NNM 1/24/2 Mombera (Mzimba) District Book, 25 January, 1907 and NNM 1/24/6 Mzimba District Book, 20 August 1923 to 9 May 1930.

²⁶ O.T.: Wilson Z. Moyo, op-cit.

3. Ngoni interaction with the earlier Tumbuka inhabitants

From all accounts, the Mpherembe Ngoni met no resistance from the earlier Tumbuka inhabitants at the time of their settlement. The original Tumbuka inhabitants were living in sparsely scattered homesteads and there was only one strong Tumbuka ruler called Mnyanjagha Bota who was living along the Rukuru River in the Zaro-Manoro area which was (is) to the west of Mpherembe's headquarters. According to a recent version, Mnyanjagha was the initial title of the Tumbuka rulers before they were influenced by the intrusion of the Chewa, Balowoka, Senga and finally the Ngoni. Mnyanjagha Bota was the overseer of all the other Nyanjagha who were his subordinate chiefs. Therefore, the Mpherembe Ngoni encountered a very influential ruler of pure Tumbuka stock as defined by the Tumbuka.²⁷ However, Mnyanjagha Bota did not resist the Ngoni intrusion and because of that his authority survived and his headmanship continued to be recognized with respect by the Ngoni, the early Christian missionaries, and the colonial administration.

The Tumbuka- Ngoni interaction was generally characterized by both resistance and peaceful co-existence in the long run. The incident of Tumbuka resistance was when the Nkhamanga-Henga princes revolted and began attacking the areas of Mpherembe and Mtwalo between 1876 and 1879 to the extent that the two Ngoni chiefs suffered heavy casualties, a fact which prompted M'Mbelwa to summon all the other Ngoni

²⁷ Y. Chondoka and F. Bota, A History of the Tumbuka From 1400 to 1900, (Lusaka: Academic Press, 2007), pp22- 68, 194-198.

chiefs to counter-attack the Henga-Nkhamanga.²⁸ Furthermore, Baza Dokowe, a Tumbuka headman revolted against M'Mbelwa in 1880 but was crushed by the M'Mbelwa-Mtwalo joint forces. In terms of peaceful co-existence, their interaction with the Tumbuka was not different from that of the main M'Mbelwa Ngoni group, which was determined by the fact that they (the Tumbuka) were mainly agriculturalists and iron smelters who cherished being left to live in peace with all their neighbours.

The Tumbuka on their part had customs which were distinct from those of the Ngoni. For example they had a traditional dance called "Chindimba" which had sexual connotations.²⁹ Their succession procedures were from uncle to nephew and they followed a matrilineal type of marriage in which hoes were used for bridewealth. They were also accustomed to worshipping their own God called "Chiuta" or "Chikhang'ombe" through their ancestral spirits called Vibanda.³⁰

²⁸ Chibambo, My Ngoni of Nyasaland, pp. 48-9; D.D. Phiri, From Nguni to Ngoni, p.142; Vail, "The Making of the Dead North: A Study of Ngoni Rule in Northern Malawi, 1855-1907" in J.B. Peires(ed), Before and After Shaka: Papers in Nguni History , p.248

²⁹ O. T. : Nelson Nkhata interviewed by Leroy Vail, Thombolombo Village, T.A. M'Mbelwa, Mzimba 4 August 1970.

³⁰ For more details about Tumbuka religion read S. S. Ncozana The Spirit Dimension in African Christianity: A Pastoral Study among the Tumbuka People of Northern Malawi, (Blantyre: CLAIM, 2002), Chapter Three especially from page 60 to 79. See also O.T. : Nelson Nkhata, op-cit; Mzemba Ngwira interviewed by Leroy Vail, Lupaso, T.A. Mtwalo, Mzimba, 26 August 1970.

The Ngoni, on the other hand, were a patrilineal and politically centralized people. In times of both peace and conflict, they indulged in militaristic dances like Ingoma and Ligubo through which the achievements of heroes were celebrated. Their marriages were strictly patrilineal, in that a man transferred substantial amount of wealth to his wife's family in order to secure the wife and her services. Inheritance of position and property was from father to son. In their religious observances, they worshipped God whom they called Mkhulumuqango through their ancestral spirits called Madhozi.³¹ But it should be noted that due to their long migration, the Ngoni religion was not strongly attached to the land as was the case with other ethnic groups in Central Africa, hence it was prone to erosion.

So when the Ngoni and Tumbuka began living together, they began to influence each other culturally despite their differing ways of living.

To begin with, the Ngoni had great impact on the Tumbuka. Politically, the Ngoni developed a unifying ideology which became a symbol of Ngoni identity. That identity to a greater extent was maintained into the Colonial period and spread well beyond the Ngoni community. For example, the Tumbuka began living in large communities more or less in imitation of the Ngoni. They also adopted the Ngoni marriage system of paying cattle as dowry and patrilocal residence after marriage.³²

³¹ O. T. : David Sibande interviewed by Vail, Emoneni Village, T. A. Mtwalo, Mzimba 14 September 1971; Zakeyo Soko, Embangweni, T. A. Mzukuzuku, Mzimba, 1 August 1971.

³² J. Thompson, Society of Malawi Journal, pp.18-19. Also in Chondoka and Bota, A History of the Tumbuka From 1400 to 1900, (Lusaka: Academic Press, 2007) p198

At the linguistic level, the Ngoni intention was to suppress all other languages and make their own the only one. They had already passed through so many tribes with widely varying tongues and had scorned the idea of adopting such local dialects as those of the Karanga, Senga, Ufipa, Bisa and others. This consciousness made them to compel the Chewa, Tumbuka, Tonga and Senga to master Chingoni in all official conversation of the rulers. As such the Ngoni language, to some extent, influenced the local dialects of the Tumbuka and Chewa.³³ For example, the Tumbuka adopted Ngoni words for the cattle-kraal (Chibaya), for military organization, and ways of expressing courtesy by using the surname of an individual.³⁴ Apart from that, Chitumbuka has been highly Ngoniised to the extent that there are problems of standardizing Chitumbuka since it is very difficult to distinguish certain Chitumbuka and Chingoni words.³⁵

Although this was the language policy of the Ngoni elite, it was found out that the slave women could not learn the Ngoni language with its clicks and dental linguals. With the passage of time there was growing influence of captive women on the

³³ P.J. Kishindo, "The contributions of Chingoni to the Lexicons of Chichewa and Chitumbuka" (a Paper presented to a Conference on Local Studies in Malawi and , Mzuzu University, 28-29 August 2007). Pp2-15. In this paper Kishindo tries to show how Ngoni language has influenced the Chewa and Tumbuka languages despite being regarded as a moribund language.

³⁴ Fraser, Winning a primitive people. pp. 187-188.

³⁵ B. Soko , "Tumbukanised Singoni Or Ngonised Chitumbuka" (a Paper presented to the First Conference on Local Studies in Malawi, Mzuzu University, 28-30 August 2007). Pp2-10. In this paper Soko shows how both, Chitumbuka and Singoni have influenced each another.

language and child raising habits, but as long as the political and military structures remained strong and viable, the Ngoni men did not fear any undermining of their cultural base.³⁶ Against that background, the Ngoni were greatly influenced by the Tumbuka linguistically. Chingoni began to be modified and in most cases supplanted by Chitumbuka. For example, Mpherembe's headquarters changed its Ngoni pronunciation of Emtyiseni to the Tumbuka version Emcisweni.³⁷ In many Ngoni areas Chitumbuka as a language prevailed over Chingoni.

Despite this Tumbuka influence it should be noted that the Ngoni of Mpherembe were able to retain their language and culture to a higher degree than their fellow Ngoni in other parts of Mzimba District and even those of Mpezeni in Eastern Zambia. For example, among the Mpezeni Ngoni, Chingoni is heard only in songs and praises while the normal language used in everyday life is a dialect of Chinsenga.³⁸ It seems this has been achieved by several factors but for the purpose of this chapter, the main factor was that of strong cultural consciousness of the Mpherembe Ngoni promoted by Mpherembe the First himself.

When the Mpherembe Ngoni joined their fellow Ngoni in Malawi on migrating from Zambia, they might have noted a certain amount of cultural dilution among their

³⁶ Rau, "Mpezeni Ngoni of Eastern Zambia, 1870-1920." Pp. 195-6.

³⁷ O.T.: Chimozi Jere, Thomasi Mkandawire Village, T. A. Mpherembe, Mzimba, 1 June 2009 and Henderson Hara, op-cit

³⁸ J.A. Barnes, "The Fort Jameson Ngoni," in E. Colson and M. Gluckman (eds) Seven Tribes of British Central Africa, (Manchester : Manchester University Press, 1959) p.196.

Malawian cousins, and hence resorted to being more assertive about their Ngoni identity in dealing with their Tumbuka serfs (Abafo). They became very strict in that intermarriage between the Ngoni and the host-but-independent Tumbuka was forbidden. They only allowed their children to marry their fellow Ngoni and those Tumbuka or other captives that had been fully integrated into Ngoni culture.³⁹ Apart from that the Ngoni used to force their male serfs to live in the community gathering (Sangweni) in order to learn Ngoni traditions while the captured females were under the guidance of Ngoni women for them to be fully incorporated.⁴⁰

This status quo continued from the time of their settlement up to the early 1950s. As such there are many villages that still speak Chingoni in Mpherembe's area. They include: Emphangweni, Malidade, Chibhekeni, Nzungula, Changoma, Magido, Ezweleni, Zikhuba, Enkhondhlweni, Etyungeni, Langa, Samala Nqumayo, Mkosana Nsere, Enkweleni, Mwamba, Lufukaazi, Manzini and others.⁴¹

³⁹ O.T.: Group Village Headman Mkosana Nsere (Wedson Nsere), T. A. Mpherembe, Mzimba, 15 June 2009

⁴⁰ O.T.: Tchaka Jere, Inkosana Zimema Village, T.A. Mpherembe, Mzimba, 25 May 2009; and Henderson Hara op-cit

⁴¹ O.T.: Wedson Nsere op-cit; Gibson Thulu, Daudi Thulu Village, T.A. Mpherembe, Mzimba, 15 June 2009 and Edwell C. Mgomazulu, Langa Village, T. A. Mpherembe, Mzimba, 9 June 2009.

4. Ngoni Culture at the time of settlement in Northern Malawi

Culturally, at the time of their settlement in northern Malawi during the second half of the nineteenth century the Ngoni were a nation in transition. The Ngoni cultural beliefs and practices they brought with them from Kwazulu-Natal were either eroded or permuted, depending on the exigencies of their interaction with the various peoples they encountered. Those that proved resilient included the Nguni language (Chingoni), institution of kingship, warfare and dance, cattle keeping and accumulation, lobola marriage and ancestor veneration.

Their attitude toward Chingoni, for example, was that it should be spoken by all people in the New society or state they were building, whether aristocrat or serf. For many years the Ngoni insisted on their own language being spoken and scorned the tongues of Central African tribes like the Karanga, Senga, Ufipa, Biza and others. Although the proportion of men and women who had come from south of the Zambezi or were their descendants, was very slight, the language used on all public occasions such as court proceedings and important village gatherings was Chingoni. Therefore, they compelled their subjects such as the Chewa, Tumbuka, Tonga and Senga to master that language.⁴² Since the majority of their subjects were Tumbuka, they made sure that Chitumbuka was never be used on public occasions, and in all religious services and teaching.⁴³ It was thus Chingoni that even the early European missionaries spoke, and in it all the education was conducted.

⁴² Fraser, Winning a primitive people, pp30-32.

⁴³ A. R. Fraser, Donald Fraser of Livingstonia, (London: Hodder and Stoughton LTD), p.199.

The pioneering Livingstonia missionaries had to use William Koyi, one of the assistants they recruited from Lovedale in South Africa, as a negotiator because his Xhosa language was similar to that of the Ngoni.⁴⁴

The Ngoni also had enormous impact on northern Malawi through their political organization. The ideal Ngoni institution of kingship or Inkosiship was that of centralized authority where the paramount was the supreme ruler. The Ngoni paramount took care of the whole country, controlled the intake of new recruits into the impi (army) and had the sole right to form a new regiment and give it a name. He was the source of tribal law and military authority and was helped by the headmen in different parts of the tribe but a decision was only reached after some discussions in the Indaba or the paramount's council.⁴⁵ Their paramount here was M'Mbelwa, a notable son of the first leader Zwangendaba.

Among the Ngoni, the royal village had two important houses which played crucial roles in strengthening the position of the ruler, and these were the Gogo and Lusungulu houses. The Gogo house belonged to the reigning paramount's first wife who was a senior in time perspective but not in rank. She was the redeemer whereby her village Emsizini was a place of refuge for subjects in distress.

⁴⁴ J Thompson Ngoni, Xhosa and Scot, (Zomba: Kachere Series, 2007) pages 23 and 74.

⁴⁵ Elmslie, p107-108

She was an important figure in the ceremonial and ritual life of the royal village.⁴⁶ When the paramount died, the sons from this house were never allowed to become heirs to the throne of their deceased father but were assigned an advisory role relative to the new ruler. The Lusungulu house on its part was where the ‘big wife’ came from. This wife was supposed to be chosen from the pure Ngoni aristocracy and the paramount had to pay lobola for her from the herd of his mother, the Queen Mother (inkosikazi). It was from this house only that an heir was chosen.⁴⁷ If a paramount died while the heir was still young, the Ngoni used to choose a regent who took care of the young Inkosi until he became mature enough. For example, after the death of M’Mbelwa the First in 1891, Mpherembe I became a regent for the paramountcy until 1896 when Chimtunga was installed as the next Ngoni paramount.⁴⁸

The authority of the paramount was most vividly demonstrated during war time. For example, in 1882 M’mbelwa I summoned all the armies to his headquarters at Njuyu to attack the rebellious Nkhamanga-Henga people who were plundering some areas under Mpherembe and Mtwalo.

⁴⁶ M. Read The Ngoni of Nyasaland (London: Oxford University Press, 1956), p. 14. Also see B. Pachai, “Ngoni Politics and Diplomacy in Malawi: 1848-1904,” in B. Pachai (ed), Early History of Malawi (London: Longman, 1972), p. 182.

⁴⁷ B. Pachai, “Ngoni Politics and Diplomacy in Malawi: 1848-1904,” in B. Pachai (ed), Early History of Malawi, p. 182.

⁴⁸ Rennie, p311 also in Pachai, “Ngoni Politics and Diplomacy in Malawi: 1848-1904,” in B. Pachai (ed), Early History of Malawi, pp184-185.

In this operation, the Ngoni defeated the rebels by killing Chikulamayembe Mjuma and also Mwendera, while the Henga princes Kambondoma and Kanyoli fled away. And in 1887, M'Mbelwa's army defeated the Arab-Bemba coalition in a campaign during which a Bemba Chief Ndakale was killed at Kabondwe.⁴⁹

Another central element of Ngoni culture in the 19th century was the art of warfare and dance. War among the Ngoni in pre-colonial days was like work where all heroes received their praise-adulation after successful performance in battle. Even the slaves who showed their courage and strength in war quickly received their freedom.⁵⁰ Wars were waged to extend boundaries, to retain tribal independence, secure internal cohesion and capture people and cattle for the good of Ngoni society. Songs and dances were performed without drums. They danced Ligubo at the funerals of paramounts and royal sisters,⁵¹ Ingoma when going to and returning from the battle field and women danced Msindo.

