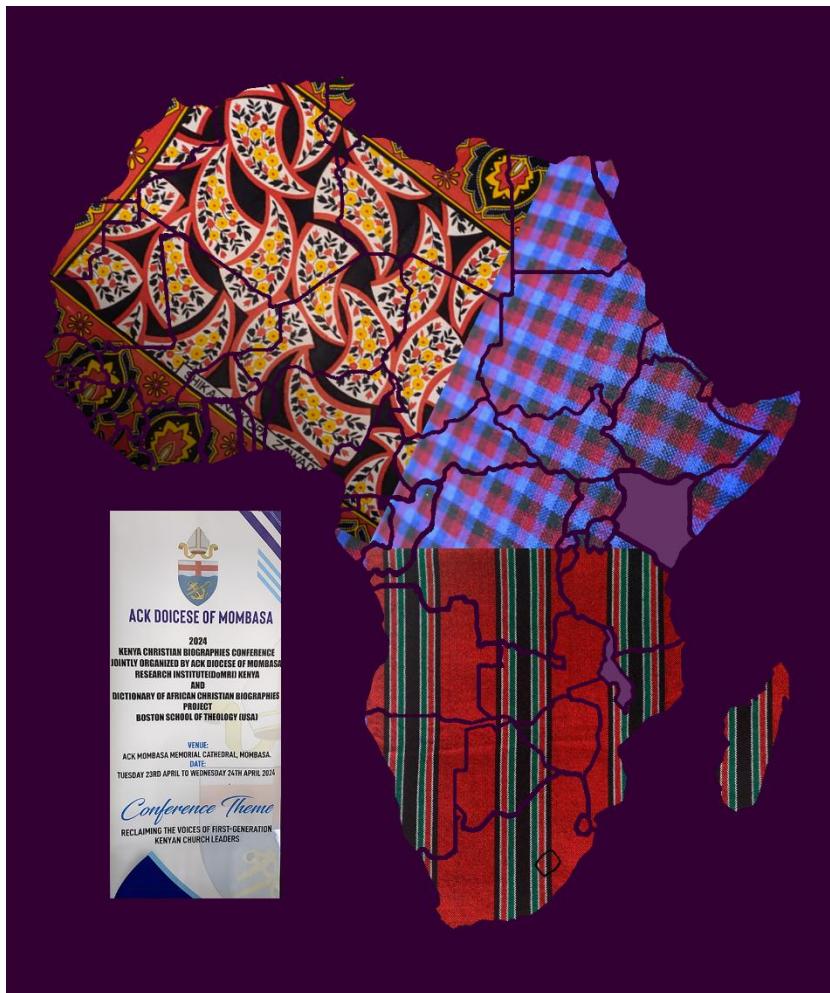


# JOURNAL OF AFRICAN CHRISTIAN BIOGRAPHY

Vol. 10, No. 3-4 (July-Oct 2025)

**Focus: Pioneers and Leaders in Kenya**  
Proceedings of the DoMRI Kenya  
Christian Biography conference 2024



A publication of the *Dictionary of African Christian Biography*

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A quarterly publication of the *Dictionary of African Christian Biography* ([www.DACB.org](http://www.DACB.org))



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## JOURNAL OF AFRICAN CHRISTIAN BIOGRAPHY

The *Journal of African Christian Biography* (JACB) publishes research on biographies of African Christians. The primary focus is on the role of local agents in the spread of Christianity in Africa. The JACB is an open access publication committed to facilitating global conversations among scholars across cultures, nations, Christian traditions, and academic specializations, with particular emphasis on Africa. We invite contributions from individuals affiliated with religious and educational institutions in Africa and elsewhere.

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Cover photo: Banner from the April 2024 Kenya Christian Biography Conference in the Anglican Cathedral in Mombasa

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## Introduction

### The Story of a Collaboration: New Wine in New Wineskins

By Michele Sigg, Editor



The collaboration between the Diocese of Mombasa Research Institute (DoMRI) and the *Dictionary of African Christian Biography* (DACB.org) began after an email exchange I had with Director Ferdinand Manjewa M'bwangi in early 2023 (Read about the genesis of DoMRI p. 3 by Rt. Rev. Dr. Baya). A month later, the fledgling research institute decided to undertake an ambitious project—organizing the very first national Christian Biography conference on the African continent. The Kenyan Christian Biography Conference took place in April 2024 in the Anglican cathedral of Mombasa (see photos, left).

The DACB-DoMRI collaboration exemplifies a renewed approach that reflects core values central to the DACB's mission and informing all of our initiatives. These values include: (a) placing the African and ecumenical narrative of Christianity on the continent at the center of the broader historical record; (b) fostering equitable cross-cultural and inter-church collaborations that address resource-based power differentials; we do this by prioritizing local leadership in organizational decisions and content selection (e.g., biographical subjects); (c) incorporating women as both writers and biographical subjects in equal proportion wherever possible; and (d) ensuring universal accessibility of biographies through the DACB website, our open-access e-journal, or locally published volumes.<sup>1</sup>

This approach had several practical implications for the conference. First,

<sup>1</sup> A more extensive list of values is being developed for other DACB initiatives, such as workshops. You can read more about these in a forthcoming article (2026) co-authored with Dr. Anicka FAST in the *International Bulletin of Mission Research*.

the collaborative relationship did not come with a large influx of foreign money. DoMRI had to raise funds to cover most of the costs of surrounding the conference. DACB was able to contribute a modest subsidy.<sup>2</sup> Second, the inter-disciplinary team of DoMRI researchers decided on the overall theme of the conference focusing on stories of Anglican and other Christian forebears in the Diocese of Mombasa, while each of them chose their own biographical subject. Third, the proceedings of the conference include four biographies of men and four of women. In addition, the conference presenters included two women and three female panel moderators. Fourth, these proceedings will be published in the *Journal of African Christian Biography* and on DACB.org. The website and the journal are fully open access and the content can be freely reproduced with attribution.

The conference proved to be a groundbreaking event that generated significant local engagement. It attracted considerable attention from Mombasa's primary news outlets and the cathedral's media team recorded all presentations in full. Those who attended the Sunday worship service at the cathedral a few days after the conference heard about the biography recovery work that the Diocese of Mombasa was undertaking under the visionary leadership of Rt. Rev. Dr. Alphonse Baya. I was honored to give the sermon that day and to be part of the vision of Bishop Baya and DoMRI. I hope that these friendships will endure for many years. Like new wine in new wineskins, may this collaboration and these friendships create opportunities for shared joy as we work together to recover and document the stories of African Christian forebears.

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<sup>2</sup> DACB is entirely funded by private donors and grantmakers.

## Foreword

### Charting the Way: The Mombasa Biography Conference of April 2024

By the Rt. Rev. Dr. Aphonce Mwaro Baya  
Diocesan Bishop of the Anglican Diocese of Mombasa

It is my distinct pleasure to introduce the July-October 2025 issue of the *Journal of African Christian Biography* containing the proceedings of the 2024 Kenya Christian Biography Conference—namely eight biographies of Kenyan Christian pioneers from the nineteenth to the twenty-first century. This inaugural conference took place April 23 to 24, 2024 at the Mombasa Memorial Cathedral of the Anglican Church of Kenya. The conference was jointly organized by the Anglican Diocese of Mombasa Research Institute (DoMRI) in Mombasa, Kenya, and the *Dictionary of African Christian Biography* (DACP.org), housed at the Center for Global Christianity and Mission at Boston University School of Theology (USA).

The Diocese of Mombasa Research Institute began in September 2018 as the Diocesan Research Unit (DRU) under the leadership of Dr. Ferdinand Manjewa M'bwangi (Chair), Prof. Dr. Julius Gathogo (Vice Chair), Dr. Bryson Samboja (Treasurer), Dr. Evans Mwangi (Secretary), and steering committee members Dr. Lawrence Munga Tsawe-Chidongo, Very Rev. Dr. Canon Dorcas Kiundu, Rev. Gerald Ngumbao, Rev. Josphat Murutu, and Rev. Michelle Kiundu. Later, more members joined the team as others stepped down. In 2023, DRU changed its name to the Diocese of Mombasa Research Institute or DoMRI. This conference and the ensuing publication of these biographies is the Diocesan research team's second major activity since the project they undertook between September and November 2018 to trace the one hundred and fourteen years of the Digo Mission (1904-2018). The research was published in 2020 in a volume entitled *The Digo Mission of the Anglican Church of Kenya: Essays in Commemoration of 114 Years of Mission Work in Kwale County of Kenya (1904-2018)*.<sup>3</sup>

#### Why commission the Diocesan research team?

As bishop of the Anglican Diocese of Mombasa, my vision in commissioning the Diocesan research team to capture the historical record of these unsung heroes and heroines of faith was to ensure their stories would not remain on the periphery of Kenyan Christian history. As Anglicans in Mombasa and the rest of the country are

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<sup>3</sup> Julius Gathogo and Sarah Wallace, editors, *The Digo Mission of the Anglican Church of Kenya: Essays in Commemoration of 114 Years of Mission Work in Kwale County of Kenya (1904-2018)* (Wilmore, Kentucky: First Fruits Press, 2020).

undertaking a holistic ministry that embraces all pillars of culture—kinship, religion, economics, politics, aesthetics, and ethics—we feel that our broad-based growth should reflect the mission of Christ which is progressing admirably through the centuries. Luke 2:52 highlights Jesus' holistic growth in four key areas: intellectually (wisdom), physically (stature), spiritually (favor with God), and socially (favor with others). This model serves as a blueprint for our personal growth by showing that development should encompass all aspects of life, not just one or two areas.