Cattle keeping and accumulation was also another central element of Ngoni culture. Cattle served a number of purposes in that they were a source of food in terms of milk curds (amasi), cooked blood (ulubende), and meat. Apart from that cattle were regarded as a social binder and a link between the living and the dead.

⁴⁹ D. D. Phiri, From Nguni to Ngoni: A History of the Ngoni in Malawi, Zambia and Tanzania (Limbe: Montfort Press, 1982), pp. 128, 145-47.

⁵⁰ D. I. Nkhoma, "The Northern Ngoni: A Political System." (History Seminar Paper, Chancellor College, University of Malawi, 1968/69) p.2.

⁵¹ Read, pp. 22-29.

In short the primary value of cattle was the security they provided in terms of social position, judicial matters, labour and food, ritual and sacrifice.⁵² In promoting social cohesion gift of cattle to important guests was reasonably common in Ngoni society because they regarded such gift as a pledge of friendship -not in ordinary sense but in a mystical and binding way. For example, both M'Mbelwa and Mtwalo gave a cow to the Livingstonia Mission in 1878, and Mzukuzuku did the same in March 1879.⁵³

In their marriage system, the Ngoni were patrilineal and insisted on payment of lobola (bride price) as a means by which a man secured the productive and reproductive services of a wife. Consequently, the children born in a family belonged to the father and could be claimed by him if the marriage broke up, or on the death of their mother.⁵⁴ Marriage with a deceased brother's wife (Chokolo) was also very significant and well established among the Ngoni. This was done to provide a home and security for the widow, and to ensure that children left by the deceased were properly looked after. In that respect, any children born of such a marriage were regarded as belonging to the deceased brother.⁵⁵

⁵² Ibid, p22, 174.

⁵³ Thompson, Ngoni, Xhosa and Scot, pp48-49.

⁵⁴ Read, p.18.

⁵⁵ Thompson, Ngoni, Xhosa and Scot, pp145; O.T.: Eliteki Ngulube, Chinombo Village, T. A. Mpherembe, Mzimba, 7 June 2009.

A central feature of Ngoni religious life in the 19th century was Ancestor Veneration. This involved the worship of Umkulumqango (the High God) through the spirits of one's ancestors (amadhozi).⁵⁶ In times of troubles, the eminent ancestors whose spirits were guarded in a village and who were known and remembered were addressed and meat was offered to them as a form of sacrifice from the herd of cattle associated with the house to which they had belonged.⁵⁷ Ngoni also believed in Itshanusi- a prophet behind Ngoni military power who was also concerned with the moral order as well as the relationship between the living and the dead. For example, before the impi engaged themselves in a raid, the Itshanusi was consulted to 'see' if there were any spirits angered by neglect or by some individual's misconduct which would be injurious to the army in battle.⁵⁸

It can therefore be concluded that although the Ngoni were in process of modifying their traditions at the time of settlement in northern Malawi, their Ngoni-ness was still evident. Indeed as it shall be observed, some elements of their culture began to be eroded after they began interacting with the European Missionaries and later on with the Colonial Administration.

⁵⁶ Elmslie, p. 68.

⁵⁷ Read, p. 157-159.

⁵⁸ Ncozana, p. 107.

Chapter Three

THE DEBATE ABOUT THE INFLUENCE OF MISSIONARY CHRISTIANITY AND THE MODERN STATE ON AFRICAN CULTURE

This part focuses on what has been written about the way African societies and cultures fared in Africa generally and Malawi in particular in the face of Christian missionary and colonial administrative intrusion. Different scholars have studied this issue of cultural change in Africa in the face of interaction between African societies and the West during the colonial era. On the situation in Africa in general, the main proponents have been Ajayi(1969), Ranger(1983), Suret-Canale(1971), Davis(1973), Strayer(1987) and Mazrui (1986); while similar developments in Malawi have been dealt with by Read (1956), Pachai(1972), McCracken(1977),Thompson(1982), Linden andLinden (1974), Chanock(1985), Ncozana(2002) and Phiri(2007).

1. Christian Missionary Penetration in Africa: Its Motive and Impact

European Christian Missionaries came to Africa with multiple motives which were at times contradictory. For example, there was a genuine tendency to raise an African and the countervailing one of keeping him down, the gospel of brotherhood and that of the colour bar, the discriminative give and the invidious take.⁵⁹

⁵⁹ B. Malinowski, "Theories of Culture Change," in I. Wallerstein(ed), Social Change: The Colonial Situation (New York: John Wiley, 1966). p. 15

These multiple motives had both considerable and heterogeneous influences on African culture. Ideally, the great motive in European Christian missionary penetration of Africa was to Christianize and civilize Africans along European model. In this view, the missionaries aimed at converting Africans so that they should stop what they perceived as barbaric customs and develop a new social and political order similar to that of the European world. They viewed traditional cultures as obstacles to full participation in the new life; not only because Africans were sinful, but also because they weakened one's attachment to those 'universal Christian values' that were the common heritage of all civilized men.⁶⁰ Hence the old society had to be destroyed not by force but by attrition.⁶¹ For them to accomplish this motive the missionaries had to use different strategies which in most cases were not popular among African societies.

For instance on the West African Coast, Europeans began using the freedmen as teachers and catechists from Sierra Leone mission schools to penetrate other areas. In Nigeria, to be specific, these people were against ritual, dancing and finery in religious ceremonies and distrusted Africans in social life.⁶² They, therefore, urged their converts to make a clean break with the past because they tended to regard practically everything in the old society as some-how tainted with heathenism. This was also the case in Central Africa.

⁶⁰ Ibid p. 13

⁶¹ J. F. Ajayi, "The Place of African History and Culture in the Process of Nation Building in Sub-Saharan Africa", in I. Wallerstein(ed), Social Change; The Colonial Situation (New York: John Wiley, 1966), pp.606-607

⁶² J.F. Ajayi, Christian Missions in Nigeria, 1841-1891 (London: Longman, 1965). p. 8, 108

For example, in Malawi the Catholics were against the Nyau cult for the sexual content of its songs, the appearance of naked dancers in the presence of women, and because they had reason to believe that there were instances of adultery taking place after the performances.⁶³ For their part, the Scottish missionaries of Blantyre and Livingstonia introduced sports and games such as cricket, rugby and association football and ‘purified’ Christian dances with the aim of controlling African dances which were viewed as evil.⁶⁴

Despite their association with such agencies of modernization, Christian missionaries were not always in the vanguard of progressive social change due to the influence of pseudo-scientific racism and the growing thrust of European imperialists in Africa especially after the 1880s. In most cases, missionaries were particularly sensitive and insecure when confronted with Africans of equal or better education. Where European Missionaries felt threatened by African advancement or other external forces, they seemed to promote African culture in those areas. For example, In Freretown near Mombasa in Kenya, missionaries tried to reinforce certain aspects of traditional ethnic identities such as dances, largely in the hope that the freed slaves would not embrace Islam. In addition to that Swahili language was promoted at the expense of English despite Africans wanting to learn the European language.

⁶³ I. Linden & Linden J., Catholics, Peasants and Chewa Resistance in Malawi, 1889-1939. (London: Heinemann, 1974), p. 119.

⁶⁴ Hokkanen, “Christ and the Imperial Games Fields’ in South-Central Africa – Sport and the Scottish Missionaries in Malawi, 1880 – 1914: Utilitarian Compromise,” The International Journal of the History of Sport, Vol.22, No. 4, July 2005, pp745-762.

Some missionaries argued that English would expose immature African Christians to ‘oceans of doubtful and vile literature,’ promote a spirit of self-advancement, pose sexual dangers to European women and political dangers to the colonial state in general. In this context, the principal of Divinity School, Reverend J. F. Hamshire opposed the teaching of English and refused to speak English to his students but answered them in Swahili.⁶⁵ This brought conflicts because most Africans were after acquiring western norms (language inclusive) for their social advancement and not necessarily being converted to Christianity.

In the above context, European Missionaries created a social structure in which their function was to rule while Africans were supposed to be always subordinate. As a result African deacons or pastors were never accorded the powers or privileges of their European counterparts while missionaries, whether lay or clerical, consistently refused to serve under African pastors regardless of their qualifications⁶⁶

To a lesser extent the European missionaries paradoxically felt that the traditional African society infused with Christianity represented a more desirable cultural alternative and a better base for future development than the increasingly secular, urban and industrial society from which they had come.

⁶⁵ R. W. Strayer, The Making of Mission Communities in East Africa, (London: Heinemann, 1978), pp. 19-27

⁶⁶ Strayer, The Making of Mission Communities in East Africa, pp8-9, and p.16

However, they faced problems when it came to creating harmonious Christian communities out of raw African societies. The fluidity of African cultures made missionaries such as Christian Missionary Society (The Anglicans) in East Africa face difficulties in accommodating African ways of life. For example, the Kikuyu and Maasai since 18th Century had interacted in terms of war, trade and cultural borrowing and even most East African peoples were heterogeneous and of diverse origins very far from notions of ethnic purity.⁶⁷ This led them to create the rigid Western-oriented African societies and traditions at the expense of the then fluid African cultures.

Missionaries impacted African societies in a number of ways depending on the location and the relations between European Missionaries and individual African societies on one hand, and relations between/among African societies and the European Missionaries on the other hand. One of the immediate impacts of the missionaries' penetration in Africa was that they assumed both political and religious leadership. For example, a missionary who set out with a few dozen porters and tried to settle in a native village had to set up what amounted to a small independent state. He was recognized as a kind of chief by the village headmen around about, and to a greater or lesser extent the Sultan of Zanzibar, and the British or French Consul were felt to be behind him. In Malawi, the Blantyre Missionaries assumed political leadership in the seven villages that surrounded them.⁶⁸

⁶⁷ Ibid, p. 90, 4-5.

⁶⁸ B. Pachai, Malawi: The History of the Nation, (London: Longman, 1973), pp85-94.

In addition to that, the coming of Christian Missionaries also upset the balance of power within African societies. This was because many of the earliest mission adherents came from the less affluent sectors of African societies or were people seeking an alternative to the traditional means of achieving status. For example, European missionaries' attempt to spread Christianity in East Africa helped some African ethnic groups such as the Baganda to promote their language and outlook upon life at the expense of those of satellite ethnic groups like the Basoga, Luo, Acholi etc. because of their involvement as teachers and catechists.⁶⁹ In Malawi, the Livingstonia missionaries also promoted the Tumbuka language at the expense of other dominant peoples' languages like Ngoni and Ngonde to the extent that by 1900 Tumbuka stood out as a lingua franca of the people from the north.⁷⁰ The general result in most cases was that the converted people were elevated in the society and began challenging either their societies' old social structures or those of others that were dominant in their areas.

Apart from the above issues, the European conception of religion became limited in the sense that it was seen as a personal and not a communal affair. But this was not the case with Africans amongst whom religion was viewed as a responsibility of the communities, and the welfare of the individual, the family, village or large community was believed to depend on the members severally or collectively maintaining the right

⁶⁹ R. Oliver, The Missionary Factor in East Africa (London: Oxford University Press, 1952) pp. 189-190.

⁷⁰ L. H. Vail, and L. White, "Tribalism in the Political History of Malawi", in L. Vail (ed), The Creation of Tribalism in Southern Africa (London: James Currey, 1989), pp154-157

relationships with the ancestors, gods and other unseen powers.⁷¹ Therefore, in the long run, this uprooted Africans from their communities whereby converts were viewed with suspicion in their societies. For example, among the Kikuyu those girls that were attending mission schools were labelled as prostitutes while Christianized men were despised as the uncircumcised ‘boys’ of the missions.⁷²

Africans also adapted new social values due to the Christian Missionaries’ different perspectives on the social outlook of the christianised Africans. The Roman Catholics and the Dutch Reformed Church Missionaries, for example, were eager to produce a contented Christian peasantry. To them rural life was the epitome of virtue while the city was filled with evil and atheism. The Catholics, in particular, were anti-intellectualism and anti-cosmopolitanism and hence became exponents and supporters of African provincialism in Zaire and some parts of East and Central Africa. On the other hand, Scottish Presbyterians with their abiding faith in the value of education, created a middle class elite in their areas of influence.⁷³

⁷¹ J. F. Ajayi, Christian Missions in Nigeria, 1841-1891 (London: Longman, 1965), pp.2-5 S. and also see a book by; S. S. Ncozana, The Spirit Dimension in African Christianity: A Pastoral Study among the Tumbuka People of Northern Malawi, (Blantyre: CLAIM, 2002) Chapter 1 pp. 15-37.

⁷² Strayer, op-cit; p. 66

⁷³ Strayer, pages 2, 77 and 95.

One of the lasting impacts of the missionaries was their role in the colonization of Africa. In most cases they called their respective governments or other European counterparts to annex and administer some parts of Africa for the protection of both missionaries and their African dependants from slave traders or notorious African tribes.⁷⁴ These colonial administrators also made a considerable impact on African societies and cultures hence there is a need to study them.

2. Impact of Western Colonization

Like their missionary counterparts, the colonial administrators believed that Europeans were the harbingers of a new civilisation and that they were destined to leave their mark on the physical and mental nature of man in Africa. Within colonialism, traditional institutions that had roots in village and rural life had to be transformed and adapted for urban living patterns.⁷⁵ However the impact was not even. While the lives of some communities were profoundly affected, those of others were hardly affected even by the end of the colonial era when Europeans had to leave.⁷⁶ Despite the above scenario, in most cases colonial attitude towards African culture was ambiguous in that where the Europeans made a show of accepting the African, it was because they wished to destroy his culture and where they made pretence of tolerating his culture, it was because they could not accept him as an equal.

⁷⁴ Oliver, pp104-5, 115-165.

⁷⁵ Ajayi "Colonialism: An Episode in the Development of African Society", in L. H. Gann and P. Duignan (eds), Colonialism in Africa, Vol. 1 (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1969), pp497-504

⁷⁶ Ibid, pp504-5

The most fundamental aspect of the European impact was the loss of sovereignty which it entailed for practically every African people where the colonialists often crushed, suppressed or amalgamated states at will. Imperialism brought a drastic re-ordering of African societies and human relations and created a varying measure of cultural fluctuation in African states.⁷⁷ In some cases the colonialists set up direct European rule with a conscious effort to order the day-to-day lives of the African peoples. In other areas, varying degrees of local autonomy were permitted to continue. Once conquest had been achieved, it was the submissive chiefs, the custodians of law, order and hallowed custom, rather than radical educated elite, who became the favoured agents of European administration.⁷⁸

Initially, Europeans believed that African society was profoundly conservative which was against the reality of pre-colonial Africa. In pre-colonial times, societies had certain valued customs but custom was loosely defined and infinitely flexible. Custom helped to maintain a sense of identity but also allowed for an adaptation so spontaneous and natural. Most Africans moved in and out of multiple identities, defining themselves at one moment as subject to this chief, at another of that chief. For the colonialists to control Africans, they invented what were called customary law, customary land-rights, and customary political structure.

⁷⁷ R.H. Davis "Interpreting the Colonial Period in African History", African Affairs, Vol. 72 (1973) p386-389.

⁷⁸ Ajayi, An episode, p502, 505.

This led them to create the Native courts which tried many cases that were involving the colonial administration rather than Natives, such as control of forest fire, agricultural improvement policies, etc. For example in 1948, the Native courts in Chansali District in Zambia heard about 390 criminal cases. Of these 143 were convictions for infringements against health orders, and 70 for breaches of forestry and agricultural orders.⁷⁹ In this scenario there were few cases in these courts involving the natives themselves but most of them were those concerning colonial policies. In the end, together with African intellectuals they created rigid tribal groupings such as those found in Central Africa which have survived to the present.⁸⁰

The colonization of Africa by the Western nations also upset the balance of power in African societies. This was because they exposed different Africans to different aspects of modernisation such as business, education, governance, etc. For example, the combination of labour migration, the breakdown of large villages, effects of the First World War, the increased powers of District Commissioners after 1912 in Nyasaland eroded the authority of tribal chiefs and headmen.⁸¹ Therefore the hierarchical structure of village life began to disintegrate as personal wealth became no longer the prerogative of the chiefs.

⁷⁹ M. L. Chanock Law, Custom and Social Order: the Colonial Experience in Malawi and Zambia (Cambridge: CUP, 1985) pp.219-229. P. 4

⁸⁰ Ranger, pp247-248

⁸¹ Linden, p120.

3. Cultural Change in Africa in the face of Western intrusion

In the historiography of cultural change in Africa in the face of interaction between African societies and the West during the colonial era, scholars have come up with three main perspectives or schools of thought.

The first perspective or school of thought is that African societies and cultures on the whole survived the disruptions of Western intrusion. In most cases there were Africans who found themselves uprooted and hence needed to discover new ways of making a new society. For example, in the Central region of Malawi, the Chewa modified their Nyau cult to resist the Catholics attack on their culture and Colonial government on taxation.⁸² In some parts such as West Africa, the culturally influenced freed slaves from Sierra Leone failed to make an impact in Benin and other parts of West Africa despite championing European commerce and technological civilization.⁸³ African converts were disowned by their tribal communities. For instance, missionary pupils, lacking all the family ties and inherited traditions of free African society were regarded as more foreign than the European himself.

⁸² I. Linden & J. Linden, Catholics, Peasants and Chewa Resistance in Malawi, 1889-1939. (London: Heinemann, 1974), p114.

⁸³ J. F. Ajayi in his book entitled Christian Missions in Nigeria, 1841-1891 (London: Longman, 1965) and his article entitled "The Place of African History and Culture in the Process of Nation Building in Sub-Saharan Africa", in I. Wallerstein(ed) ,Social Change; The Colonial Situation (New York: John Wiley, 1966) provides a detailed account of European Missionaries' attempt to westernize their African converts.

The second school of thought argues that though generally harsh in their impact on African culture, Christianity and Colonialism also had a liberal face which made it possible for certain missionaries and colonial administrators to promote the development of some African traditions and institutions. Although European contact destroyed many of the organized institutions of African societies, it failed to destroy substantial areas of African culture. To some extent the ‘indirect rule’ followed by the British, for example, consolidated the indigenous organised institutions of governance, and also deepened ethnic consciousness in many British colonies as manifested in Uganda and Nigeria.⁸⁴

The last perspective maintains that Christianity and Colonialism were destructive or adulterative in their impact on African culture in that they viewed an African as a person without history. European colonisers were influenced by the combination of idealistic sociology and pseudo-scientific Darwinism which made them embark on drastic re-ordering of African societies and human relations.

⁸⁴ A. A. Mazrui, “Cultural Forces in African Politics: In search of a Synthesis, “ in Mowoe I. J. and Bjornson R. (eds), Africa and the West (New York: Greenwood Press, 1986) p.41-50.

For example, Sir Harry Hamilton Johnston, a leading British empire-builder of the late 19th century tried to describe the Negro or African as follows:

The Negro, more than any other human type, has been marked out by his mental and Physical characteristics as the servant of other races... in a primitive state (he) is a born slave. He is possessed of great physical strength, docility, cheerfulness of disposition, a short memory for sorrows and cruelties, and an easily aroused gratitude for kindness and just dealing. He doesn't suffer from home-sickness... provided he is well fed, he is easily made happy... ⁸⁵

This attitude made them to define themselves as natural and undisputed masters over vast numbers of Africans and to conclude that everything of value in Africa originated outside the continent. They drew upon European invented traditions which were forced on Africans in order to define and justify their roles, and also to provide models of subservience into which it was sometimes possible to draw Africans. As Africa became a colony of white settlement, the settlers had to define themselves as natural and undisputed masters of vast numbers of Africans.⁸⁶ Since few connections could be made between British and African political, social, and legal systems, British administrators set about inventing African traditions especially in governance, but not in production, for Africans. The invented traditions of African societies, whether originating with Europeans or Africans themselves, distorted the past but became in themselves realities through which a good deal of colonial encounter was expressed. This move put African culture in general in an ambiguous position.

⁸⁵ R.H. Davis "Interpreting the Colonial Period in African History", African Affairs, Vol.72 (1973) p.383-386, and this view is also found in the book written by H. H. Johnston, A History of the Colonisation of Africa by Alien Races, (Cambridge: Cambridge Press, 1899), pp151-2.

⁸⁶ T. Ranger "The Invention of Tradition in Colonial Africa," in Hobsbawm E. and T. Ranger (eds) The Invention of Tradition (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1983), pp211-262.

For example Ranger quoting Vail indicates that a group of Livingstonia Mission-educated Africans led by Chilongozi Gondwe created what they called the Tumbuka chieftainship of Chikulamayembe by 1907 in order to counteract Ngoni dominance in political affairs. This type of scenario also emerged in Tanganyika where Europeans and Africans combined to create a new political order based on mythical history and the main supporters were the progressive chiefs.⁸⁷

The French in Francophone Tropical Africa followed the assimilation policy which ignored or suppressed the political and cultural structures that were truly African to the extent that traditional chiefdoms gave way to administrative chiefdoms. African chiefs' positions were ambiguous: on one hand they were extolled as testimony of respect for 'customs' and 'African institutions,' and on the other they were always being reminded that they existed only by the good grace of the coloniser and were nothing but tools in his hand.⁸⁸ The British, on the other hand, pursued the policy of "indirect rule" which was no better than that of the French. This policy put African authorities in a similarly ambiguous position in that on one hand they represented custodians of the traditions of their people while on the other they had to work for the colonial administration in helping to implement government policies.

⁸⁷ Ibid, pages 212-229, 237, and 252-253.

⁸⁸ J. Suret-Canale French Colonialism in Tropical Africa, 1900-1945 (London: Hurst & Company, 1971). The whole book deals with the French rule in tropical Africa.

This scenario, for example, was experienced in colonial Malawi and Zambia where native courts were in dilemma in that they were native in name only and not in practice. Indirect rule gave an opening for the elite inventors of tradition.⁸⁹ So whether direct or indirect rule, political principles were the same whereby in both, the native chiefs were given well defined tasks to do. This meant that colonialism did leave African society in a state of ambiguity which posed a lot of questions on the way forward after independence on what seems to be culturally relevant to the process of nation-building.

It is the first of the above-stated lines of thinking that has the greatest bearing on the present study about the Mpherembe Ngoni and their adaptation in Mzimba District during the colonial and post- colonial periods. The Ngoni of Mpherembe, it is concluded, culturally survived the disruptions of Western intrusion and manipulations of the first post-colonial regime.

4. African reactions to Colonialism and Western imperialism

African reactions to colonialism and Western imperialism were varied from place to place. Wherever there was a common measure between the intentions of European impact and the existing needs of the African society, change could lead to new thriving forms of cultural cooperation.

⁸⁹ Ranger, p. 242.

On the contrary when it seemed necessary for the Europeans to take away from the African his territory; to curtail his opportunities, to use his labour to the detriment of Native enterprise without satisfactory remuneration, then the absence of a common factor led to conflict.⁹⁰ But, since Africans were making contacts with both European Missionaries and Colonial Administrators, their reactions were sometimes cross-cutting where they could not differentiate a missionary from an administrator, but at other times they were specific to a group of Europeans.

In terms of relations between Africans and European missionaries, conflicts arose between African Christians and their missionary mentors on one hand while on the other between converted Africans and the general African communities due to the incompatibility of Mission Christianity with traditional religious sensibilities. Africans welcomed the Christian Missionaries not mainly for religious purpose but for different purposes. To them, Christianity was just an intrusive religious system in its own right as well as an aspect of European rule hence the interaction was complex and varied. For example in the Kenyan area of Giriama famine made Africans temporarily embrace Christianity.⁹¹ In other situations missionaries were seen as brokers in disputes among various groups.

⁹⁰ B. Malinowski, "Theories of Culture Change," in I. Wallerstein(ed), Social Change: The Colonial Situation (New York: John Wiley, 1966). p. 20

⁹¹ Strayer, p53-54.

For example, the Tonga in Malawi welcomed the Livingstonia Missionaries because they saw them as allies against the M'Mbelwa Ngoni.⁹² Furthermore in some cases mission communities were viewed as a source of economic resources such as employment, trade and vocational training. For example in the long run Livingstonia Mission played the role of a satellite in the labour reserve economy of Southern Africa during the colonial period.⁹³

Some Africans began mixing Western values with their own traditions. Hence they claimed to have healing powers and the ability to perform miracles because they had been possessed by the Holy Spirit. In this respect they combined elements of African healing with Christian tradition in a way that was rejected by most missionaries and by doctors in particular. For example, the wives of African pastors Peter Z. Thole and Hezekiah Twea of the Livingstonia Mission in northern Malawi had some knowledge of local medicines and mid-wifery.⁹⁴

⁹² B. Pachai, "Ngoni Politics and Diplomacy in Malawi: 1848-1904," in B. Pachai (ed), Early History of Malawi (London: Longman, 1972), p 194.

⁹³ McCracken, Politics and Christianity , p.20 (2000 edition).

⁹⁴M. Hokkanen, "Quests for Health and Contests for Meaning: African Church Leaders and Scottish Missionaries in the Twentieth Century Presbyterian Church in Northern Malawi," in Journal of Southern African Studies Volume 33, Issue4, December 2007 pp744-747.

At the same time, some Africans began to rebel by focusing on local politics while others established their own churches taking various attitudes to polygamy and seeking their identities by experimenting with new liturgies, vestments and ceremonies.⁹⁵ In this context, European missionaries only became relevant by taking into account the old world of African values, concepts, sensibilities and pattern of behaviour.⁹⁶

In Malawi there developed a clash of interests between European Christians and Africans in general over the perception of African religion. For example, in the central region, Africans began questioning the Christianity they professed as part of the colonial process which had led to colossal loss of life during the First World War and began to agitate for a return to such cultural practices as Mwabvi ordeal and polygamy among the Ngoni and Nyau among the Chewa.⁹⁷ In the same note, the Northern Ngoni began to promote their traditional dances as a vehicle of protest against westernisation through education and organized sports, and as a means for competing for the loyalty of the young generation under missionary influence.⁹⁸

⁹⁵ J. F. Ajayi in I. Wallerstein(ed) ,Social Change; The Colonial Situation (New York: John Wiley, 1966), pp.607-8.

⁹⁶ R.W.Strayer The Making of Mission Communities in East Africa., (London: Heinemann, 1978), p.2.

⁹⁷ Linden and Linden, pp 112-113.

⁹⁸ M. Hokkanen, “ Christ and the Imperial Games Fields’ in South-Central Africa- Sport and the Scottish Missionaries in Malawi,1880-1914: Utilitarian Compromise,” in The International Journal of the History of Sport Vol.22, No. 4, July2005.

The Tumbuka of northern Malawi, for their part, incorporated their traditional beliefs into Christianity despite condemnation by the Livingstonia Missionaries.⁹⁹ In addition to that some Africans in the Livingstonia Mission were either suspended or started independent African churches because of their deep devotion to traditional institutions like polygamy, traditional medicine, etc.¹⁰⁰ Yet other Africans fought within the Livingstonia Mission where they began challenging their European counterparts in the interest of African culture.

For example, in 1914, Livingstonia Mission formed the Charms and Superstitions Committee to discuss the use and practice of charms and superstitions by Christians and to consider terms, and define the meaning of words used in this connexion. They reached a compromise in which African churchmen tolerated certain practices such as the use of medicines that were ingested, applied to cuts or used as lotions. However, the committee condemned Virombo (a spirit-possessed dance) and argued that Virombo spirits were not a valid disease category.¹⁰¹

⁹⁹ S. S. Ncozana The Spirit Dimension in African Christianity: A Pastoral Study among the Tumbuka People of Northern Malawi, (Blantyre: CLAIM, 2002) pp. 147-161.

¹⁰⁰ Hokkanen Quests for Healing in Colonial Society: Scottish Missionaries and Medical Culture in Northern Malawi, 1875-1930 (PhD Thesis in History and Ethnology, University of Jyväskylä, Finland, 2006) pp. 733-744.

¹⁰¹ M. Hokkanen, “Quest for Health,” in Journal of Southern African studies Vol 33 pp740-742.

Politically, many Africans began to be agitated after the outbreak of the First World War. In Kenya, for example, Africans were not happy after the First World War because it changed Kenya status from a protectorate to a colony, then there were high taxes, lower wages, introduction of the Kipande (registration certificates), an increased demand for labour associated with the soldier-settlement scheme.¹⁰² The prominent Africans who took a leading role in politics were the mission-educated elite who began challenging both their European missionary counterparts and colonial administrators because of their negative attitude towards African Culture.¹⁰³

These Africans felt alienated from their culture and hence began to redefine themselves with a view of saving themselves from western cultural imperialism. These educated elite began challenging the White missionaries as spokesmen for African needs and aspirations. For example, in French tropical Africa, teachers and ex-servicemen became the spokesmen of their people.¹⁰⁴ However, sometimes Africans became politically conscious through the help of some white missionaries. For example, Missionaries at Livingstonia such as Dr. Robert Laws and Rev. Donald Fraser encouraged Africans to form the Native Associations in order for them to express their political views.

¹⁰² Strayer, p 122.

¹⁰³ Oliver, R. A., The Missionary Factor in East Africa (London: Oxford University Press, 1952) p.292.
In this book the author shows how the mission-educated elite opposed both missionaries and white settlers in East Africa especially in Kenya.

¹⁰⁴ J. Suret-Canale French Colonialism in Tropical Africa, 1900-1945, p.439.

This was regarded by them as schools of training in national selfhood.¹⁰⁵ In most cases these nationalists used culture to bargain for the independence of most African countries in the 1960s. The fundamental aim of African nationalism has been to weld peoples of different languages and traditional cultures into one nation state.¹⁰⁶

However, at independence, a black bourgeoisie with an outlook similar to that of the former colonial masters replaced the European rulers in the sense that they imported some invented traditions which are still being adhered to today.¹⁰⁷ After independence, the ideology, aspiration and personal characteristics of the national leader have been extremely important determinants of government policies in the new African states. For example in Tanzania, Nyerere was honoured as teacher (Mwalimu), while in Ghana it was about Nkrumah's charismatic leadership who was hailed as the redeemer (Osagyefo) and in Malawi Dr. Banda was hailed as a Messiah (Ngwazi).¹⁰⁸ It must be noted, however, that most of these leaders were despotic which posed danger to the cultural pluralism of these new states.

¹⁰⁵ J. McCracken, p 320 (2000 edition).

¹⁰⁶ J. F. Ajayi, "The Place of African History and Culture in the Process of Nation Building in Sub-Saharan Africa", in I. Wallerstein (ed), Social Change: The Colonial Situation (New York: John Wiley, 1966), p.606.