Research-oriented activities are implied in the four key areas because they shape us into a well-informed society facing the future. St. Luke—in his Gospel and in the Acts of Apostle—set a good example of a well-documented piece of work. In the work of DRU or DoMRI, our agenda, as servants in God's vineyard in the technologically sophisticated society of the twenty-first century, is to engage researchers in our diocese and in our local universities to join us and rebuild the wall (Neh 2:18). Indeed, just as the wall protected the Jewish remnant in Nehemiah's time from danger, in our vision, research-based activities serve as the bulwark against societal annihilation or total collapse. We appreciate that everyone is an asset in the broad mission of promoting the kingdom of God and have placed research at the center of our mission as the Diocese of Mombasa. The pursuit of research inspired the vision and mission of DRU/DoMRI, which go beyond merely retrieving the African church's legacy even to addressing cosmological concerns.

We pray that this initiative will inspire other dioceses of the Anglican Church of Kenya which have not adopted research as an agenda of the Great Commission (Mt 28:17-20) and holistic Christological growth (Lk 2:52). Certainly, the church of Christ in Africa will always need to partner with scholars within its geographical contours and build a culture of documenting her history for posterity (Gathogo 2024). To embrace intellectual blindness as the way of Christ is form of uncritical mysticism that scandalizes the modern church.

## The Biographies

This volume presents biographical papers from the April 2024 conference in Mombasa, Kenya, which marked a significant milestone in recovering marginalized historical voices through rigorous scholarly presentations. Dr. Michele Sigg, Executive Director of the *Dictionary of Africa Christian Biography* (DACP.org) project at Boston University School of Theology's Center for Global Christianity and Mission, delivered the introductory keynote address: "The Power of Biography for Reconstructing History: Modern Pioneers, Preachers and Prophets of Kenya."

The conference featured presentations on historically underrepresented first-generation Kenyan church leaders, presented in this issue in chronological order, from the late nineteenth century to the twenty-first century. Rev. Gerald Ngumbao's paper on an early martyr titled "Retracing the life, Missionary Work and Martyrdom of David Koi (1819-1895) in Forodhoyo, Kilifi County" is followed by the sole missionary biography, "The Story of Miss Florence Deed (1868-1958) by Prof. S. Muoki. Next comes the story by Ven Canon Dr. B. K. Samboja of another early pioneer, "The

Mission Work of Rev. Canon Jonathan Kituri (1888-1964)." Following that, we have the biographies of three figures born in the first decades of the twentieth century: "Nimrod Mwakiwa Mboje (1900-1986): Establishment of the Anglican Church Among Settlers in Shimba Hills and Kwale County" by Rev. K. Ofundi, "The 'Shero' of her Time! Maryam Mwang'ombe (1914-2016)" by Very Rev. Canon Dr. Dorcus C. Kiundu, and "Education, Pastoral Ministry and Politics: The Missionary Legacy of Nathaniel Mweri Baya (1911-1994)" by Rev. Dr. F. Manjewa M'bwangi. The last two biographies include "Rose Mlale Mwadime (1938-2013): Championing Mothers' Union Ministry in the Anglican Church of Kenya Dioceses of Nairobi and Mombasa" by Rev. Dr. Evans Mwangi and "The Legacy of Margaret Sidi Kadzomba (1942-2004) and her Impact on Church Growth" by Mrs. Evaline C. Kombe.

Dr. Japheth Muthoka served as Program Manager, with Prof Josphat Mwatelah, Prof. Mwakio P. Tole, Dr. Evalyn Datche, and Dr. Nancy Ngowa moderating sessions. Dr. Michele Sigg and Prof. E. Mombo delivered keynote addresses, while Prof. Dr. Julius M. Gathogo of ANCCI University, Kenyatta University, and the University of South Africa (UNISA) provided concluding remarks. Rev. Canon G. Kuza, Mombasa Anglican Diocesan Administrator, delivered the vote of thanks to all those who contributed to making the conference a success.

### **The Scholarly Calling to Research and Write**

The abovementioned contributions are commendable and represent significant progress towards our scholarly objectives. While the Mombasa Anglican Diocese research community has not yet achieved all anticipated outcomes, this trajectory of systematic research and documentation constitutes a defining characteristic of twenty-first-century ecclesiology—one that effectively counters ignorance, mediocrity, and uncritical mysticism.

The scholarly imperative finds biblical precedent in numerous Old Testament writers: Moses (Pentateuch), David (Psalms), Solomon (Proverbs, Ecclesiastes), Isaiah, Jeremiah (Jeremiah, Lamentations), Ezekiel, and Daniel. New Testament authors include Paul (thirteen epistles), John (Gospel, Revelation), Luke (Gospel, Acts), Peter, James, Matthew, Mark, and Ezra (Uwaegbute 2023).

Classical Greek intellectual tradition similarly established foundational patterns through Homer's epics, the tragedies of Aeschylus, Sophocles, and Euripides, the historiography of Herodotus and Thucydides, and the philosophical works of Socrates, Plato, and Aristotle (Ali 2022). Later figures include novelist Nikos Kazantzakis and poets Constantine P. Cavafy and Odysseas Elytis.

Leading post-colonial African theological writers include John Mbiti, often called the "father of modern African theology," and Charles Nyamiti, a Catholic priest and systematic theologian known for his work on African Catholicism (Wünch 2015). Other key figures include Musa Dube, a feminist theologian focusing on postcolonial biblical interpretation, and François Kabasele Lumbala, a Congolese theologian who writes on inculturation and political theology. These writers challenge colonial interpretations of Christianity and seek to develop theological frameworks that are

relevant to African contexts. This research and writing trajectory that has been in Africa since the earliest foundational thinkers and African Church Fathers Tertullian, Clement of Alexandria, Athanasius, and Augustine of Hippo must be encouraged rather than discouraged (Vuntarde & van Oort 2013).

Leading contemporary African writers provide equally significant contributions: Chimamanda Ngozi Adichie (Nigeria), Abdulrazak Gurnah (Tanzania / UK), Ngũgĩ wa Thiong'o (Kenya), Wole Soyinka (Nigeria), Damon Galgut (South Africa), Tsitsi Dangarembga and Petina Gappah (Zimbabwe), and Yaa Gyasi (Ghana), among others (Benharrousse 2024). These Nobel and Booker Prize laureates address critical questions of identity, history, and African social realities. Ngũgĩ wa Thiong'o's postcolonial work in English and Kikuyu explores cultural identity and liberation. Nana Darkoa Sekyiamah (Ghana), co-founder of *Adventures from the Bedrooms of African Women* and author of *The Sex Lives of African Women*, similarly contributes important perspectives (Benharrousse 2024).

The Mombasa Anglican Diocese has positioned itself within this scholarly tradition through rigorous research and publication. Like the rest of the ecumenical society, the diocese must utilize research to understand and address challenges like church conflict, youth engagement, and community needs in order to ultimately strengthen its leadership, spiritual formation, and socio-economic impact on the community. Research is essential for developing sustainable projects, formulating effective strategies, and ensuring that church activities align with community needs, thereby fostering growth and stability within the church and society. Our challenge however remains: Are we able to give the accurate account that St. Luke (1:1) sought to offer Theophilus? The scholarly imperative to research and write is a demanding and essential vocation with deep roots that must be nurtured despite opposition from religious anti-intellectualism.

## Conclusion

Biographical scholarship in Africa provides crucial insights into the continent's history and complexities by highlighting individual agency, illustrating the impact of social and political structures, and offering inspirational and educational narratives for contemporary society. These works document diverse experiences across the socio-economic spectrum, from leaders to ordinary people, serving as an entry point for understanding historical contexts, challenging colonial narratives, and fostering a sense of collective pride and identity within a transforming continent. As the stories of Nathaniel Mweri Baya, Jonathan Kituri, David Koi, Maryam Mwang'ombe, Nimrod Mwakiwa Mboje, Rose Mlale Mwadime, Margaret Sidi Kadzomba, and Florence Deed demonstrate, the ideals and contributions of an individual become more impactful after the story is carefully researched and published. Henceforth, they will now speak to present as well as future generations.

Furthermore, oral history documentation remains a valuable methodology to preserve living voices and personal experiences, address gaps in written records, offer

unique perspectives from marginalized communities, build intergenerational community, and provide a nuanced understanding of past events from an individual perspective. By capturing living memories, oral history creates testimonies that challenge established historical narratives and foster empathy and deeper historical understanding across generations.

The Mombasa biographical conference of April 2024 was a humble gesture that sought to provide a few crucial insights into the complexities of African history through individual agency. May God help us to further engage our creativity and provide exemplary leadership in biographical research and documentation for the sake of this generation and the next.

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# Retracing the Life, Works, and Martyrdom of David Koi (1820s-1895) of Forodhoyo in Kilifi County

By Gerald Ngumbao

David Koi (1820s-1895) was the first Giryama Anglican evangelist and pastor who played a significant role in the spread of Christianity in Forodhoyo and its surrounding areas. Before his conversion, Koi was a prominent community leader in Forodhoyo, a position that later enabled him to engage actively in both church affairs and local political matters.

## Koi's Early Life

Koi was born in the early 1820s at Chapungu in Bamba, Kilifi County, though the exact date of his birth remains unknown. Following his birth, a traditional naming ceremony was held, and he was given the name “Kadzitsa.” “Koi” is his clan name, as the Giryama people are identified by their clans. Before his baptism, Koi’s full name was Kadzitsa Koi Kizi. Upon baptism, he was given the Christian name “David.” Koi was the youngest of three children. His elder siblings were Ndhundhi Kizi, the firstborn, and Mbitha Kizi, who sadly died at a very young age.

## Koi's Ancestry

Koi’s father, Mwambire Ndhundhi, was a Mugiryama by ethnicity, belonging to the larger *Amidzichenda* community of Kenya’s lower Coast region. He was a member of the *Amwandhundhi* clan and was born in Chapungu, located in present-day Bamba Sub-County, Kilifi County. Due to the harsh climatic conditions at Chapungu, Mwambire, his wife Kizi, and their family relocated to Forodhoyo, where the environment was more suitable for farming, their primary source of livelihood. It is worth noting that the surname *Mwambire* was not used; instead, their mother's name was preferred for easier identification. Koi’s family relocated to Forodhoyo, where the conditions were more favorable for farming, which was their primary means of livelihood.

Koi grew up as a village boy who displayed the qualities of a future leader from an early age. As a young man, he engaged in farming and occasionally tended to cattle and goats, living fully immersed in traditional village life. Eventually, Koi married and had two children, Sidi and Nyevu. As a result, he came to be known as “Abe Sidi,” though the correct Giryama phonetic spelling should be “Bi Sidi.”<sup>4</sup> The exact date or

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<sup>4</sup> Julius and Teddy, interview with Gerald Ngumbao, January 24, 2023, Forodhoyo home, personal interview. In the Midzichenda community, a person’s name typically changes after marriage and the birth of children, with parents often being referred to by the name of their first-born son or daughter.

age of Koi's marriage is not known, but it was likely in his late twenties or early thirties, as marriage in the Giryama community typically followed soon after a young man had undergone initiation rites.

Koi received only traditional, primarily vocational, education. Later in life, Koi assumed the role of a local chief.<sup>5</sup> However, it is important to point out that the Giryama people did not practice hereditary chieftaincy, unlike some other African communities. Therefore, it is likely that Koi served as a village elder. Koi came to faith through the preaching of Abe Goa, one of Rebmann's earliest converts.<sup>6</sup> Abe Goa was a member of the local Giryama people who had been expelled from the tribe after being accused of causing a drought through witchcraft. Abe Goa traveled to Rabai and began inquiring about the Christian faith from Rebmann. However, his conversion appears to have been influenced more by the personal turmoil he experienced:

Later, when drunk, he had an argument with his wife and attacked her with an axe. She was badly injured and Rebmann sent her to Mombasa to be cared for. William Jones and Ishmael Semler took her and were responsible for caring for her. While she was in Mombasa she suddenly died. Abe Goa felt terrible remorse and sought comfort from the German missionary. This is where he became one of Rebmann's first converts.<sup>7</sup>

Koi met Abe Goa while en route to his maternal home in Duruma, passing through Rabai. It is possible that this journey to visit his maternal relatives played a role in his eventual conversion and calling to serve the Lord Jesus Christ. During this encounter, Abe Goa persuaded Koi to embrace Christianity, a message he accepted. He was later baptized by George David and given the Christian name David. Although the exact date of his baptism is unknown, it likely occurred between 1846 and 1847. The details surrounding his confirmation remain unclear, and it is not known whether he was ever confirmed, an issue that merits further investigation.

George David was the only one of the three men from Bombay who remained in East Africa, residing at Rabai. Since David Koi was illiterate at the time, George David took it upon himself to teach him with the primary goal of enabling him to read the Bible. Koi's deep interest in the Scriptures and his inquisitive nature reportedly contributed to his rapid spiritual development.

## **Koi's Mission and Community Involvement.**

After David Koi had grown strong in his Christian faith and learned to read, George David took him to Petanguo in Godoma to assist with mission work. Petanguo was one

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<sup>5</sup> Colin Reed, *Pastors, Partners, and Paternalists: African Church Leaders and Western Missionaries in the Anglican Church in Kenya, 1850–1900* (Leiden, New York, Köln: Brill, 1997), 44–45.

<sup>6</sup> Reed, 44.

<sup>7</sup> Reed, 44.

of the Christian settlements established by the Church Missionary Society (CMS). Koi was tasked with leading morning worship and interpreting the Bible for the local community. Under his leadership, worship became more vibrant and contextualized. From the outset of his time in Petanguo, Koi stood out as the only Christian in the area with both the confidence and determination to deepen his understanding of the faith. This commitment led him to travel frequently to Rabai and Frere Town for further instruction. The main challenge was that Petanguo was primarily a settlement of fugitive slaves, people without rights and without a recognized leader. As a community leader, Koi had, in a sense, also lost his people.

Despite the challenges, the Christian faith provided the village with a new sense of identity and a hopeful vision of forming advantageous political alliances. However, this hope was not realized, as European missionaries remained loyal to the colonial administration and did not actively support such alliances. The Petanguo Christian community eventually faced increasing difficulties: limited support from the CMS, constant threats and attacks from slave traders, and the infertility of the surrounding land. These pressures led to internal divisions. Some Christians returned to their traditional ways of life, while others migrated to more fertile areas in search of better prospects.

## **The Birth of Forodhoyo Church**

Around 1879, Koi left Petanguo and returned with his family to his home in Forodhoyo, where he settled. He was soon followed by Jeremiah Mangi, his family, and a few other Giryama converts. Deeply committed to the Christian faith, Koi established a church at Makoroboini, approximately five kilometers from his home. The church in Forodhoyo grew rapidly, largely due to Koi's influence as a respected community leader. His leadership and the growing congregation led Rev. Sparshott to write to the CMS, arguing that the emergence of the church around Abe Sidi (David Koi), the Giryama Church, was strong evidence that CMS should continue its mission work along the East African coast of Kenya.

In the 1860s, the CMS in London had seriously contemplated abandoning its mission in Kenya due to numerous challenges. However, the emergence of an indigenous church became a compelling reason for CMS to continue its work in the region. One key figure in this development was Koi, who dedicated himself to evangelism in the Forodhoyo area, immersing himself in Scripture and prayer. Koi demonstrated strong leadership and contributed significantly to the well-structured worship life of the Forodhoyo Christian community. Forodhoyo became a beacon of Christian hope and transformation for both locals and foreigners. This center of faith served as a vital bridge, enabling the Gospel to engage meaningfully with the surrounding tribal society.