¹⁰⁷ R.H. Davis "Interpreting the Colonial Period in African History", African Affairs, Vol.72 (1973) p.394. See also Ranger, pp261-262.

¹⁰⁸ F. M. Stark, "Theories of Contemporary State Formation in Africa", Journal of Modern African studies, Vol.24, No.2 (1986), pp335-338 Also see A. A. Mazrui, "Cultural Forces in African Politics: In search of a Synthesis," in Mowoe I. J. and Bjornson R. (eds), Africa and the West (New York: Greenwood Press, 1986), p.45.

In Malawi, an attempt to achieve cultural heritage and integration in the independence era, as already noted above, was made by Dr. Banda hence there shall be an assessment of his policies on Culture and how they affected the Ngoni under study here in the fifth chapter. But for the upcoming chapter focus will be on relations between the Ngoni of Mpherembe and the key Western cultural brokers in the form of the Livingstonia missionaries and the Nyasaland colonial administrators.

Chapter Four

IMPACT OF THE LIVINGSTONIA MISSION AND THE COLONIAL STATE ON NORTHERN NGONI SOCIETY AND MPHEREMBE'S AREA

The interaction of the Livingstonia Missionaries and British Colonial Administrators with the Northern Ngoni in general has been presented by the pioneering missionaries themselves such as Walter Angus Elmslie(1969), Donald Fraser (1922) and Agnes Fraser (1934), and scholars like McCracken (1977), Pachai (1972)(1975), Rennie (1965), Thompson (1982)(2007), and Vail (1989), among others. This chapter discusses the impact the missionaries and colonial administrators in question had on Northern Ngoni society in general and Mpherembe's area in particular. It begins with a description of the Livingstonia's Missionaries' penetration of Northern Ngoniland. It then discusses Ngoni reactions to the missionary presence. Thereafter, the Livingstonia Mission's impact on Ngoni culture is highlighted. The chapter concludes with an examination of Ngoni cultural adaptation in the face of Colonialism.

1. Livingstonia Missionary penetration of Northern Ngoniland.

As was the case with the rest of the Northern Ngoni under M'Mbelwa, the people of Mpherembe also came to be steadily influenced by Christian missionary activity from the 1890s onwards. Christian missionary influence among the Northern Ngoni spread gradually but steadily from 1879 to 1899. The Livingstonia missionaries under Dr. Robert Laws established their first contact with the Ngoni under M'Mbelwa in 1879, a year after the missionaries opened an observation post at Kaning'ina near the present town of Mzuzu which was later closed because it was in no man's land.¹⁰⁹ During that time Dr. Laws discussed with M'Mbelwa the idea of opening up the area for missionary work, and M'Mbelwa showed interest not for religion's sake but due to anticipated material benefits from the missionaries. In 1881, Dr. Laws visited M'Mbelwa for the second time, together with William Koyi, Dr. Hannington, Dr. James Stuart, Mr. James Sutherland, and Mr. John F. Moir when M'Mbelwa allowed them to operate only in his area. Dr. Laws visited M'Mbelwa twice in this way because he saw the impossibility of teaching among the Tonga while the Ngoni continued raiding them. By this time the Ngoni were still at loggerheads with the Tonga, hence they viewed missionaries as potential allies against the Tonga.¹¹⁰

¹⁰⁹ Elmslie, p. 95; Thompson "Donald Fraser and the Ngoni," pp43-45.

¹¹⁰ L. H. Nyirenda, 'The Origin and Development of Mzimba District, 1904-1974' (History Seminar Paper, Chancellor College, University of Malawi, 1974/75), p. 3.

That was followed by the opening or launching of mission stations in Ngoniland such as that of Njuyu in 1882, Ekwendeni in 1889, and Embangweni or Hora in 1895.¹¹¹

In 1890, the first two Ngoni converts were baptised in the persons of Mawelera Tembo and his brother Makara Tembo.

Despite the acceptance of missionaries by M'Mbelwa and Mtwalo, most subject people were not in favour of Christianity, they visited the mission station out of curiosity while others were attracted only by the gifts of cloth the missionaries provided.¹¹² Mpherembe was one of the sub-chiefs who continued to resist the missionaries until 1897, when he allowed them to open a school which was well established by 1899, but that was on condition that missionaries would be giving him gifts.¹¹³ The first mission station in Mpherembe was opened at Muyobe popularly known as *Mabrekesi* probably because of the brick works the missionaries introduced there.¹¹⁴ After about 1896 Inkosi Mpherembe even became a bit tolerant in his attitude toward the missionaries and permitted them in the area because they could give him monthly gifts.

¹¹¹ Fraser, op-cit, pp194-6; J. McCracken, Politics and Christianity in Malawi 1875-1940, the Impact of the Livingstonia mission in Northern Province, (Cambridge: CUP, 1977) pp 57-58

¹¹² Elmslie, p.153, 275.

¹¹³ Chibambo, p. 59. Also in Elmslie, p. 302.

¹¹⁴ O.T.: W.Z. Moyo, and Leckson Jere, op-cit.

It was through the work of Donald Fraser and Charles Stuart that missionary work was opened in Mpherembe's area.¹¹⁵ This was followed by the establishment of a school at Enkondhleni in 1897, where Inkosi Mpherembe himself enrolled but eventually gave up because sometimes the alphabet used to twinkle in his eyes like stars due to his being intoxicated with beer.¹¹⁶ Later on several schools such as Emcisweni (in Malidade's area), Ekweleni, Thundubike, and Mayura were opened in the area by 1919.¹¹⁷ These schools served both purposes whereby on one hand they were centres of education while on the other they served as agencies of Christianisation. This made the Ngoni for a long time to use such words as 'school' and 'church' interchangeably where they would call a church meaning a school or a school meaning a church.

The first church minister to be sent to Mpherembe's area was Peter Zimema Thole who arrived there in October 1928 and served both Njuyu and Emcisweni Congregations, with the main station at Njuyu, until about 1936.¹¹⁸ Some of Mpherembe's sons such as Chinombo were sent to mission schools during that period.¹¹⁹

¹¹⁵ A. R. Fraser, Donald Fraser of Livingstonia, (London: Hodder and Stoughton LTD, 1934), p.44-49.

¹¹⁶ D. D. Phiri, From Nguni to Ngoni, p.174.

¹¹⁷ S1/1580/19 Mzimba District Administrative Annual Reports (1919) - Missions General Resolutions by Conference: Mombera.

¹¹⁸ 47/LIM/9/3 Livingstonia Mission: Annual Returns, Statistics and Reports-(1930-1942) also see McCracken, Politics and Christianity in Malawi 1875-1940, the Impact of the Livingstonia mission in Northern Province, (Cambridge: CUP, 1977), p.251.

¹¹⁹ O.T.: Watson Jere, Inkosana Mwamba Jere's Village, T. A. Mpherembe, Mzimba, 24 June 2009.

Even his grandson Pickford who became Mpherembe II in 1942 was a product of Livingstonia Mission education but was never detached completely from Ngoni cultural traditions. This earned him wrath among the Colonial Administrators especially the District Residents at Mzimba Boma who often referred to him as pagan fellow but trained by the Scotch Mission at Ekwendeni.¹²⁰

The missionaries were admitted to Mpherembe's domain not because of the new religion they brought, but because it was then fashionable for every Ngoni chief of significance to have a "mission" to serve his people. The missionaries were then greatly valued for their material possessions, technical skills, and even the vague conviction that they wielded godly powers.

2. Ngoni Reactions to the Missionary Presence.

For a long time, the relationship between the Livingstonia missionaries and the Ngoni was an uneasy one. That was because, among other things, the missionaries were aggressive and began to interfere in the domestic and external relations of Ngoni Society. For example, they attacked raiding, which was an annual source of wealth for the Ngoni aristocracy.

¹²⁰ M.N.A: NNMI/24/10 Mzimba District Book (1 January 1942).

Apart from that, the missionaries also spread the idea of equality of all before God, a view which was strange to the Ngoni because they strongly believed in their class system with the Zansi-Ngoni on top and other assimilated tribes who were referred to as Abehla and Abafo occupying positions in the middle and lower rungs of the social hierarchy, depending on the time of their assimilation into Ngoni Society.

The Livingstonia Missionaries also attacked polygamy which they perceived as a lustful desire on the part of ambitious Ngoni men. But contrary to this, the Ngoni viewed polygamy as something central to their way of life in that it was a means of expanding their tribe and dominating other tribes, and of accumulating prestige and wealth.¹²¹ The missionaries also condemned beer drinking, which they saw as a habit which caused a lot of mischief such as homicides, adultery and quarrels. The Ngoni, however, saw no problem in their excessive beer-drinking because it was a pleasurable and relaxing way of spending their leisure time.¹²²

¹²¹ D. Fraser, op-cit, pp. 12-13(for missionary view), O. T.: Gibson Thulu, Daudi Thulu Village, T. A. Mpherembe, Mzimba, op-cit and Simon Lozi, Chagaya Lozi Village, T. A. Mpherembe, Mzimba, 18 June 2009.

¹²² O. T.: Catherine Hara Chigagu Village, T. A. Mpherembe, Mzimba, 4 June 2009; and see also L.H. Nyirenda, "The Origins and Development of Mzimba District, 1904-1974", (History Seminar Paper, Chancellor College, 1974/75), p. 5.

And, the missionaries also preached against Ngoni beliefs in witchcraft and superstitions which were the most powerful of all the forces at work among the Ngoni as noticed by Elmslie, “They had witchdoctors called ‘Itshanusi’ who used the poison ordeal to detect witches and these people were very influential among the Ngoni people”.¹²³

The encounter of the early missionaries with the Ngoni was thus marked by a high degree of cultural conflict. This was especially so in the early days of missionary work in northern Malawi. M’Mbelwa I, for example, at first gave permission for the missionaries to run a school at Njuyu, but this was later retracted. He began to insist that the missionaries should teach him first so that he could censor what the young ones were to be taught. He was particularly anxious about ensuring that missionary teaching did not undermine Ngoni military and cultural values.¹²⁴

But after sometime, several factors led the M’mbelwa Ngoni to change their attitude towards the Livingstonia Missionaries, and among them was the influence of the Nhlane family. The Nhlane family was the first Ngoni clan to make friendship with the Livingstonia Missionaries when Dr. Robert Laws established an observation post at Kaning’ina in 1879 which was near to their village.

¹²³ Elmslie, pp. 52-62.

¹²⁴ D. Fraser, op-cit pp. 195-6; L.H. Nyirenda, “The Origins of Mzimba District and Development of Mzimba District, 1904-1974”, (History Seminar Paper, Chancellor College, 1974/75), p. 4.

This made the Missionaries use them as a means of gaining an entrance to the Ngoni country.¹²⁵ It was indeed this family that introduced Dr. Laws and his entourage to the Paramount Chief M'mbelwa and his brother Mtwalo.¹²⁶ Even when M'mbelwa forbade the missionaries to preach in his Kingdom, the Nhlane family members became mediators between M'mbelwa and the Missionaries. The Nhlane family accommodated the missionaries further to the extent that the first school in Ngoniland was opened in their Hoho village where attendance was closed to boys and girls from other villages.¹²⁷

Apart from the above factor, the Livingstonia Mission also gained an influence among the Ngoni due to diplomatic or tactical approach of the pioneering missionaries such as Dr. Walter Angus Elmslie and Donald Fraser. Dr. Elmslie was the first missionary resident among the Ngoni after being entrusted by Dr. Robert Laws to negotiate for a place on which to erect a new station and introduce Christianity among the Northern Ngoni. Elmslie, with the help of his interpreter, William Koyi, used a number of strategies to influence the Ngoni attitude towards Christianity. For example, he used to give M'mbelwa and other important Ngoni chiefs gifts of calico, trinkets to promote friendship and negotiations between the two parties.¹²⁸

¹²⁵ Elmslie, p. 142.

¹²⁶ Phiri, D. D. From Nguni to Ngoni: A History of the Ngoni in Malawi, Zambia and Tanzania (Limbe: Montfort Press, 1982).p. 153. Also see Elmslie, p. 92.

¹²⁷ Phiri, D, D. From Nguni to Ngoni: A History of the Ngoni in Malawi, Zambia and Tanzania, pp. 172-173.

¹²⁸ D. D. Phiri, op-cit p.154.

The climax of his influence came on 17th and 18th January, 1886 when he prayed for the rains after the Ngoniland was threatened with a drought in the growing season of 1885-6.¹²⁹ This made the Ngoni believe that the Bible had some charms, hence M'mbelwa granted the missionaries permission to operate in all areas of his kingdom.¹³⁰ Dr. Elmslie also consolidated his relationship with Ngoni through his medical skills practised at Njuyu and Ekwendeni.

Later on Dr. Elmslie was joined by another missionary by the name of Donald Fraser who arrived in Ngoniland in January 1897.¹³¹ He gained much influence among the Ngoni living around Loudon (Embangweni) Mission Station. Fraser adopted a much more sympathetic attitude towards Ngoni culture and aspirations which made him a target of criticism by other white missionaries. He developed policies of the use of large sacramental conventions, the encouragement of African church music where he introduced singing competitions, the wide-spread use of sub-sessions and women elders, and the process of itineration in which he supervised the school teachers and tolerated some local herbal medicines. The introduction of sacramental conventions was the most important contributory fact of mass conversion among the Ngoni. These reminded the Ngoni of their most important tradition called Incwala- feast of the first fruits, so it was like the revival of the festival.¹³²

¹²⁹ Elmslie, p.158-188.

¹³⁰ D. D. Phiri, From Nguni to Ngoni, pp160-161.

¹³¹ J. Thompson, 'Fraser and the Ngoni' p.112.

¹³² Ibid, p. 124, 127, 185-186 and 216.

As a result, even the older generation which was in the forefront of resistance against missionary influence became converted. Therefore, the Livingstonia Mission managed to become popular among the Ngoni especially around Embangweni area partly due to the sympathetic, diplomatic and tactical approach of Donald Fraser.

Despite this general acceptance of Christianity, Inkosi Mpherembe still resisted their presence in his area. Missionary expeditions were repulsed on several occasions because they could not pay their way with presents of cloths and other goods which were of great interest to him and not Christianity and education.¹³³ He also did this probably because he was still enjoying his supremacy as a recent comer in the 1870s and he did not want to be challenged by these missionaries as they has done to other Ngoni leaders. So Mpherembe and Ng'onomo Makamo, an induna of M'mbelwa independently continued raiding until as late as 1896.

3. The Mission's Impact on Ngoni Culture.

Although many Ngoni people resisted the missionaries on the basis of preserving their culture, missionary activities had considerable impact on general Ngoni cultural traditions. But it must be also noted that the impact was not homogenous and one-sided, as the two sides impacted on each other. At one level, for example, there was wholesale suppression of the Ngoni war spirit, leading to an end to raiding.

¹³³ Elmslie, pp251-252

Yet, at another level, dances like Ingoma were merely modified to suit the Christian ethics, whereby the Ngoni began composing Ingoma songs to be sung and danced during church sermons.