Koi was not only an evangelist and religious leader, but also a mediator between the colonial government and society. Koi's active involvement in church, community affairs, and the politics of the region was largely enabled by his ability to read and write. He became the voice of the oppressed villagers against the brutal treatment of the

British administrators during “*Pekeshe*” raids.<sup>8</sup> Koi was not only an evangelist and religious leader, but also a mediator between the colonial government and the local community. Koi became a powerful voice for the oppressed villagers, especially during the brutal crackdown by British administrators during the “*Pekeshe*” raids.<sup>9</sup>

## Koi’s Working Methodologies

As an evangelist and community leader, Koi’s methodologies remain vividly remembered and deeply ingrained in the collective memory of the people of Forodhoyo. One notable approach he employed was incorporating ancestral and traditional worship resources, such as traditional drums, *kayamba*, *ndema*, and other locally available instruments. This contextualized worship resonated deeply, ministering directly to the hearts of the community. Additionally, Koi was a well-rounded Christian leader who actively championed social justice for his people, a commitment that earned him widespread respect and popularity among his villagers.

## The Problems and Death of Koi

The mission along the Coast of Kenya was fraught with challenges. Those engaged in spreading the Gospel faced numerous obstacles. At the outset of his mission work in Petanguo, Koi encountered various difficulties, including opposition both from within the Christian community and from outside it. Among the Giryama people of Petanguo, he was unpopular, viewed as a betrayer of their traditional religion. At Forodhoyo, there was a notable lack of financial and moral support from the CMS stations at Rabai and Frere Town. Koi had anticipated assistance from the CMS, but his hopes were ultimately unfulfilled. The reasons behind the CMS’s distancing from these indigenous Christian centers remain unclear, though it is possible that political motives played a role. Nevertheless, these challenges did not deter Koi from faithfully carrying out his God-given mandate of shepherding the Church until his death. Koi’s death has been explained in various ways by different historians. To address this question, this article proposes three possible theories.

The first theory is known as the Arab theory, which is the most widely accepted view among many church historians. According to this theory, Koi was hiding while

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<sup>8</sup> “*Pekeshe*” is a Giryama word meaning “raids.” During the colonial period, the British often sent *askaris* (soldiers) into villages to conduct brutal and inhumane tax raids. At that time, David Koi played a critical role in resisting these operations. Stationed at Mwaiba Hill, Koi would intercept and read letters from the British administrative headquarters before they reached local chiefs. The messengers carrying these letters typically passed through Forodhoyo, giving Koi the opportunity to discreetly open, read, and reseal them. Upon discovering plans for upcoming raids, he would alert the villagers in advance. As a result, many who had not paid the taxes would flee into the forests before the *askaris* arrived, effectively rendering the tax raids unsuccessful.

<sup>9</sup> Julius and Teddy, interview with Gerald Ngumbao, January 17, 2023, Forodhoyo home, personal interview.

simultaneously exploiting runaway slaves, mainly from the Takaungu plantation, for his own benefit:

One day, a band of Arabs arrived at his home, Fuladoyo (Forodhoyo as used in this thesis), led by a man, Mbaruk. David Koi welcomed them into his house. He decided to share the Gospel with them, but the Arabs brushed aside David's talk about the religion and asked some pointed questions. Is this your place? Are these your slaves? Do they work for you? No, David replied, only for themselves, to cultivate their own food. But what do you get out of it? Koi replied, I don't do it for gain, except I want these people to have religious instruction...". The Arabs were not satisfied. David Koi could not convince the Arabs that he gained nothing from the Fuladoyo *watoro*. Switching to Arabic, the Arabs discussed matters, and then some of them left the house. They returned later and dragged David Koi outside, placing him in a hole they had just dug, they buried him up to his neck, then in front of the *watoro*, one of the Arabs cut off David Koi's head.<sup>10</sup>

Based on the above perspective, two possible explanations emerge. First, the Arabs may have killed Koi because he was preaching the message of '*Bwana Issa*', which was unwelcome among the Muslim Arabs. Alternatively, they may have suspected Koi of harboring runaway slaves, an act from which he was believed to be personally benefiting.

The second theory is the missionary theory, which holds that Koi died because of his Christian faith. This is why Anderson concluded that Koi was the first East African martyr. However, the proponents of these two theories present conflicting accounts, particularly regarding the date of the event. It is important to note that dates are crucial in the writing of historical narratives. Anderson suggests that Koi died in 1882, while Bengt Sundkler & Christopher Steed<sup>11</sup> and Reed place his death in 1883 and 1885, respectively.

The third theory surrounding Koi's death is what may be termed the local theory, which carries a more political tone. Koi was killed by the colonial authorities because he stood up for the rights of his villagers against the brutality of the tax raids. As one oral account put it, "*Kodi were ni suthi kila mudzi urihe*" (Was tax to be a suit demanded from every village?).<sup>12</sup> Being the only educated elite in the village, Koi would often persuade messengers from the colonial administration offices at Mwangea Hill or Ganze to let him read the letters they were delivering to local chiefs. Upon reading

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<sup>10</sup> William B. Anderson, *The Church in East Africa, 1840–1974* (Dodoma: Cambridge University Press, 1977), 16–17.

<sup>11</sup> Bengt Sundkler and Christopher Steed, *A History of the Christian Church in Africa* (Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press, 2004).

<sup>12</sup> This is a Giryama expression meaning that paying tax was compulsory; every household was expected to contribute.

them, Koi would promptly inform the indigenous people about the colonial authorities' plans. As a result, many tax defaulters would flee into the bush to avoid arrest and the payment of *kodi* (tax). The repeated failure to collect taxes and apprehend defaulters eventually prompted the colonial administrators to investigate the cause.

One of the messengers reported that Koi often opened official letters before they reached their intended recipients. Upon hearing this, the colonial administration officers were enraged. They stormed Koi's village, arrested him, and forced him to dig a hole. After tying his limbs, they made him stand in the hole and buried him up to his neck. In full view of his family and several villagers, they beheaded him and carried away his head to an unknown location, one that remains undiscovered to this day. Koi is said to have died on October 3, 1895, at his home in Forodhoyo, an account that challenges Anderson's claim that Koi was the first East African martyr. This is the most likely position, given that the church in Forodhoyo did not include runaway slaves. Instead, its members were primarily local residents from the surrounding area, including some of Koi's own family members. In conclusion, Koi's death recalls that of Alexander Kipsang Muge, the outspoken Anglican Bishop of Eldoret, who boldly opposed political injustices during President Moi's regime in Kenya in 1990. Like Muge, Koi died a Christian hero, remembered for his unwavering stand against the social injustices of his time.<sup>13</sup>

## Conclusion

Koi was a natural-born leader, consistently standing up for the rights and welfare of his people, a legacy the contemporary Church would do well to emulate. The Church is called to be the voice of the voiceless. As a pioneer in mission, Koi emerges as the first Giryama evangelist to proclaim the message of salvation in Forodhoyo, a village deeply rooted in traditional practices. Koi served God with deep passion, dedicating both his time and personal resources to the work of the ministry.

Koi exemplified a true minister of the Church, one who served selflessly, without expecting anything in return. He supported himself, his family, and his followers through farming, leading by example. After his death, the church in Forodhoyo struggled to thrive, and many people gradually reverted to their traditional ways of life. Between 2000 and 2003, Pentecostal churches began to emerge rapidly in the area. Although the Forodhoyo Church faced decline during this period, it is important to recognize that it paved the way for expanded mission opportunities along the Kenyan Coast, particularly in the North-Western region. In fact, it was after the closure of Forodhoyo that the mission outreach grew even stronger.

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<sup>13</sup> **Editor's Note:** The term '*Christian hero*' reflects the author's personal viewpoint. However, in keeping with DACB standards, Koi is classified as a *martyr*, which denotes an individual who dies as a result of their Christian witness and subsequent actions, whether political or not.

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# The Story of Florence Irene Deed (1868-1958)<sup>14</sup>

By Stephen Muoki Joshua



Florence Irene Deed was a pioneering missionary nurse and educator who served in Kenya's Coast Province for over thirty years with the Church Missionary Society. Arriving in 1894, she co-founded the Kaloleni CMS Mission Station and made significant contributions to education, healthcare, and church development among the Giriama people. She was fluent in the Rabai dialect and deeply involved in community life. Her legacy includes advancing women's empowerment and promoting a contextual expression of Christian mission.

## Deed's Early Life and Missionary Work

Deed was born on May 26, 1868, in Holloway, London, United Kingdom. She died at the age of 90 on March 26, 1958, in Chandlers Ford, Hampshire, where she had settled after retiring from a successful missionary career in East Africa.<sup>15</sup> In 1893, at the age of 25, Deed was accepted by the Church Missionary Society (CMS)<sup>16</sup> to serve in East Africa, a period marked by increasing momentum to include women in missionary work. She had recently completed her nursing training at London Girls' Collegiate School at the Willows.<sup>17</sup> Deed was a founding missionary woman of the Kaloleni CMS Centre, serving there between 1904 and 1935.