To begin with, despite the Livingstonia Missionaries' condemnation of several Ngoni cultural practices, the Ngoni were able in one way or the other to influence missionaries to recognise some of their cultural traditions. As a result the missionaries did make a considerable contribution of their own to the survival of certain Ngoni customs and traditions. For example, Ngoni hymns and proverbs were adopted and adapted for church use. In the long run, this influenced even other non-Ngoni evangelists such as Hezekiah Tweya, Elija Chavula and Yuriya Chirwa to excel in composing Ngoni songs which became part of Church hymns.¹³⁴ Through the work of Donald Fraser, there was also, to some extent, the revival of the Incwala -the feast of the first fruits which was closely linked to sacramental convention of the Livingstonia Mission. Later on Incwala tunes became the basis of the Izingoma zo Bukristu, a Church hymnary.¹³⁵ Dowry was also another issue which the missionaries accepted, as the traditional marriage without lobola was not allowed in the church unless parents of the girl agreed to the marriage without it.¹³⁶

¹³⁴ Thompson, Ngoni, Xhosa and Scot, pp.82-83. Also see Thompson, "Donald Fraser and the Ngoni," p. 240.

¹³⁵ B. Soko, "Innovation and Change: The survival of Ngoni oral Traditions in Malawi" (Paper presented to a Conference on Oral Tradition and Innovation, University of Natal, 8-11 July 1991), p.8

¹³⁶ Thompson, "Donald Fraser and the Ngoni," pp. 125-140, 226.

Linguistically, missionaries had an ambivalent attitude toward the Ngoni language despite the preference they showed for it in the initial stage of their work where it was used in hymns and preaching. The fortunes of the language thus fluctuated a great deal as time went on. For example, Ngoni language was being used in sessions at Ekwendeni Congregation until September 1907 when Elmslie became the moderator while David Mumba who succeeded Daniel Gondwe became the session clerk (Umbali in Chingoni) and began documenting session proceedings in Chitumbuka. But from 3rd September, 1908 to 9th February 1911 the Ngoni language was revived again in the minutes of the sessions when the moderator was Reverend Charles Stuart who succeeded Reverend R. D. McMinn and his session clerk was Peter Z. Thole.¹³⁷ As time went on, it was found out that some missionaries such as Elmslie were in favour of promoting Chitumbuka whereas others like McMinn and Stuart enjoyed Chingoni hence took advantage of Elmslie's furlough to replace Chitumbuka with Chingoni in sessions.¹³⁸ But since missionaries like Elmslie were the most experienced and influential in Ngoniland, they began undermining the integrity of Chingoni in that they abandoned it as a medium of preaching and began to speak and teach in Chitumbuka, under the pretext that the Tumbuka were in majority.

¹³⁷ 47/LIM/3/4 Livingstonia Mission: Ekwendeni Congregation Minutes (1907-1911).

¹³⁸ 47/LIM/3/5 Livingstonia Mission: Ekwendeni Congregation Minutes (1913-1916).

The Livingstonia Missionaries used two strategies in trying to promote Chitumbuka among the Ngoni and other people. The first strategy was that of involving some royal members in mission activities like the two sons of Mtwalo I, Yohane and Amon, who were uprooted from their society through conversion and education, and these were forced to be trained in the language of the majority. The other strategy was that of writing or translating existing literatures in Chitumbuka. For instance, the New Testament was translated into Chitumbuka and also Dr. Steele, a missionary doctor at Ekwendeni compiled a Tumbuka dictionary whereas Dr. Laws also wrote a comprehensive Tumbuka dictionary with detailed Tumbuka nouns, verbs, adjectives, and other features.¹³⁹ Later on in 1908, Dr. Innes translated St. Luke's gospel into Chitumbuka.¹⁴⁰

This made it possible for Chitumbuka to gradually replace the language of the Ngoni aristocrats to the extent that in most Ngoni areas political power and military history were retained but the medium of communication was the language of the once despised people -the Tumbuka.¹⁴¹

In addition to the above impact, the missionaries were also very strict with their converts and made sure that these abided by church doctrines.

¹³⁹ 47/LIM/4/17 Livingstonia Mission: Dr. Laws, A Dictionary of Chitumbuka

¹⁴⁰ Elmslie, pp. 280-282, also see *The Livingstonia News*, December 1908, Volume 1 Number 6, for Dr. Innes' work.

¹⁴¹ P. Madula, "Revitalisation of Chingoni: The Role of Mzimba Heritage Association" (Paper presented to a Conference on Local Historical and Heritage studies, Mzuzu University, 28-30 August 2007), p. 6.

They were against some Ngoni customs such as beer drinking, polygamy, and umthimba marriage. In that respect, many converts found indulging themselves in these acts were either suspended for a time or expelled completely. For example, the Ekwendeni congregation session ex-communicated Simon Shonga of Ezondweni due to polygamy on 6th July 1913, and also disciplined Maria Mhango and Zikwezga Nkhoma for beer-brewing on 21st September 1916.¹⁴² This missionary attitude contributed to gradual decreases in witchcraft beliefs, beer drinking and polygamy among the Ngoni. Also the Chokolo phenomenon-that is inheriting or marrying the wife of one's deceased relative decreased. The Ngoni also abandoned their traditional form of worship which was based on veneration of ancestral spirits. Furthermore the missionary schools made the youth to acquire wealth by seeking employment which substituted the old way of acquiring wealth by raiding.¹⁴³

Although Ekwendeni Congregation of the Livingstonia Mission covered parts of Mpherembe's territory where there were 68 schools in Emcisweni area, the people of Mpherembe had little contact with the missionaries. The limited contacts were through evangelistic meetings usually held during weekends.¹⁴⁴

¹⁴² 47/LIM/3/5 Livingstonia Mission: Ekwendeni Congregation Minutes (1913-1916), see also 47/LIM/5/15B Livingstonia Mission: Expelled Members from Ekwendeni Congregation.

¹⁴³ J.K. McCracken Politics and Christianity in Malawi: Impact of Livingstonia Mission in the Northern Province, 1875-1940 (Blantyre: CLAIM, 2000). This was also noted by M. Read in her book entitled The Ngoni of Nyasaland (London: Oxford University Press, 1956), p115.

¹⁴⁴ *The Livingstonia News*, August 1908, Volume 1 Number 4.

Even in minutes of the Session at Ekwendeni most issues dealt with related to areas such as Euthini, Edundu, Choma , Ekwaiweni, Engcongolweni, and Matuli. By 1919 as reported by the Mzimba District Resident to the Chief Secretary in Zomba, the Ngoni Mission had four main centres and these were Ekwendeni and Loudon which had dwelling houses, school, and brick churches while Hora and Njuyu looked abandoned containing hill houses of a cheap character for the use by Missionaries on holiday in the hot months.¹⁴⁵

The only time the Livingstonia missionaries could have had considerable impact on the Ngoni of Mpherembe was when Chinombo, a son of Mpherembe but a dedicated Christian became the regent to Pickford in 1914. But his power and influence was a short-lived as he died in 1921.¹⁴⁶ That was probably a blow because from then onwards came leaders like Esau Jere then later on Pickford who looked rebellious towards the ethics of the Livingstonia Missionaries despite being educated at Ekwendeni Mission.

The one and only saving factor was the pastorate of Reverend Peter Zimema Thole.¹⁴⁷ During his pastoring of the Emcisweni Congregation, Rev. Thole did a lot for the Ngoni people and culture in Mpherembe's area.

¹⁴⁵ M.N.A.: S1/1580/19, Mzimba District Administrative Annual Reports (1919) - Missions General Resolutions by Conference: Mombera (1919).

¹⁴⁶ M.N.A: NNMI/24/5 Mzimba (Mombera) District Book (29 August, 1918 to 20 August 1923).

¹⁴⁷ 47/LIM/9/3 Livingstonia Mission: Annual Returns, Statistics and Reports-(1930-1942)

He had a passion for Ngoni culture especially the language. Thole made some enormous contributions to the survival of Singoni by preaching and composing songs in it. This is why although some Ngoni traditions such as cattle keeping and accumulation, lobola marriage and ingoma dance were retained by the whole Northern Ngoni society the Mpherembe Ngoni excelled by adding the Ngoni language which became almost moribund in other Ngoni areas.

4. Ngoni Cultural Adaptation in the face of Colonialism.

After 1904, the Colonial Administration too began to impact on the socio-political development of the Northern Ngoni in Mzimba District as they became the last group to be put under the British sphere of interest in Nyasaland.

British Colonial rule was delayed by more than ten years among the Northern Ngoni because the Livingstonia missionaries spoke well of the Ngoni in terms of their ability to manage the affairs in their areas of jurisdiction. On the other hand, the British Colonial administration also feared to jeopardize some good missionary work among the Ngoni if it rushed to use force as it did with the Yao and the Maseko Ngoni. Consequently, from 1891 to 1904, while many parts of Malawi were being subjected to colonial rule, the Northern Ngoni were left alone, as masters of their own house. The British protectorate administration based at Zomba in the southern part of the country recognized their independence and sovereignty over the area circumscribed by the South Rukuru River with Hora Mountain as its central topographical feature.¹⁴⁸

¹⁴⁸ Pachai, Early History of Malawi, p. 202.

It was the breakdown of law and order in the area that led to colonial takeover. The spirit of equality that the Livingstonia missionaries used to preach encouraged rebellions among Ngoni subjects and the influx of European traders and fortune-hunters made the Ngoni unable to control their area properly. As if this was not enough, during the early part of 1904 native police from Chinthechi (Nkhata-Bay) entered Ngoniland and begun collecting hut tax and burning villagers.¹⁴⁹ These pressures prompted the colonial administration with the help of the Livingstonia Missionaries to act by annexing the area. Northern Ngoniland, therefore, came under protectorate rule on 24th October 1904, following a meeting between the Governor Alfred Sharpe and Ngoni leaders at Ekwendeni. One of the agreements reached was that a District Resident would be sent to Ngoniland. They also agreed that the authority of the hereditary chiefs would be upheld, that the chiefs would be able to decide minor disputes among their people and would assist colonial government officials in administration and tax collection.¹⁵⁰ Thereafter a Boma was created among the Ngoni where Mr. Hector MacDonald popularly known as UMadondolo among the Ngoni became the first British resident at Hora in October 1904.¹⁵¹

¹⁴⁹ Fraser, Winning a primitive people, p. 239-241.

¹⁵⁰ M. N. A: NNMI/24/1 Mzimba (Mombera) District Book (1 April, 1905).

¹⁵¹ B. A. M. Jere, "The Position of the Office of Inkosi ya Makosi in M'Mbelwa's Kingdom, 1855-2007" (unpublished manuscript researched and compiled for Mzuzu University, December, 2007). p. 21

In April 1905, the Boma moved to its present location due to water problems at Hora and was named Mzimba after the river which originally means human body in the Ngoni language.¹⁵²

This move changed the socio-political organization of the Ngoni people in that Ngoni administrative authority became responsible to the Colonial government. For the first time, the judicial system changed because now many cases were brought to the District Resident rather than to chiefs. The introduction of hut-tax in 1906 put Ngoni society in a very difficult situation because they had previously been accustomed to receiving wealth rather than giving hence resentment was high.¹⁵³ Hut-tax also became unpopular because as many Ngoni men were polygamists, an individual was required to pay it according to the number of wives or households he had. This proved a strain on polygamists, as sources of cash income hardly existed. It was a factor which led to the development of labour migration to the Shire highlands, the two Rhodesias and South Africa, which resulted in further cultural interfusion and weakening of tribal ties.¹⁵⁴

Despite the above scenario, the relationship between the Ngoni and the colonial government was fairly cordial at least up to 1914.

¹⁵² L. H. Nyirenda, op-cit, pp. 12-13.

¹⁵³ O. T.: Wellings Thulu, Daudi Thulu Village, T. A. Mpherembe, Mzimba, 15 June 2009; and Leckson Jere, Op-cit

¹⁵⁴ Pachai, Early History of Malawi, p.179.

Relations became strained thereafter because the colonial government accused Jere chiefs of misbehaving such as not helping the government to collect hut-taxes. But the Chiefs, on the other hand, blamed the colonial government for not providing markets where people could sell their commodities such as cattle. Furthermore, Chimtunga the Ngoni paramount chief, refused to send men and food to serve in the First World War. The Ngoni refused to go to war because they found no logic of starting it now as it was against what the missionaries had taught them, which was that wars were bad and to be stopped and the Ngoni complied.¹⁵⁵ As a result, Chimtunga was banished and exiled to Chiromo (now Bangula) in Nsanje in 1915 and returned to be a village headman in 1920 under the principal headman Mkhuzo.

Mzimba was then put under the District Administrative Native Ordinance like other districts in the protectorate whereby it was divided into seven sections without a paramount but each under a Principal Headman.¹⁵⁶ This had a great impact in that individual Ngoni chiefs now had the first experience of being directly responsible to the District Resident as experienced by other ethnic groups. Eventually, their political authority declined because they had no power of their own to make rules and regulations or even try cases according to customary law except by invitation of the District Resident.

¹⁵⁵ B. A. M. Jere, "The Position of the Office of Inkosi ya Makosi in M'Mbelwa's Kingdom, 1855-2007," p. 9.

¹⁵⁶ M.N.A: S1/1008/19, Mombera (Mzimba) District Administrative Annual Reports (1918-19). Also see, Pachai, B., "African Initiatives in Local Administration: The Case of the M'Mbelwa African Administrative Council", in R.J. MacDonald (ed) From Nyasaland to Malawi, (Nairobi: EAPH, 1975). Pp. 192-193.

This made the Ngoni regret their decision of having signed a peace treaty with the colonial government which stripped them of all the powers they formerly enjoyed. They even composed songs of protest against their first District Resident, Hector MacDonald.¹⁵⁷

During the First World War, the Ngoni also suffered economically because many cattle and people were taken from them to meet the needs of the war. However, the Ngoni were still united during these crises and tried to advance their concerns collectively. For example, in 1919 the Ngoni chiefs asked the Colonial Government to consider reviving the Ngoni language but this was rejected by the colonial government as being impractical. The colonial government was in fact against the idea of one language in Ngoniland and supported the existence of various local dialects which was advantageous to the government as far as the internal security and peace of the country was concerned.¹⁵⁸ The Ngoni also continued regarding Chitunga as their paramount and requested his return from exile through their association called the M'mbelwa Native Association formed in 1920.¹⁵⁹

To a lesser extent, the Ngoni Chiefs gained considerable power in 1929 when they were granted section courts with limited jurisdiction.

¹⁵⁷ Soko, "Innovation and Change: The survival of Ngoni oral Traditions in Malawi," pp. 18-19.

¹⁵⁸ M.N.A: S1/1008/19, Mombera (Mzimba) District Administrative Annual Reports (1918-19).

¹⁵⁹ M.N.A: S1/1140/19, Mombera (Mzimba) District Administrative Annual Reports (1919-20).

During this time the Ngoni really showed that unity was very central to them by rejecting the proposal that some areas of Mpherembe and Mtwalo should go to the Tumbuka of Chikulamayembe as proposed by Ramsay, the North Nyasa District Commissioner in 1929.¹⁶⁰

In 1933 the Colonial Government introduced the Native Authority Ordinance (Indirect Rule) which was designed to provide the local people with a form of local government. This move gave all chiefs the status of hereditary chieftaincy.¹⁶¹ This revived Ngoni power of administration through the Jere Council formed in 1931 (later changed to become the M'Mbelwa African Administrative Council in 1947) in order to present their collective concerns to the government. It was the only council which survived the test of time during the colonial rule. It took over responsibilities of local councils to offer more political, economic and social welfare services for the betterment of the district communities.¹⁶²

Politically, this council requested the colonial government to put Lazaro Jere as Mmbelwa II and to be the sole Native Authority in the Ngoni-Tumbuka area. It also requested that Simon Nhlane be replaced by a Jere Chief and Amon Jere be the sole ruler of Ekwendeni and Ezondweni areas.