As a young, unmarried woman without any relatives in the mission field, Deed defied many odds to serve in East Africa. She arrived on the East Coast of Kenya in 1894.<sup>18</sup> Before moving to Kaloleni, Deed first settled at the Rabai Mission Center,

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<sup>14</sup> See Photo Index in Appendix 1.

<sup>15</sup> P. Ayre, *DEED, Florence Instone MBE, Miss*, last modified April 22, 2024, Europeans in East Africa,

[https://www.europeansineastafrica.co.uk/\\_site/custom/database/default.asp?a=viewIndividual&pid=2&person=7699](https://www.europeansineastafrica.co.uk/_site/custom/database/default.asp?a=viewIndividual&pid=2&person=7699)

<sup>16</sup> Regrettably, the Church Missionary Society online archives contain no collection related to her. However, Florence Deed documented her work in a personal diary (Deed, 1904–1929), which is currently in the custody of Mr. Samuel Chengo, son of the late Japheth Chengo, a local evangelist and teacher who worked closely with Deed. In addition to the diary, Mr. Chengo also preserves other valuable materials, including photographs, the first English-Giriama dictionary, and handwritten early church records.

<sup>17</sup> P. Ayre, *DEED, Florence Instone MBE, Miss*, last modified April 22, 2024, Europeans in East Africa,

[https://www.europeansineastafrica.co.uk/\\_site/custom/database/default.asp?a=viewIndividual&pid=2&person=7699](https://www.europeansineastafrica.co.uk/_site/custom/database/default.asp?a=viewIndividual&pid=2&person=7699)

<sup>18</sup> Julius Mambo, interview by Reuben Katite, February 14, 2020, Kaloleni, digital recording.

which John Ludwig Krapf and Johann Rebmann had earlier established. She later relocated to Chang'ombe, where she spent ten years teaching freed slave girls.<sup>19</sup> Deed was part of a group of twenty-three women sent to the Mombasa Mission in East Africa. Most of them did excellent work, not only running the girls' schools and caring for women at Frere Town and Rabai, but also venturing into the villages and playing a significant role in establishing regular missionary work in the predominantly Muslim town of Mombasa.<sup>20</sup>

In June 1904, Deed left for Kaloleni,<sup>21</sup> where she was later joined by Miss M. L. Mason. Together, the *Mabibi* (ladies) missionaries established the Kaloleni CMS Mission Station in the same year. They went on to found Kaloleni Girls' School and the Kaloleni Vocational Training Centre in 1927,<sup>22</sup> and later the CMS Kaloleni Hospital, now known as St. Luke's Hospital, in 1929.<sup>23</sup> However, their work was abruptly interrupted in 1914 due to the Giriama uprising against the colonial regime, which created widespread insecurity in the region. Consequently, Deed and Mason were forced to relocate to Rabai for seven months. Upon their return to Kaloleni, the local elders fined them a couple of goats, accusing them of having brought misfortune to the community.<sup>24</sup>

### **The Broader Missionary Context and Early Evangelistic Efforts in Giriama Land**

Deed was neither the first white missionary to visit Kaloleni nor the first to establish a mission station among the Agirama people of Kenya's Coast. The earliest Christian community in the region emerged in the early 1870s at Forodhoyo, about 30 miles from Takaungu, where Besidi, a Giriama evangelist had fled to from Rabai in self-imposed exile after killing his wife during a domestic dispute. The Christian community established in his home area became a refuge for runaway slaves (Kitoro Christianity). By 1874, Besidi had 11 converts. Tragically, he was later killed by Arabs. In 1875, Dawnes Shaw journeyed from Mombasa via the Tudor Creek, passing through Ribe Methodist Church on his way to Mwaeba, located far to the north of Kaloleni.

In 1876, another missionary, Rev. W. Taylor, passed through Kaloleni on his

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<sup>19</sup> Reuben Katite, "A History Of Kaloleni Mission: Establishment, Development And Influence Of The Church Missionary Society To The Giryama Community Between 1904 And 2004" (*Master's thesis*, Pwani University, 2021), 159.

<sup>20</sup> Eugene Stock, *The History of the Church Missionary Society: Its Environment, Its Men and Its Work*, vol. 2 and 3 (London: Church Missionary Society, 1899).

<sup>21</sup> Gordon Hewitt, *The Problems of Success: A History of the Church Missionary Society 1910–1942* (London: SCM Press, 1971).

<sup>22</sup> Joseph Ogutu Owino, "Contribution of Church Missionary Society in Developing Western Education in Kaloleni District in Colonial Kenya (1890–1950): Historical Perspective," *The International Journal of Social Sciences and Humanities Invention* 4, no. 8 (2017): 37–69.

<sup>23</sup> F. A. Ojwang', "Trends in the Practice of Indigenous Supernatural Powers Among the Agirama of Kilifi County, Kenya: 1840–2000" (*Master's Thesis*, Kenyatta University, 2021).

<sup>24</sup> Eugene Stock, *History of the Church Missionary Society, Journal of Religion* 2 (1950): 431–432.

way to Mwaeba, where he attempted to plant a church. In 1896, four male missionaries working along the coast requested permission from the CMS to take an evangelistic holiday to central Giriama. Although their proposal did not initially receive enthusiastic support from the mission authorities, they were eventually granted permission, albeit reluctantly. They received encouragement and support in their planning and preparations from Rev. Jones, the pastor at Rabai, who also advised them on which district to visit.<sup>25</sup>

The initiative to send four missionaries to Giriama-land played a significant role in opening up the southern region of Giriama. Upon their arrival, they were warmly received, which allowed them to visit numerous villages and share the gospel with the Giriama people. Before they left southern Giriama, the Giriama leaders urged them to build a church that would facilitate the rapid spread of Christianity in the area. However, they were unable to do so at the time, as their visit was brief.<sup>26</sup> Despite their brief stay, the mission laid the groundwork for the establishment of a permanent mission station soon after their departure.

The first official CMS mission station in Giriama land was established in 1890 by Rev. Grafftey Smith at Jilore, located about 70 miles from Mombasa and 17 miles inland from the then-ruined and abandoned town of Malindi. Jilore became a challenging mission field, witnessing the deaths of several missionaries, including the wife and son of Rev. Douglas Hooper, who arrived in 1892. Eventually, the work of Deed in Kaloleni replaced Jilore as the center of Giriama missions.

While CMS was the earliest missionary agency to arrive in Giriama land, it was not the only one with an early interest in the region. Other early arrivals included the Methodist Missionary Society (MMS), the Neunkirchen Mission (NM), the East African Scottish Mission (EASM), later known as the Church of Scotland Mission (CSM), the Africa Inland Mission (AIM), and several Roman Catholic societies from various countries, such as the Consolata Missionaries from Italy, the Holy Ghost Mission, the Jesuits, and the Mill Hill Fathers.<sup>27</sup> Although the missionaries were not immediately accepted by the local population, they succeeded in gaining a few converts. Among the Giriama, the first Christian community emerged in the early 1870s around Forodhoyo, approximately thirty miles from Takaungu.<sup>28</sup>

Although Besidi was killed by Arabs who invaded Forodhoyo a few years later, one of his converts was among the four Giriama converts who were confirmed by the Anglican Bishop Peter Sorenson Royston of Mauritius during his visit in 1878 at Rabai. As Hewitt notes, “a Giriama catechist later began a catechism class at Mwaeba hills, which is ten miles west of *Mtsanganyiko*, and the congregation comprised of the Giriama

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<sup>25</sup> Eugene Stock, *The History of the Church Missionary Society: Its Environment, Its Men and Its Work*, vol. 2 and 3 (London: Church Missionary Society, 1899).

<sup>26</sup> Eugene Stock, *History of the Church Missionary Society, Journal of Religion* 2 (1950): 431–432.

<sup>27</sup> Church of the Province of Kenya. *Rabai to Mumias: A Short History of the Church of the Province of Kenya, 1844–1994* (Nairobi: Uzima, 1994).

<sup>28</sup> Gordon Hewitt, *The Problems of Success: A History of the Church Missionary Society 1910–1942* (London: SCM Press, 1971).

people. Both the Forodhoyo and Mwaeba settlements had been offshoots of the Church Missionary Society at Rabai and Frere town.<sup>29</sup>

The efforts to reach the Giriama people with the gospel did not end with the killing of Besidi. In 1890, a significant mission was launched at Jilore, approximately seventy miles from Mombasa and seventeen miles inland from the abandoned town of Malindi. Reverend Grafftey Smith was sent to lead this initiative.<sup>30</sup> Similarly, the first official mission in Giriama land began at Jilore in 1890, under the leadership of Reverend Grafftey Smith. However, the conditions were challenging for the European missionaries. The second missionary, Reverend F. Burt, nearly died from blackwater fever.<sup>31</sup> The lack of clean water and the harsh climate posed major obstacles to their work at Jilore.