¹⁶⁰ M.N.A: S1/54.H/33, Mzimba District Administrative Annual Reports (1932).

¹⁶¹ O.M. Phiri, "M'Mbelwa African Administrative Council: Political, social and Economic Activities, 1933-1962," (History Seminar Papers 1984/85, Chancellor College, University of Malawi).p.5

¹⁶² Ibid; Also see; P.Kajani, "Evolution of the Role of Chiefs in the Administration of Mzimba District Since the late 19th Century", (BED Dissertation, History Department, Chancellor College, University of Malawi, 2001).

In 1938 the council asked for self-government based on the 1904 promises and the autonomy of these chiefs after the introduction of Indirect Rule 1933.¹⁶³ Apart from that it was also against the idea of Central African Federation which was seen as a way of obstructing the aims of indirect rule as the core interest of Africans.¹⁶⁴ As a result, Inkosi ya Makosi M'Mbelwa II was among the delegates sent to Britain in 1952 to denounce the imposition of the federation in question.¹⁶⁵ Then in 1942, the Ngoni chiefs adopted their ancestral names such as M'mbelwa, Mtwaro, Mzukuzuku, Chindi, Mzikubola, Mabilabo and Mpherembe. This made Pickford Jere adopt his grandfather's old Ngoni name of Mpherembe so he became Mpherembe II.¹⁶⁶

Socially, the council aimed at improving people's well-being in education, road and bridge construction and eliminating poor social conditions prevalent in the district. For example, it used to pay fees for the needy or give bursaries to encourage competition. It also restricted the Mganda dance which evolved out of African experiences in the two World Wars by arguing that it was undermining their own Ngoni cultural dances, school attendance, and also promoted disobedience among the young.

¹⁶³ B. Pachai, "African Initiatives in Local Administration: The Case of the M'Mbelwa African Administrative Council", in R.J. MacDonald (ed) From Nyasaland to Malawi, (Nairobi: EAPH, 1975), pp. 209-212.

¹⁶⁴ O.M. Phiri, "M'Mbelwa African Administrative Council: Political, social and Economic Activities, 1933-1962," (History Seminar Papers 1984/85, Chancellor College, University of Malawi).p.8.

¹⁶⁵ B. A. M. Jere, op-cit p. 9, and 11

¹⁶⁶ M.N.A: NNMI/24/11 Mzimba District Book (16 May, 1938 to 23 December, 1948). Also see, Pachai, B., "African Initiatives in Local Administration: The Case of the M'Mbelwa African Administrative Council", in R.J. MacDonald (ed) From Nyasaland to Malawi, (Nairobi: EAPH, 1975). Pp. 196-198.

It also aimed at boosting the declining Ngoni culture amidst other existing cultures such as those of the Tumbuka, Tonga and Chewa.¹⁶⁷ Therefore, through this council, the Ngoni managed to convince the Colonial Administrators that their Ingoma dance was the most dignified dance which was worthy to be promoted than other dances.

In economic aspects, the Council intensified its activities in agriculture where it discouraged overgrazing and shifting cultivation, for these escalated soil erosion in the district. However, it was against some colonial policies such as the forced construction of bunds and terraces. It argued that such policies were a waste of time, an act of slavery and unfair to people as dates were fixed by the government without considering one's physical strength. The council also saw the establishment of markets as a substitute for the improvement of incomes of the people in the absence of employment opportunities. As a result, the colonial government established a ghee industry in the district in 1940 with an aim of inducing the Ngoni to exploit cattle resources for economic values which previously were regarded as non-economic, for example, milk was not for sale, bulls not for draught.¹⁶⁸ Furthermore the government encouraged the dairy farmers to form co-operative societies to boost their bargaining power.

¹⁶⁷ O.M. Phiri, "M'Mbelwa African Administrative Council: Political, social and Economic Activities, 1933-1962," p.13-14.

¹⁶⁸ Ibid, p.15-16.

This led to the formation of the Kafukule Ghee Co-operative Union in 1948 but with time and expansion, it was renamed the Kasitu Valley Ghee Co-operative Union.¹⁶⁹ This Co-operative Union monopolized the buying rights of milk within areas of Chiefs Mtwalo and Chindi but later extended to that of Chief M'Mbelwa where a sub-union was formed at Edingeni and Loudon.

However, this co-operative society was not successful because it faced a number of problems such as: low quality of product, competition from other ghee producing areas, imported Kenyan butter, farmers were paid late, the private dairy owners were buying at high price than those paid by the co-operative society, and there was embezzlement of funds.¹⁷⁰ In addition to that some Ngoni sections such as that of Mpherembe were not fully integrated in this capitalist economy and hence continued with their traditional way of cattle keeping.

Apart from dealing with the colonial government, the Ngoni also counter-acted the Tumbuka who wanted to revive Tumbuka nationalism as early as 1930s'. For example, Mnyanjagha Bota who was under Mpherembe wanted autonomy from the Ngoni but was not successful and other Tumbuka followed suit.

¹⁶⁹ M. L.Chinkhuntha, "The Kasitu Valley Ghee Cooperative Union (KVGU): Its Development and Socio-economic Impact on the People of Mzimba" (History Student Research Paper, Chancellor College, University of Malawi, 1988/89).

¹⁷⁰ Ibid, pp.7-20.

To contain this, the Ngoni chose two non-Jere councillors and elevated them to the rank of Subordinate Native Authorities in 1951 and these were Chapundika Munthali and Kampingo Sibande. Tumbuka nationalism was revived again in 1959 by James Dokowe, the grandson of Baza Dokowe and Mr. R.P.K. Banda but both of them failed. Therefore, the Ngoni continued to dominate other tribes in politics by tactfully regulating their social presence.¹⁷¹

The political relations between the Ngoni and the colonial administrators especially after 1933 generally proved beneficial to the Ngoni. This was because indirect rule gave the local authorities considerable powers. Apart from that the colonial government now began focusing on their paramount chief M'Mbelwa more than other subordinate chiefs. This made the colonial government treat the Ngoni as an entity with one leader at a time hence there was little colonial interference in Mpherembe's area on individual basis. The only occasion when the colonial government tried to interfere in the affairs of Mpherembe's chiefdom was when they came to settle a dispute between Pickford, the title holder of Mpherembe II and his uncle and regent, Esau Jere. It was because Esau was jealous of Pickford and began ill-treating him. As a result a meeting was held at Emcisweni by the District Section Council where the District Resident was also present and that was on 10th May, 1932.

¹⁷¹ Pachai, B., "African Initiatives in Local Administration: The Case of the M'Mbelwa African Administrative Council", in R.J. MacDonald (ed) From Nyasaland to Malawi, (Nairobi: EAPH, 1975). Pp. 206-207.

They settled the feud by deciding to move Esau to settle along the Rukuru River near Timothy Nsere's Area.¹⁷² Even after settling this dispute, the colonial government was not in good books with Pickford, Mpherembe II. This is evident from remarks made by several district officials at Mzimba in their annual reports. They often depicted him as a big and rather stupid fellow and not very intelligent.¹⁷³

It can therefore be concluded that the Ngoni of Mpherembe were never fully westernized despite benefiting from missionary work in their area. This proved to be a factor of continuity in the evolution of their traditions. Even the Colonial Government was never in full control of the area due to its concept of indirect rule, and belief in the viability of a centralised Ngoni administrative system presided over by M'Mbelwa.

¹⁷² M.N.A: NNMI/24/7 Mzimba District Book (4 August 1928 to 19 December 1932).

¹⁷³ M.N.A: S1/67.F/37, Mzimba District Administrative Annual Reports (1936). Also see; M.N.A: S1/89.F/36, Mzimba District Administrative Annual Reports (1935)

Chapter Five

THE NGONI OF MPHEREMBE AND MALAWIAN CULTURE DURING THE BANDA REGIME, 1964-1994

The history of Malawi culture during Dr. Banda's regime in general has been presented by the scholars like Short (1974), Vail and White (1989), Lwanda (1993), Forster (1994), and Phiri (1998), among others. This chapter deals with the way the Mpherembe Ngoni were integrated into Malawian Culture during the regime of Dr. Hastings Kamuzu Banda from 1964 to 1994. It does so by first examining the cultural policy of post-independence Malawi, and then analysing Dr. Banda's attitude towards Ngoni culture as a whole. That is followed by a highlighting of how the Northern Ngoni tried to search for cultural space within Malawian national culture during the period under review. The chapter concludes with a demonstration of how the Mpherembe Ngoni tried to use the cultural dispensation of the time to ensure the persistence of their Ngoni linguistic identity and related aspects of life.

1. The Cultural Policy of Post-independence Malawi

Independent Africa, Malawi inclusive, faced many cultural challenges due to legacies of Colonialism and Christianity. There was a tendency, especially of some educated Africans, to adopt western cultural values¹⁷⁴ on one hand, while on the other there was a concern of the traditionists over cultural erosion. This was the background to Dr. Hastings Kamuzu Banda's intervention in the country's cultural affairs. As independent Malawi's first head of state, he was able to enforce national cultural identity on Malawians by authoritarian means. In carrying out his cultural policy Dr Banda had two visions of an idealistic Malawian culture. The first idea was the creation of African or Malawian culture that would to be free from Western infiltration while the second one was to create a single Malawian culture out of many cultural traditions in the country.

Due to his long stay abroad, Dr. Banda probably felt alienated from his native culture and was thus anxious to return to his roots but was dismayed with the extent to which Western influences had permeated the African way of life. In order to counteract against this Western influence over Malawian culture, Dr Banda made a lot of changes from the time he became a Prime Minister in 1963. The first action was to advocate a return to traditional African institutions by promoting local dress, music and dance.¹⁷⁵

¹⁷⁴ S. Twea, "Cultural Issues in the Development of Nationalism and National Building in Malawi Since 1958," (History Seminar Papers 2003/04, Chancellor College, Zomba.), p. 5.

¹⁷⁵ Kandbook B. F. and Phiri K. M., Twenty Five Years of Independence in Malawi, (Blantyre: Dzuka Publishing Company, 1989). p. 47.

In this respect, Dr. Banda made populist appeal by maintaining that Malawi would obtain democracy based on time-tested African institutions. He therefore strengthened the power of local courts which were to be presided over by the chairmen to try customary cases, a move started when Orton Chirwa was the Minister of Justice in the days before the Cabinet Crisis of September 1964. These courts were under the Ministry of Justice which was part of the Executive branch of government.¹⁷⁶ This meant that Malawi had a dual court system comprising of the Western Judicial System which was an independent Judiciary and the Traditional Courts system which was under the Executive. Banda saw this move as more appropriate for Malawi than the system in Britain where it was often possible for one to be acquitted on the basis of a clever defence or a legal technicality. These traditional courts were later on, in 1969, permitted to pass the death sentence, which also became a tool for silencing political opponents.¹⁷⁷

In addition to this, a number of acts were passed in Parliament. For instance, the Dressing Code Act was instituted in 1968, according to which miniskirts, and bell-bottomed trousers were banned and men were not allowed to keep long hair.¹⁷⁸

¹⁷⁶ Ibid, p. 33.

¹⁷⁷ P. Short, Banda, (London and Boston: Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1974), pp. 154-271

¹⁷⁸ Twea, p. 5.

In trying to implement the act the Malawi Government arrested Muslim women in November 1991 for wearing male attire which was viewed as their custom at initiation.¹⁷⁹ Apart from that the Censorship Board was established in 1972 to screen out extreme Western influences. Even birth control which was mostly favoured by westerners was also discouraged and books on the subject were banned.¹⁸⁰

While Dr. Banda was doing all he could do to contain Western culture on one hand, on the other he was also shaping up an ideal Malawian culture. His problem here was how to come up with a standardised Malawian culture out of different cultural traditions in the country. In the long run, Dr. Banda singled out for promotion of Chewa culture at the expense of other cultures.¹⁸¹ Dr. Banda's choice of Chichewa as a national language was because he believed that the Nyanja and Mang'anja peoples from whom ChiNyanja took its name were basically all Chewa.¹⁸² On another note, Banda probably did not also want to promote Chimang'anja or Chinyanja as these became the languages of preaching and education by the Blantyre Mission and were hence full of corrupted words.¹⁸³

¹⁷⁹ J. Lwanda, Kamuzu Banda of Malawi: A Study in Promise, Power and Paralysis, p. 137.

¹⁸⁰ Short, Banda, pp.279-280.

¹⁸¹ L. H. Vail and L. White, "Tribalism in the Political History of Malawi," p. 182.

¹⁸² Short, p. 273.

¹⁸³ Vail and White, p. 166.

However, it must be noted that Dr. Banda did not want the anglicised Chichewa hence he demanded its standardisation, so as to make it spoken as it was done when he was a young man in Kasungu and as it was being spoken in the villages of the Central Region.¹⁸⁴ So the Chichewa Board was instituted in 1972 to do the work. This made the Chewa people and Chewa culture to be the core of the Malawi nation by virtue of being the most ancient and least compromised by colonialism. Hence Malawian culture was considered synonymous with Chewa culture.¹⁸⁵

It should also be noted that as Dr. Banda was discouraging the unquestioning aping of the western way of life, he developed a fairly consistent cultural philosophy which centred on turning his people into a standardised and tradition-bound nation.¹⁸⁶ Dr. Banda began stressing on the subordination of the young to the elderly such as parents, elders and chiefs; and respecting traditional notions of crime and innocence, and right of families to have as many children as God gives them.¹⁸⁷ This made him challenge the formal education to supplement or promote ancient wisdom for its existence.¹⁸⁸

¹⁸⁴ Short, op-cit, p.273.

¹⁸⁵ Vail and White, p. 182.

¹⁸⁶ Kandbook B. F. and Phiri K. M., Twenty Five Years of Independence in Malawi, (Blantyre: Dzuka Publishing Company, 1989).p. 46. Also see K. M. Phiri “Dr Banda’s Cultural Legacy and its Implications for a Democratic Malawi” in Phiri K. M. and K. R. Ross (eds), Democratisation in Malawi: A Stocktaking, (Blantyre: CLAIM, 1998), pp. 154-159.

¹⁸⁷ K. M. Phiri, “Dr Banda’s Cultural Legacy and its Implications for a Democratic Malawi” in Phiri K. M. and K. R. Ross (eds), Democratisation in Malawi: A Stocktaking, p. 154-161.

¹⁸⁸ P. G. Forster, “Culture, Nationalism and the Invention of Tradition in Malawi”, Journal of Modern African Studies, Vol. 32, No. 3 (1994) pp.490-493. This is also supported by K. M. Phiri in his article entitled, “Dr Banda’s Cultural Legacy and its Implications for a Democratic Malawi” in Phiri K. M. and K. R. Ross (eds), Democratisation in Malawi: A Stocktaking, p. 161.