## The Founding of Kaloleni Mission

The Jilore mission center was situated on a piece of land that jutted into a lake, in the remote village of Sabaki. The atmosphere in Jilore was heavy and rife with mosquitoes, while the decaying vegetation from the dense tropical growth along the lakeshore emitted a foul, deadly smell. Beyond the harsh climatic conditions, the Giriama people of Jilore were initially unfriendly to the missionaries, offering them a cold and unwelcoming reception. The language barrier further complicated the missionaries' early days in the area. In 1890, CMS sent Rev. A. G. Smith to Jilore, followed by Rev. F. Burt, though neither stayed long. In 1892, Rev. Douglas Hooper arrived with his wife Edith. Sadly, she soon joined the long list of missionaries who succumbed to the diseases of the African coast, dying at Jilore in October 1893.<sup>32</sup>

Just before Hooper proceeded to Jilore, the CMS had finalized plans to establish mission work in Kaloleni, located in the southern part of Giriama. Deed and Mason were selected by the CMS to pioneer the work in this region. Deed had previously interacted with the Giriama people in Rabai, which was believed would help her relate more easily to the community. In the early 1900s, Kaloleni emerged as a prominent center of mission work in Southern Giriama. In June 1904, Deed officially established the Kaloleni Mission Station and oversaw the construction of a church.<sup>33</sup> Her missionary efforts in Kaloleni had a twofold purpose. The first was to alleviate suffering through the training and practice on the art of medicine. The second aim was to collaborate with Christian evangelists in expressing divine compassion and addressing

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<sup>29</sup> Gordon Hewitt, *The Problems of Success: A History of the Church Missionary Society 1910–1942* (London: SCM Press, 1971), 1.

<sup>30</sup> Eugene Stock, *The History of the Church Missionary Society: Its Environment, Its Men and Its Work*, vol. 2 and 3 (London: Church Missionary Society, 1899).

<sup>31</sup> Ludwig Krapf, *Travels, Researches and Missionary Labours during an Eighteen Years Residence in East Africa* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1968), 509.

<sup>32</sup> Eugene Stock, *The History of the Church Missionary Society: Its Environment, Its Men and Its Work*, vol. 2 and 3 (London: Church Missionary Society, 1899).

<sup>33</sup> Philip Horace, *A New Day in Kenya* (London: World Dominion Press, 1960).

the prejudices of those otherwise unwilling to receive the gospel message. However, an unexpected obstacle arose when the colonial government temporarily halted Deed's plans. As Barrett explains, "the government then did not approve of white women living there alone."<sup>34</sup> Although the executive committee initially hesitated, the objection was eventually resolved. The workers were permitted to proceed on the condition that they could raise funds to construct a suitable house. With this directive, Deed arrived in Kaloleni in June 1904 and was later joined by Mason.<sup>35</sup>

## Deed's Missionary Work in Kaloleni

Deed arrived on the East Coast of Kenya in 1894, initially settling at the Rabai Mission Centre before moving to Chang'ombe village, where she lived for ten years. During her time in Chang'ombe, she dedicated herself to teaching freed African slave girls. It was also during this period that she learned and mastered the Rabai vernacular so well that the local people affectionately named her *Memurahai*, meaning "mother of the Rabai sub-group."<sup>36</sup> Deed and Mason had clearly defined objectives in their work in Kaloleni. They arrived with the aim of introducing Western medicine to the Giriama people, establishing a formal education system to promote literacy, and, above all, winning Christian converts.<sup>37</sup>

Deed was warmly welcomed by the Giriama people and quickly gained popularity within the local community.<sup>38</sup> Her fluency in the local language, acquired during her ten-year stay at Chang'ombe, greatly contributed to this acceptance. The Giriama affectionately nicknamed her '*Bibi Didi*', a localized version of her name. This ability to connect easily with new friends significantly eased her mission of spreading the Gospel.

The first incarnational task that Deed undertook was to study and learn the language of the local people. This proved less difficult for her, as she had already acquired the Rabai dialect. Missionaries needed to master African languages to effectively communicate with local communities and spread Christianity. Consequently, they engaged in important pioneering work in African linguistics, dedicating significant time to preparing grammars, dictionaries, and New Testament translations into Swahili and other African languages. From the very beginning of planting Christianity in East Africa, missionaries emphasized the study of African

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<sup>34</sup> Lois Y. Barrett, *Treasure in Clay Jars: Patterns in Missional Faithfulness* (London: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing, 2004).

<sup>35</sup> Reuben Katite, "A History Of Kaloleni Mission: Establishment, Development And Influence Of The Church Missionary Society To The Giryama Community Between 1904 And 2004" (*Master's thesis*, Pwani University, 2021).

<sup>36</sup> Samuel Chengo, interview by author, September 23, 2023, Kaloleni, Digital Recording.

<sup>37</sup> Gordon Hewitt, *The Problems of Success: A History of the Church Missionary Society 1910–1942* (London: SCM Press, 1971).

<sup>38</sup> Naomi Kenga, interview by Reuben Katite, December 12, 2020, Kaloleni, digital recording.

languages and the translation of scripture into local vernaculars.<sup>39</sup>

Secondly, in addition to the Western missionaries, local communities were actively involved in language translation and the development of various forms of literature. While the linguistic efforts of missionaries were undoubtedly significant, recent studies on vernacular scripture production reveal that Africans played a creative and influential role in the translation process, embedding their own ideas and imagery into the final texts.<sup>40</sup>

A temporary church was promptly established in Kaloleni following a few initial evangelistic activities in the village. These efforts included the introduction of Western education to the local community, the translation of the Gospel of St. Luke into the Giriama language, and the publication of Giriama literature booklets such as *Mashomo ga Kwanza ga KiGiriama* (First Lessons in Giriama), *Kalenga Juu* (Aiming Higher), and *Mashomo ga Hiri ga KiGiriama* (Second Lessons in Giriama). Deed was not only an evangelist but also a trained medical practitioner, offering treatment to the sick within the community. In addition, she was a talented keyboardist who greatly enriched the worship experience during church services.<sup>41</sup>

Deed was greatly supported by Simon Kondo, one of the earliest converts, alongside his own father. Kondo was baptized in 1913 and later commissioned as an evangelist.<sup>42</sup> Among others baptized that same year were James Mae, Daniel Duli, William Mwanyale, Shem M'baruku, Aaron Kadenge, George Sirya, and Onesmus Ngowa, all from Kaloleni village.<sup>43</sup>

Baptism was a process that required thorough preparation. Before being baptized, candidates underwent catechism classes, which lasted for at least three years. During this period, they were taught Bible stories and Christian morals to guide them in living according to the faith. The priests who came to Kaloleni to baptize the new converts included Rev. Felton Lugo Gore, Rev. J. E. Hamshire, Rev. K. A. Rodgers, The Rt. Rev. Peal, Rev. E. Crawford, and Rev. George Burns. These clergy were sent from Rabai, the main CMS station in the region, to Kaloleni.<sup>44</sup>

Self-denial and deep commitment formed the foundation for the local people's involvement in the incarnation of the gospel. Kaloleni served as a mission station, an operational hub from which the missionaries coordinated their work.<sup>45</sup> Deed, the first missionary in Kaloleni, traveled extensively across Giriama-land spreading

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<sup>39</sup> Church of the Province of Kenya. *Rabai to Mumias: A Short History of the Church of the Province of Kenya, 1844–1994* (Nairobi: Uzima, 1994).

<sup>40</sup> Gordon Hewitt, *The Problems of Success: A History of the Church Missionary Society 1910–1942* (London: SCM Press, 1971).

<sup>41</sup> Ishmael Fondo Dena, interview by Reuben Katite, January 20, 2020, Jila Town, digital recording.

<sup>42</sup> George Kombe, interview by author, December 15, 2020, Kaloleni town, digital recording.

<sup>43</sup> Ishmael Fondo Dena, interview by Rueben Katite, January 20, 2020, Jila Town, digital recording.

<sup>44</sup> George Kombe, Interview by author, December 15, 2020, Kaloleni, digital recording.

<sup>45</sup> Naomi Kenga, interview by Reuben Katite, December 12, 2020, Kaloleni, digital recording.