Dr. Banda also encouraged African culture by reviving traditional dances during political rallies, and by restoring the respectability of customs like Vinyau.¹⁸⁹ Among the dances that were highly cherished by Dr. Banda was Ingoma which became a source of pride to his foreign dignitaries such as the then British Prime Minister, Margaret Thatcher during her visit to Malawi in 1988.¹⁹⁰

Although the concept of Malawi's cultural identity was good, its implementation policy was sometimes problematical. Dr. Banda resorted to dictatorial methods which provoked counter-reactions right from the beginning and these were intensified towards the end of his rule.¹⁹¹ The issue of elevating Chichewa as a national language at the expense of other equally influential languages such as Tumbuka and Yao, for example, met resentment by people from the North and South for fear of cultural subjugation to the Chewa.¹⁹²

Dr. Banda also interfered both with the function and the lines of succession of traditional chiefs as had been the case during the colonial period.

¹⁸⁹ P. Short, p. 273.

¹⁹⁰ Kandbook and Phiri, p. 38.

¹⁹¹ K. M. Phiri "Dr Banda's Cultural Legacy and its Implications for a Democratic Malawi" in Phiri K. M. and K. R. Ross (eds), Democratisation in Malawi: A Stocktaking, (Blantyre: CLAIM, 1998), pp. 149-165. Also see P. Kishindo, "Cultural Policy during Banda," in Phiri K. M. and K. R. Ross (eds), Democratisation in Malawi: A Stocktaking, (Blantyre: CLAIM, 1998), p. 253.

¹⁹² Short, pp. 273-274.

Independent minded chiefs like Mwase of Kasungu, Katumbi of Hewe, Chikumbu of Mulanje and Mtelela of Mangochi were replaced after questioning his right to interfere in traditional matters. Banda's assertion of control over the chiefs had a rapid knock out effect on the cultural life in the villages, as most traditional activities came to be scrutinized from any possible political angle.¹⁹³ Emphasis was on those activities which reinforced the position of Banda and his regime.

2. Dr. Banda's Attitude towards Ngoni Culture

The general outlook of Dr. Banda's cultural policy did not aim at promoting tribalism despite its despotic implementation. His traditionalist sentiments encouraged headmen to feel part of the new regime throughout the country and not only in the predominantly Chewa-speaking Central Region. Dr. Banda used culture for political gains¹⁹⁴ where he was able to secure his legitimacy and to demonstrate closeness and solidarity with Malawians at grassroots level despite having spent forty years abroad. Banda imposed a common language to weld Malawi's tribal cultures into one national culture as Short (1974) quotes him, in the Hansard of 20th May 1966, where he said:

There will always be tribes in this country... [and] there will always be regions... But these tribal designations, these regional designations, must exist, and we must recognise them, only as a means of identifying ourselves as true Malawians.... I value my being a Chewa from Kasungu in the Central Region, only because and only as ... (it) stamps on my forehead the sign that I am a true Malawian... We have no longer a collection of tribes in this country now. We are a nation. Therefore we must think more of ourselves as Malawians and less, much less, as Nkondes, Tongas, Ngonis, Chewas, Yaos, Nyanjas, Senas.¹⁹⁵

¹⁹³ Lwanda, Kamuzu Banda of Malawi: A Study in Promise, Power and Paralysis, (Glasgow: Dudu Nsomba Publications, 1993), pp. 135-136.

¹⁹⁴ Forster, p. 494-496.

¹⁹⁵ Short, p. 266-267,273.

Dr Banda tried to create and strengthen national consciousness by preserving and selecting few cultural aspects for the sake of cultural homogenisation. He, therefore, recognised such institutions as chieftainship, reviving traditional dances, and restoring to respectability customs like *Vinyau*.¹⁹⁶ In this aspect, the independence celebrations became forums of promoting national identity and fostering cultural unity which was essential in the building of the Malawi nation.¹⁹⁷ In addition to that Dr. Banda provided special benefits for a number of his most active supporters, including constructing houses for favoured chiefs and members of Women's League of the Malawi Congress Party.¹⁹⁸

Apart from the Chewa culture that Dr Banda tried to elevate, he was also in good terms with the Ngoni especially those from Mzimba. This might have arisen due to several factors such as his close association with M'Mbelwa the Second¹⁹⁹ and probably his knowledge of the history of the Ngoni. As such the M'Mbelwa Ngoni were among the few favoured people in Malawi during Dr. Banda's reign. This is evident from the fact that houses were constructed for all Ngoni chiefs such as Mtwalo, Mpherembe, Chindi, Mabilabo, Muzukuzuku, Mzikubola, and their paramount M'Mbelwa.²⁰⁰

¹⁹⁶ Short, p. 273.

¹⁹⁷ Twea, pp. 4-5.

¹⁹⁸ Forster, p. 491.

¹⁹⁹ O.T.: John Mvula, Solomoni Jere Village, T. A. Mpherembe, Mzimba, 28 May 2009.

²⁰⁰ O.T.: Samson Ngoma, Langa Village, T. A. Mpherembe, Mzimba, 9 June 2009 ; Larnard Jere, Molozi Jere Village, T. A. Mpherembe, Mzimba, 4 June 2009; and Wilson Z. Moyo, op-cit.

As if this was not enough, during his public rallies Dr. Banda used to cite Ngoni history beginning from Shaka Zulu's biography, Ngoni migration under Zwangendaba and their settlement in Malawi which showed his passion for the Ngoni as a great people.²⁰¹ Politically, Dr. Banda continued to recognise the Ngoni political structure with M'mbelwa as paramount and their council called the M'mbelwa District Assembly rather than Mzimba as other district or town councils would have been designated. The only change was that during this time the District Commissioner was more powerful than in the colonial period.²⁰²

Additionally, there was also a tendency of putting what was regarded as an important cultural dance to be performed last during Dr. Banda's rallies. For example in the Central Region, the entry of Gulewamkulu in the dancing arena was always made to indicate the close of dancing ceremonies. In the case of the Northern Region, there were several traditional dances such as Mwinoghe from Chitipa, Honala and Malipenga from Nkhata-Bay and even Vimbuza from either Rumphi or Mzimba.

²⁰¹ O.T.: Eliteki Ngulube, Chinombo Village, T. A. Mpherembe, Mzimba, 7 June 2009; Efrida Gamba, Chilangalanga Village, T. A. Mpherembe, Mzimba, 27 May 2009; Standwell Jere, Mzoba Village, T. A. Mpherembe, Mzimba, 7 June 2009; Watson Jere, op-cit; Peterson Nkuna, op-cit; Chimozi Jere, op-cit; and Zebediah Hara, Chibisa Hara Village, T. A. Mpherembe, Mzimba, 21 June 2009.

²⁰² Nyirongo, Manfield M., "Continuity and Change among the Ngoni of Mtwalo's area in Mzimba District, 1855-1955", (History Student Research paper, Chancellor College, University of Malawi, 2005).p26.

But to signify his love for the Ngoni culture other dances seemed to be subsidiary to Ingoma which was usually performed last and he was always happy to patronise it in the dancing arena.²⁰³ In short, Dr. Banda had a partiality for the Ngoni, especially those of Mzimba, which favoured them above the other tribes in the country.

3. Ngoni Search for Cultural Space

The Ngoni search for cultural space was as old as their settlement in Malawi. The Ngoni enjoyed a reputation throughout Southern Africa as effective soldiers and administrators hence their migration from Natal, the deeds of Zwangendaba, the victories of the Ngoni armies, Ngoni skills in state-building, and their high level culture; were celebrated and publicised by the cultural brokers like Yesaya Chibambo and Charles Chidongo Chinula.²⁰⁴ The Ngoni tried to revive their lost glory by adjusting to the situation. For example, during the colonial era, as already noted above, the Ngoni tried to promote their identity through their organised body the M'Mbelwa Administrative Council. During the independence struggle, the Ngoni tried to promote their identity by aligning themselves closer to Dr. Banda who was being hero-worshiped by almost every African nationalist in Malawi.

²⁰³ O. T.: Wisdom Nkuna, Zyawera Nkuna Village, T. A. Mpherembe, Mzimba, 18 June 2009. Also see Nyirongo, Manfield M., "Continuity and Change among the Ngoni of Mtwalo's area in Mzimba

District, 1855-1955", (History Student Research paper, Chancellor College, University of Malawi, 2005), p27-28 and Kandbook B. F. and Phiri K. M., Twenty Five Years of Independence in Malawi, (Blantyre: Dzuka Publishing Company, 1989). p. 21.

²⁰⁴ Vail and White, pp. 160-162.

At a special public ceremony in 1959, the Ngoni offered Dr. Banda a shield, spear and knobkerrie at Edingeni, the paramount's headquarters.²⁰⁵ Later on Dr. Banda was accorded a Ngoni military title Ngwazi-meaning the fierce and invincible warrior.²⁰⁶ This was done probably with the intention of glorifying Ngoni military and political history in one perspective. The other way of looking at it is that it was also done so that the Ngoni cultural aspects would be accepted by the would-be national leader, Dr. Banda. Indeed in return, there was official recognition which was manifested through Dr. Banda's enthronement of M'Mbelwa III in 1961 and M'Mbelwa IV in 1984.²⁰⁷

Soon after independence, the Ngoni continued using their changing environment or situations tactically by accommodating other people in order to strengthen their political power. For example, most of their Ingoma songs were changed to Chitumbuka in order to accommodate the Tumbuka while maintaining the original tunes of their songs. The Ngoni war dance Ingoma became a political dance where there was Ingoma ya Bobaba and Ingoma ya Bomama which were performed at national festivals alongside many other Malawian traditional dances.²⁰⁸ They also adapted their songs and praise poems for Zwangendaba and other heroes to praise Dr. Banda during mass rallies.²⁰⁹

²⁰⁵ Bowman Jere, p.9

²⁰⁶ O. T.: Medison Mumba, Khabango Village, T. A. Mpherembe, Mzimba, 5 June 2009.

²⁰⁷ Bowman Jere, p. 9 and 13.

²⁰⁸ Soko, Innovation and Change, p.16.

²⁰⁹ Soko, Innovation and Change, pp17-23.

The Ngoni also began reviving their old cultural practices during the independence time. For example, in 1988 the Ngoni revived the rituals of rain calling at Emdhakude in Inkosi Mabilabo's area for the purpose of civic education.²¹⁰

This trend continued and in 1997 the Mzimba Cultural Heritage Association in conjunction with the Museum Department in Mzuzu launched a language project with the aim of teaching Malawians to speak Chingoni. This association was mandated to revive not only Singoni but also the Ngoni cultural values through events like Incwala and Mphala.²¹¹ This has received a wider attention from not only the Ngoni ethnic group but also among other people who see the language as a passport to proficiently interact with business people in South Africa.²¹²

4. The Persistence of Linguistic and other features of Ngoni Culture in Mpherembe's area

As the Northern Ngoni in general were looking for cultural space through accommodation, the Mpherembe Ngoni in particular were doing that through consolidation of their old cultural practices. This was particularly so with regard to their preservation of Singoni and cultural practice like Umthimba and Chokolo.

²¹⁰ Bowmen Jere, p. 15.

²¹¹ P. Madula, p.7.

²¹² Ibid, p.8.

In the pre-colonial period and during the greater part of the colonial era, the Ngoni of Mpherembe used two strategies for consolidating their identity among the original Tumbuka inhabitants in their area of control. The first, which was effective up to early 1950s, was the prohibition of Ngoni children to marry Tumbuka wives. This was because they thought Tumbuka women would weaken the Ngoni cultural fabric leading to sublimation of their cultural values.²¹³

The second strategy was that of allowing some indigenous Tumbuka authorities to rule their areas on Ngoni behalf as was the case with the M'mbelwa Ngoni who put some Tumbuka leaders into important positions, as either headmen or indunas. Among those who were respected in this way by M'mbelwa were Ching'anya Mkandawire, Jalavikuba Munthali and Baza Dokowe Nyilongo.²¹⁴ Mpherembe did the same by elevating Eneya Kumwenda and Matchisano Mkandawire to headmanships. In addition to this, the Mpherembe Ngoni recognized and consolidated the already existing authority of Mnyanjagha Bota. This recognition was given to these influential Tumbuka people so that the whole Tumbuka community in the area should feel part and parcel of Ngoni society.²¹⁵ It was also done to control the Tumbuka indirectly through their influential and respected leaders.

²¹³ O. T.: Wilson Moyo, op-cit.

²¹⁴ Vail, "The Making of the Dead North: A Study of Ngoni Rule in Northern Malawi, 1855-1907," p. 245.

²¹⁵ O. T.: Henderson Hara, op-cit.

On a note which is contrary to popular belief that one learns language from one's mother, the Mpherembe Ngoni preserved their language through the efforts of fathers. It might be rightly called 'father language' as many Ngoni children learnt it from their fathers and not mothers.²¹⁶ For example, boys used to spend most of their time herding livestock and sometimes sitting at the Sangweni (men's compound) listening to elders' discussions. So as children followed these Ngoni cultural traditions, the elders were assured that their identity would still continue on to the next generation. In that way the Mpherembe Ngoni continued to maintain their language and culture.²¹⁷

The conservative policy of Mpherembe the First also aided the survival Singoni (Ngoni language). In the first instance, he enforced rules which barred wanton intermarriages between Ngoni and Tumbuka. He used to say that cattle should be exchanged among the Abezansi (Ngoni proper) only, and not with the Abafo (serfs) to which the Tumbuka belonged.²¹⁸ Apart from that the Ngoni of Mpherembe assimilated the captives as individuals as opposed to M'mbelwa who incorporated captured youth into regiments depending on their tribe of origins.²¹⁹ So the captured people in battles were brought before the chief who then divided them amongst the Ngoni families. This made the captured individuals in Mpherembe lose their identities much faster than those of M'mbelwa, leading to their easy absorption into Ngoni society.

²¹⁶ O.T.: John Mvula, op-cit

²¹⁷ O.T.: Shadreck Madhlopa, op-cit

²¹⁸ O. T.: John Mvula, op-cit.

²¹⁹ Rennie, pp. 309-311.

In short, the Singoni (Ngoni language) survived in Mpherembe's area because the aristocrats could scorn anybody speaking a different language, hence even children, whether born of Ngoni or Tumbuka mothers, were encouraged to speak Singoni on all occasions.

The Ngoni of Mpherembe also tried to maintain and promote Ngoni funeral rites. Zwangendaba assigned Mpherembe to Emtyiseni house which was the custodian of the said rite and this gave Mpherembe a position of significance ritually.²²⁰ This rite has earned Inkosi Mpherembe respect among his fellow Northern Ngoni chiefs. This respect has made the Ngoni of Mpherembe to produce renowned praise singers such as the late Belama Jere who were very influential during Ngoni festivals, such as the revived Mabiri celebrations and during installation of new important Ngoni chiefs.²²¹

In addition to the above aspects, the implicit antagonism over Emtyiseni which is the name of Mpherembe's headquarters has aided the cultural continuity in the area under study. Since 1931 there have been two camps among Mpherembe's Ngoni each of which has put forward claims to the name, and this has contributed to the persistence of linguistic and other features of Ngoni culture in the area.

²²⁰ Bowmen Jere, p16.

²²¹ O.T.: Standwell Jere, op-cit.

Each section wanted to maintain the original name Emtyiseni with its traditional role among the M'mbelwa Ngoni and hence stuck to the Ngoni traditions.²²² This has made each section to be as traditional as possible.