Christianity. At the time, there were no vehicles, so she walked, with local people carrying her belongings. Deed herself was transported in a mono chair, pulled from the front and pushed from behind for ease of movement. Among those who assisted in this task were Mwakadziru Mulewa, Mulonja, Mwanyamba, Mwang'ombe, and Mwakuvunzika.<sup>46</sup>

Whenever the convoy was on the move, the group would sing a traditional Giriama song typically sung during funeral processions. This was done intentionally to draw the attention of bystanders, thereby increasing the number of people joining the procession to help with Deed's transport. The song went as follows:

*Leader: Kibanga na kibanga* (in a helpless state or no physician).

*All: Hola hola, holaeet holaaa!* (Be healed, be healed).

Deed did not understand the meaning of the song, but she enjoyed it so much that she asked in KiGiriama, “*Ni h'ani ye aimbirwaye wira wangu?*” (Who is it that they are singing my song for?). She had believed the song was uniquely hers. However, no one was willing to explain its true meaning to her.<sup>47</sup>

Deed employed her own cooks, who were young Giriama men: Jacob Kadzomba, Joseph Mupathe, and Charo Mwenda. She lived in a grass-thatched house built with clay blocks, located at the present-day site of St. John's Girls Secondary School field, next to the home science laboratory.<sup>48</sup> Deed's fellow missionary, Mason, a trained teacher and an outstanding leader among women, played a pivotal role in fostering unity among them. She taught handcraft skills such as basket and mat making, using locally available materials.

Following the Giriama uprising of 1914, Deed and Mason fled Kaloleni for Rabai, fearing for their lives. The Giriama, one of the Nyika tribes in Kenya's coastal region, had reacted violently in 1913 and 1914 to the sudden imposition of effective colonial rule.<sup>49</sup> As Europeans, the missionaries were perceived as collaborators with the colonial administration, which led to growing hostility toward them. However, after several internal peace negotiations, the Giriama eventually agreed to welcome the missionaries back.

In addition to Mason, the CMS continued to send other missionaries to support Deed in spreading the Gospel and providing services such as education and healthcare. In 1919, Miss Francis, a missionary from England, arrived in Kaloleni to join Deed and Mason in their work. A trained teacher, Francis established a primary school later that year, named Kaloleni School, now known as St. John's Girls Secondary School. She also engaged in pastoral visitations, often cycling to Mukonzo village to reach the local community. Francis returned to England in 1923, marking the end of her service in Kaloleni.

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<sup>46</sup> Naomi Kenga, interview by Reuben Katite, December 12, 2020, Kaloleni, digital recording.

<sup>47</sup> George Kombe. Interview by author, December 15, 2020, Kaloleni, digital recording.

<sup>48</sup> John Safari Mumba, Interview by Reuben Katite, November 5, 2020, Kaloleni, Digital Recording.

<sup>49</sup> K. D. Patterson, “The Giriama Risings of 1913–1914,” *African Historical Studies* 3, no. 1 (1970): 89–99.

Sir H.T. Harris, both a preacher and a mason, came from Rabai to settle in Kaloleni in 1920.<sup>50</sup> He constructed the building shaped like a capital 'H' located on the St. John's Girls Secondary School field. The following year, in 1921, Sir Webley, an evangelist and mason, also arrived in Kaloleni. In 1923, a female missionary named Miss W. Foy, sent by CMS Australia, joined the mission. A teacher and evangelist, she assumed the responsibilities previously carried out by Francis, with a primary focus on ministering to women converts. Through her efforts, the school presented its first candidates for the Elementary-C School Examination (ECSE) in 1926. Foy returned to her home country in 1930.

The missionary who made the greatest impact alongside Deed and is still remembered by many in Kaloleni was Miss Elnor Bodger, affectionately nicknamed *Bibi Boja* by the local people as a localized pronunciation of her name.<sup>51</sup> She arrived in Kaloleni in 1927 as a teacher trainer and established a normal school, the equivalent of today's teacher training college, offering P4 and P3 certificates. After Deed's retirement in 1935, Bodger took over her responsibilities. She was later assisted by Miss Kathlene Curtis, who went on to found St. John's Girls Secondary School in 1968. Curtis left Kaloleni in 1969 and returned to England.

The students who attended this school came from beyond Kilifi District, including areas such as Taita, Koru, and Nakuru. Several local priests, including Rev. Canon William Mutta, Rev. Canon Nathaniel Mweri, Rev. Canon David Muzungu, and Rev. Stephen Malau, were initially trained as teachers at this institution. Others who passed through the school included Reuben Kombe, Justin Masha Muramba, Archie Mwabanda, Petro Wara, Lewis Katana, Jim Mwambishi, James Golowa, Lawrence Bennett, and John Kambi, among others. With the exception of Rev. Justin Masha Muramba, all of them have since passed on, leaving behind a remarkable legacy. The teacher training school was, however, closed in 1936 following the relocation of Deed and other key missionaries.

By 1927, Kaloleni Mission had become popularly known as "*Kaloleni kwa mabibi*" (Kaloleni the center of ladies) due to the significantly higher number of female missionaries compared to their male counterparts. That same year, an unfortunate incident occurred involving a night break-in by locals, which was reportedly linked to an attempted rape within the mission compound. This led to the imposition of a curfew and several arrests by the administrative police. In response to growing security concerns, more male missionaries were deployed in subsequent years. In 1928, Sir Durrat, a skilled artist, arrived in Kaloleni. He was followed in 1930 by Major Selwood, an expert in physical exercise known for conducting drills. In 1932, Sir Capon joined the mission to support the growing work. A gifted evangelist and teacher, Sir Capon contributed significantly until his departure in 1934.<sup>52</sup>

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<sup>50</sup> Margaret Kamango, interview by Reuben Katite, December 28, 2020, Kaloleni, digital recording.

<sup>51</sup> Margaret Kamango, interview by Reuben Katite, December 28, 2020, Kaloleni, digital recording.

<sup>52</sup> Samuel Chengo, interview by author, September 23, 2023, Kaloleni, digital Recording.

The Rev. Kenneth E. Stovold was sent to the Kaloleni Mission by the CMS in England. He arrived in Kaloleni in 1931 as a bachelor. The local community grew fond of him and affectionately nicknamed him *Sitovuli*, a localized version of his name. In addition to his role as a priest, Rev. Stovold was also a trained teacher. He later returned to England for his wedding, which was celebrated both there and in Kaloleni.<sup>53</sup> To mark the occasion, his fellow teachers composed a Giriama song in his honor, praising him for what they considered the best wedding ever. The song was composed by Curtis, one of the teachers, and performed by Naomi Sidi Kenga. The lyrics were as follows:

*Hunakulika Bwana Sitovuli* (We praise you Sir Stovold).

*Hunakulika Bwana Sitovuli*, (We praise you Sir Stovold).

*Here harusi irizhonona Ulaya*, (For your successful wedding in England).

*Kwehu Kaloleni nako yanona vizho*, (Even for us in Kaloleni it was a success).

*Mulungu akuhase*, (God bless you).

*Akaza alimu be huna muvera*" (As teachers' wives, we are grateful).<sup>54</sup>

In 1934, Sir George Burns, a missionary from CMS England, arrived in Kaloleni.<sup>55</sup> Known for his eloquence and powerful preaching, it was rare to see anyone dozing off during his teachings. Besides his missionary work, Burns was also a skilled mason and personally constructed the leprosy ward at St. Luke's Hospital. This example highlights how a multidisciplinary and dual approach supported the spread of the Gospel in Kaloleni, missionaries sent by CMS often brought additional skills that complemented their evangelistic, pastoral, and preaching efforts.

By 1934, the missionaries had established several mission sub-stations to facilitate the spread of the gospel within Giriama-land and beyond. In the Kauma sub-region, these included Vyambani, Jaribuni, Mavueni, and Ng'ombeni. The Chonyi sub-region had Kadzinuni and Msanduzini. Within Giriama itself, there were two main sub-regions: Godoma and Galana, with Weruni—headquartered at Kaloleni—serving as the administrative center. Godoma, located in the northwest of the Giriama region, encompassed sub-stations such as Mwangongo, Mwaeba, Forodhoyo, Tsangalaweni, Dulukiza, Dungicha, Kafuloni, Bamba, Mgamboni, Vitengeni, Nzovuni, and Jila. Meanwhile, the Galana sub-region included sub-stations like Mafingoni, Garashi, Jilore, Shakadulo, Marafa, and Fena, among others.<sup>56</sup>

All these centers were coordinated from Kaloleni, which served as the headquarters. The number of new converts continued to grow daily. Ngala wa Vidzo was the earliest convert, baptized on the evening of September 21, 1939, at Kaloleni. He was baptized with the name Ronald Gideon Ngala. He later became a prominent political leader of the Coast region and founded the Kenya African Democratic Union

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<sup>53</sup> Kenneth E. Stovold, *The CMS in Kenya: The Coast, 1844–1944* (Nairobi: East African Literature Bureau, 1946).