The Mpherembe Ngoni also continued with their tradition of polygamy. This was done at the expense of attacks from the Livingstonia Missionaries and harsh economic policies of the colonial government such as the enforced hut tax. The Ngoni used to say, Inkuzise matholweni-meaning having many children is the creation of one's village.²²³ Their understanding was that polygamy was a source of wealth and prestige and should hence be maintained and preserved.

The cultural policy of Dr. Banda also influenced the Ngoni of Mpherembe to continue with their Ngoniness. As Dr. Banda promoted traditional institutions such as courts, the Ngoni of Mpherembe tried to use such chances to promote their identity. The use of Chingoni during indaba (court councils) by some influential Ngoni leaders like Malidade Jere was highly cherished.²²⁴ In addition to that the Mpherembe Ngoni intensified the Ingoma dance, Ngoni language and Umthimba ceremony.²²⁵

²²² O.T.: Watson Jere, op-cit.

²²³ O.T.: Standwell Jere, op-cit.

²²⁴ O.T.: Group Village Headman Mkosana Nsere (Wedson Nsere), op-cit.

²²⁵ O. T.: Gibson Thulu and Mussolini Jere, Chigagu Village, T. A. Mpherembe, Mzimba, 11 June 2009.

The Mpherembe Ngoni consolidated their identity even more when the language policy changed in Malawi in 1968 which saw Chichewa becoming the sole official language. This was like a relief to them as they used to scorn Chitumbuka which had developed as a lingua franca of the Northern Region by that time. However this does not mean that they welcomed Chichewa wholeheartedly, but merely viewed it as a tool for destroying the once despised but widely spoken Tumbuka language.²²⁶ For example, when Chichewa language became effective in schools in 1968, Ngoni pupils of Mpherembe intensified Chingoni especially during break times.²²⁷ Apart from that some schools had Ngoni teachers who had a passion for Chingoni and encouraged the pupils to speak in Chingoni. Among these were Billy Lungu (a maternal grandfather to Billy Kaunda, the musician-cum-politician), Harrison Ngulube, Chalamasi Jere and Bennett Langa Mgemzulu. These teachers spoke neither Chitumbuka nor Chichewa to their learners but always Singoni.²²⁸

The Ngoni children also had access to early Ngoni books used in schools by missionaries prior to the elevation of Chitumbuka in Livingstonia Mission schools such as Funda-Kusasa uzadhla nyama²²⁹ (learn so that tomorrow you should eat meat) which aided their lexical knowledge of the language. There was also stress on studying the history of the Ngoni where such books as Midauko ya Chingoni (*History*

²²⁶ O. T.: Leckson Jere, op-cit.

²²⁷ O. T.: Wisdom Nkuna, op-cit, also Efrida Gamba, op-cit.

²²⁸ O.T.: Wisdom Nkuna, op-cit; also O.T.: Standwell Jere, op-cit

²²⁹ O. T.: Leckson Jere, op-cit.

of the Ngoni) written by Yesaya Chibambo became their companions. Even the writings and Ngoni songs composed by Chidongo Chinula and Peter Thole were highly valued among the Ngoni of Mpherembe.²³⁰ Therefore, the imposition of Chichewa did not transform the Ngoni of Mpherembe to be multi-lingual as was the case with other Ngoni sections, as argued by Manfield Nyirongo.²³¹

The above situation enabled the Ngoni of Mpherembe to retain their language and culture to a greater extent than the other Ngoni groups in Mzimba hence it was like a sub-ethnic entity within the main Northern Ngoni group. Even Dr. Banda's Government was never in full control of the area due to its concept of empowering and ruling through the traditional institutions at the national level. There was also belief in the viability of a centralized Ngoni administrative system presided over by M'Mbelwa which gave the Ngoni of Mpherembe an added advantage as there was implicit decentralization among the Northern Ngoni as already noted elsewhere above.

²³⁰ O.T.: Chimozi Jere, op-cit

²³¹ Nyirongo, Manfield M., op-cit, p33.

Chapter Six

CONCLUSION

This concluding part of the thesis focuses on the main findings of the research, relative to the objectives of the study as stated in the introductory chapter. It also draws attention to the limitations of the study as deduced from problems of data collection and analysis that were encountered.

1. Summary of Main Findings

This study on Ngoni Culture, Missionary Christianity, and the Modern State with special reference to Ngoni under Mpherembe has revealed that the Northern Ngoni of Malawi underwent differentiated and diversified experience after the death of their first leader Zwandendaba in 1848. For example, after the succession crisis which followed the death of the great leader, the Mpherembe Ngoni moved with Mpezeni into eastern Zambia but later on parted ways with him and returned to Malawi to rejoin the M'mbelwa group in 1870s.

The above scenario made the Mpherembe Ngoni become the latest and final Ngoni group to settle in Northern Malawi among the predominantly Tumbuka speakers.

As the new Ngoni settlers established themselves in the said area, they were alarmed at the extent of the cultural erosion that had taken place among the earlier Ngoni settlers due to Tumbuka influence. This prompted Mpherembe the First to be cautious about Ngoni culture in the area he and his people occupied. Mpherembe the First was able to command great respect among his fellow Ngoni until his death in 1909 as he became the only old member of the aristocracy after the death of M'Mbelwa and Mtwaro in 1891 and 1897 respectively.²³² What is more Mpherembe the First became a regent to Mbalekelwa popularly known as Chimtunga for five years following the death of M'mbelwa the First.

The above mentioned factors made Mpherembe Ngoni become more assertive than other Ngoni groups about their identity, when dealing with surrounding Tumbuka communities. They did this by forbidding intermarriage with the Tumbuka and making the Sangweni (community gathering) compulsory for all Ngoni and their male serfs, in order to promote Ngoni traditions.

On the influence of Missionary Christianity and the Modern State on African Culture in general, the study has established that both the missionaries and colonial administrators impacted African societies in a number of ways depending on the location and the relations between the foreign agents of cultural change and individual African societies. It has done so with reference to three schools of thought on the cultural impact which the resulting interaction had.

²³² J. K. Rennie, "The Ngoni States and European intrusion," in E. Stokes and R. Brown (eds), The Zambesian Past, (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1966), pp 361-319.

The first is that African societies and cultures on the whole survived the disruptions of Western intrusion through resistance and modification of their cultures. The second is that which argues that Christianity and Colonialism had a liberal face which made it possible for the development of some African traditions and institutions. And the last one is that Christianity and Colonialism were destructive in their impact on African culture which gave little hope for the survival of African culture.

It is the first of these three schools of thought that has a bearing on the Mpherembe Ngoni and their adaptation to the local environment. The study has argued that the Ngoni of Mpherembe culturally survived the disruptions of Western intrusion and manipulations which persisted even after independence. They were able to resist the European's drastic re-ordering of African societies and human relations. It has been shown, in particular, that the Ngoni of Mpherembe were able to maintain their language and other aspects of their culture to a greater degree than other Northern Ngoni groups.

The study has revealed, with regard to Christian missionary intrusion, for example, that Mpherembe's Ngoni were the last group to allow the Livingstonia Mission to operate in their sphere of influence, and even after the missionaries were admitted signs of resistance were evident. The customs which the Ngoni never gave up included beer drinking, polygamy, widow inheritance, and Umthimba marriage despite stiff opposition from the Livingstonia Missionaries.

This resistance might have prompted the Livingstonia Missionaries not to establish a permanent station at Mpherembe as was the case with other prominent Ngoni chiefs.

The same applied in the domain of interaction with the Colonial System. The Ngoni of Mpherembe were never fully westernised and this proved a factor of continuity in the evolution of their traditions. The administrative concept of Indirect Rule which the British adopted after about 1933 aided the Mpherembe Ngoni to consolidate their cultural identity, especially as the Central government tended to focus more on the paramountcy of M'mbelwa than on subordinate chieftainships.

A consolidating factor in the growth of Ngoni consciousness in Mpherembe's area was the wrangle which developed with the passage of time over the custodianship of Emtyiseni, the main Ngoni funeral rite centre established by Zwangendaba. Two camps among Mpherembe's followers emerged after 1931, each of which put forward its claims to custodianship of what remained of the centre. The competition made each group promote its Ngoniness to the best of its ability so as to outshine the other. This had the indirect effect of heightening cultural awareness in the area.

It has also been shown that the policies of Dr. Banda, Malawi's first Head of State, improved salutary to the cultural consolidation among the Northern Ngoni generally and the Mpherembe group in particular. Although Dr. Banda was dictatorial in his cultural views and sentiments, he had a positive attitude towards the M'Mbelwa Ngoni than to any other ethnic group in the North. This made the M'mbelwa Ngoni use the situation to consolidate their identity.

For example, the Ngoni war dance Ingoma became a political dance where there was Ingoma ya Bobaba and Ingoma ya Bomama which were performed at national festivals alongside many other Malawian traditional dances.²³³ They also changed their songs and praise poems of Zwangendaba and other heroes to praises of Dr. Banda during mass rallies.²³⁴ The Ngoni also began reviving their old cultural practices during the post-independence period. For example, in 1988 the Ngoni revived the rituals of rain calling at Emdhakude in Inkosi Mabilabo's area for the purpose of civic education.²³⁵

The cultural policy of Dr. Banda which included the promotion of traditional institutions like courts made Ngoni language to be promoted in the indaba (court council) in Mpherembe's area especially in Malidade's area. They also intensified the Ingoma dance, Umthimba wedding ceremonies and other cultural practices.²³⁶

Lastly, the study has also established that belief in the viability of a centralised Ngoni administrative system in the post-colonial period gave the Ngoni of Mpherembe an added advantage as there was implicit decentralisation among the Northern Ngoni. At the community level, it can be concluded that the Ngoni language and culture in Mpherembe has survived due to cultural consciousness of Ngoni patriarchy whereby fathers made sure that their sons and serfs were able to protect and promote their culture.

²³³ Soko, Innovation and Change, p.16.

²³⁴ Ibid, pp17-23.

²³⁵ Bowmen Jere, p. 15.

²³⁶ O. T.: Gibson Thulu, op-cit.

2. Limitations of the Study

The research was conducted soon after the General Elections of 2009 hence many people were not quite sure about the aim of the research and this might have compromised the obtained data. As such, some informants became cautious and suspected the researcher to have some hidden motives. A lot of negotiation and persuasion had to be undertaken, including producing my identity and explaining to them about the motives of the research.

In collecting oral traditional data, I encountered two main problems which obviously affected the quantity as well as the quality of findings. In the first stance, I wanted to be gender balanced in my data collection, but this intention was defeated by the patriarchal orientation of Ngoni society. It made many Ngoni women refuse to give information by saying that I should ask men who have enough information on the cultural traditions of their society. The second and last problem in this part was I was unable to conduct as many interviews as possible because many of the informants I wanted to see live far apart and sometimes were away on personal business elsewhere. Oral data collection for the study was consequently not as comprehensive as had been the plan originally.

As for the archival sources, the main problem was that information on my topic is very scarce and this might also have compromised my findings. This can be due to the fact that most writers of the available District files and notebooks were the administrators themselves such as the District Resident Officers or Commissioners who had little interest in Ngoni culture and only concentrated on administrative issues like the payment of taxes and handling of cases in courts. Even the Livingstonia Mission files focused much on the Ekwendeni Mission and not on Njuyu which is near to Mpherembe. And when Njuyu was abandoned and merged with Ekwendeni, most of the records tended to deal with the Ngoni under Mtwalo and not Mpherembe. In other words, the Mission records are usually silent about what went on in Mpherembe's area.

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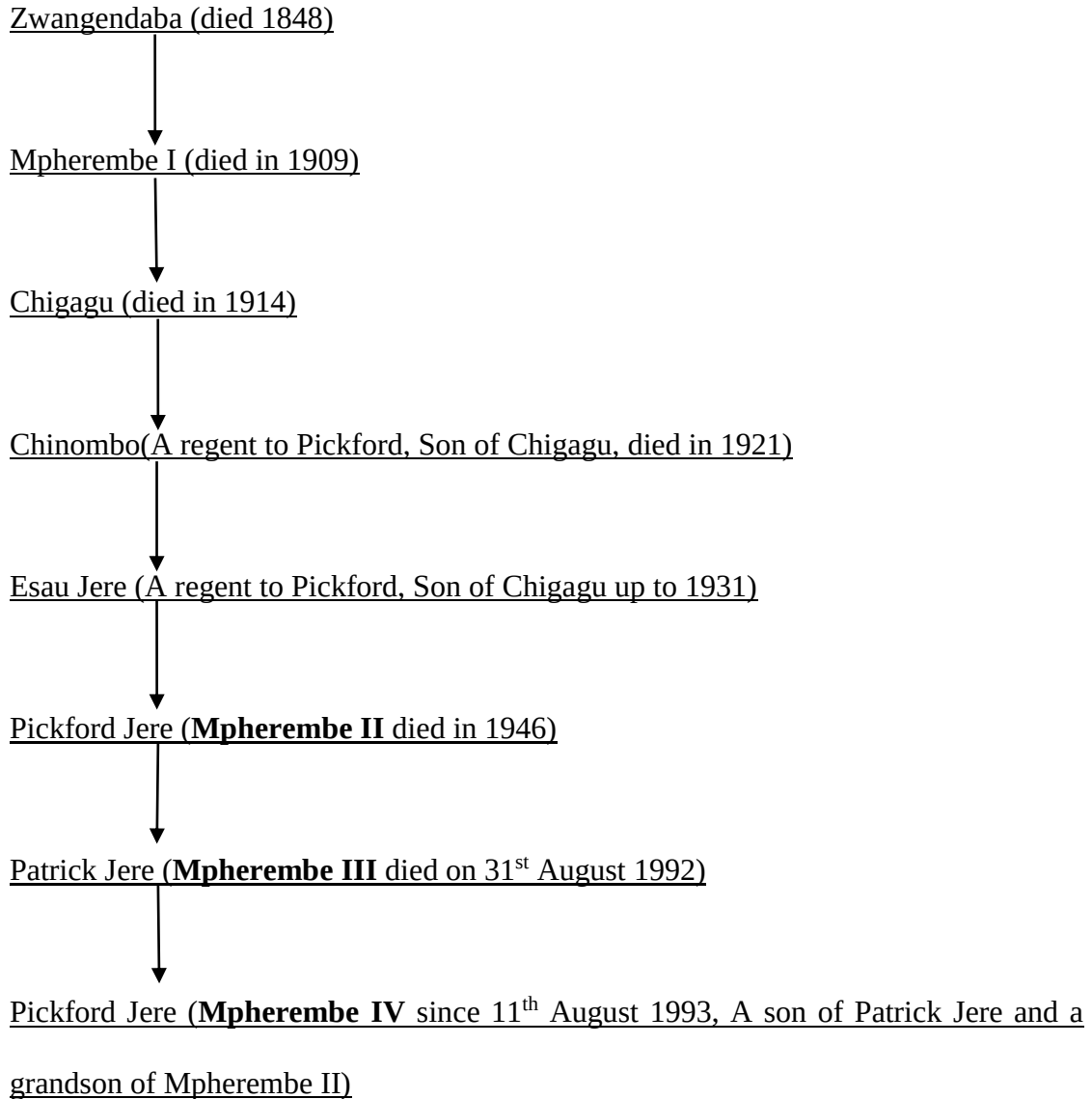
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APPENDIX

Reignal List of Mpherembe Chieftaincy since the Death of Zwangendaba



N. B. In 1942 the Ngoni Chiefs adopted their ancestral names hence Pickford Jere became Mpherembe II.