<sup>54</sup> Naomi Sidi Kenga, interview by Reuben Katite, December 12, 2020, Kaloleni, digital recording.

<sup>55</sup> Samuel Ngumbao, interview by author, February 20, 2021, Kaloleni, digital recording.

<sup>56</sup> Julius Mambo, interview by Reuben Katite, February 14, 2020, Kaloleni, digital recording.

(KADU), an opposition party following Kenya's independence in 1963.<sup>57</sup>

The majority of new converts were baptized and confirmed only after completing three consecutive years of catechism classes. At the end of this period, candidates took an examination; those who did not pass were required to repeat the classes for an additional year before qualifying for baptism or confirmation. The lessons were divided into three stages: in the first year, candidates were designated as *Msirikizi* (listener); in the second year, as *Mtsatsi* (researcher); and in the third year, as *Mshom'* (reader/learner).<sup>58</sup> Kaloleni CMS was established as a parish in 1920 under the Diocese of Mombasa. The first vicar of Kaloleni Parish was Rev. H. T. Harris, who was transferred from Rabai.<sup>59</sup>

Deed retired in 1934 after 35 years of dedicated service among the Girima. She lived a quiet life in Britain until her death on March 26, 1958. Despite representing a colonial power, Deed is remembered for her deep solidarity with the Girima people, who strongly resisted British rule. She navigated the tense divide between church and state with conviction, once affirming that "the church cannot help being involved in areas of communal tension," a statement that remains relevant as the Kenyan Church responds to the Gen Z-led protests of 2024. Deed's unique approach, which involved attending local barazas (public meetings) to promote fairness and to ensure that all participants fully understood the proceedings. She also provided education, medical care, and spiritual guidance, setting her apart from other missionaries of her time. Her willingness to integrate the gospel into the local cultural context further distinguished her ministry.

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<sup>57</sup> Ishmael Fondo, interview by author, January 2, 2021, Jila village. digital recording.

<sup>58</sup> Josiah Jumwa, interview by author, December 12, 2020, Kaloleni Mission History, digital recording.

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# The Mission work of the Rev. Canon Jonathan Kituri (1884-1964)<sup>60</sup>

By Bryson K. Samboja



Jonathan Kituri played a significant role in spreading the gospel among the coastal peoples of Kenya, especially the Taita, a group comprising three distinct communities: the Dawida, Sagalla, and Kasigau. In 1907, he became the first *Mtaita* sent to divinity school. He is also believed to have been the seventeenth man to be ordained in all of Kenya.

## Family Life

Jonathan Kituri was born in 1884. He first heard the gospel at Voi from a convert from Ndome while waiting for travelers from Mombasa who were heading to Tanganyika, now Tanzania. His mission was to travel to Tanzania in search of his lost brother, Joshua Mkala. Their father had died at Wushumbu while journeying to Tanganyika to look for Joshua. He was buried there, but according to Taita customs, his head was carried back and buried at Werugha, awaiting eventual exhumation and transfer to a cave. Jonathan Kituri later learned from his cousin that religious education was being conducted at Mbale.<sup>61</sup> He was baptized on December 30, 1906, and confirmed on April 11, 1909.<sup>62</sup> He married Emily Grace Kandemu from Freretown,<sup>63</sup> although his wife may have been from Rabai. The couple was blessed with three children: David Nyambu, Peter Maganga, and Othniel Mbogho. Unfortunately, his wife passed away at a young age while giving birth to their twins in 1918.

Jonathan Kituri had a deep appreciation for education, in contrast to some of his contemporaries who resisted sending their children to school. His sons, David and Othniel, pursued their studies up to high school level at Alliance High School, though Othniel had to drop out in Form Two due to health issues. Another son, Peter, attended Jeanes School in Kabete, now known as the Kenya Institute of Administration. David was employed by the government as the first African Probation Officer, while Peter served as a carpenter with the Taita County Council. Despite struggling with mental health issues, Othniel was widely recognized as one of the finest church organists at Werugha. After the death of his first wife, Jonathan Kituri married a second

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<sup>60</sup> See Photo Index in Appendix 2.

<sup>61</sup> Jeremiah Kituri, interview by author, June 18, 2024, phone interview.

<sup>62</sup> Joan Kituri, interview by author, March 21, 2024, WhatsApp message.

<sup>63</sup> Grace Shake, interview by author, June 5, 2024, phone interview.

wife, Irene Zae,<sup>64</sup> but they had no children together.<sup>65</sup> Three of Jonathan Kituri's children were blessed with God-fearing families: David had nine children, Peter had six, and Othniel had six. Some of Jonathan Kituri's grandchildren went on to receive a good education.

In those days, some parents expected to receive some form of income for sending their children to school to learn. To them, learning was considered work. My grandfather, Mwamburi wa Mwacharo, refused to send his children to school. My father, one of them, has lived to regret that decision. He often recalls Jonathan Kituri telling our grandfather that a time would come when people would pay school fees just to educate their children. He has lived to see the children who went to school secure good jobs and lead decent lives. His best example was the sons of Jonathan Kituri. My father took this to heart and did everything he could to send his children to school. We became the first generation in our family to receive formal education. It was a powerful lesson learned from Jonathan Kituri. Jonathan Kituri's words proved true - education was no longer free, and parents had to bear the cost of their children's school fees.

## The Landscape

The area where Jonathan Kituri served was Taita, located west of Freretown, Mombasa, and approximately 100 miles from the coastal city, near the Tanzanian border. As one travels inland from Mombasa through dry and barren terrain, the Taita Hills gradually come into view, rising dramatically from the surrounding plains. To the southeast lies the solitary Kasigau, and upon nearing Voi, one encounters the Sagalla Hills, which stand distinct from the larger Dawida hills.<sup>66</sup>

## Mission Work among the Taita

In the year 1900, the Authorities of the Church Missionary Society (CMS) believed the time had come to establish a mission at Dawida. On 28th August 1900, Wray and Richard left Sagalla to meet Bishop Peel at Voi Railway Station.<sup>67</sup> It was a particularly unfortunate time for Wray, as soon after his arrival, the rains failed and a severe famine broke out. The local people associated this calamity with the presence of the white man in their land and requested that he leave. However, Wray refused. His safety became a concern as hostility toward him grew, and he was subjected to numerous restrictions. He was, for instance, forbidden from firing his gun, as the sound was believed to drive away the clouds. He was also not allowed to draw water from the river using his tin or wash his clothes there, as this was thought to cause the river to dry up. Wray later remarked that, were it not for the support of his two hundred friends, life would have

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<sup>64</sup> Grace Shake, interview by author, June 5, 2024, phone interview

<sup>65</sup> Jeremiah Kituri, interview by author, June 18, 2024, phone interview.

<sup>66</sup> Samboja, 14.

<sup>67</sup> Samboja, 23.

been unbearable.<sup>68</sup>

Rev. R. A. Maynard, an Australian clergyman sent by the Church Missionary Society (now Church Mission Society) in 1894, relocated from Sagalla to Mbale in Dawida in 1910. He was warmly received by the local community due to his pleasant personality and evident love for the people. However, his attitude toward indigenous culture, customs, and beliefs was largely unsympathetic and condemnatory, as reflected in his correspondence. Moreover, he showed little regard for missionaries who lacked proficiency in the Taita language or who were unwilling to engage fully in learning it.<sup>69</sup>

He was nicknamed *Bwana Milele* (Mr. Forever) because of his enduring impact. A visionary leader, he established an intermediate school at Mbale, which was later renamed Maynard Primary School in his honor. This made Mbale a central hub for both Christian mission and education in the region.<sup>70</sup> In 1905, Rev. V. V. Verbi arrived in Wusi from Taveta when the CMS began its work there. From this center, the mission expanded across Taita-Taveta, engaging in evangelistic, educational, and industrial activities.<sup>71</sup>

Western religion and education played a significant role in promoting literacy. Families who embraced the new faith and education experienced positive changes. From the outset, schools were closely linked to evangelism and preaching. Classes were conducted in churches, where subjects such as Bible studies, hygiene, English, Swahili, and crafts were taught. Over time, churches became increasingly engaged in a broader range of concerns, addressing both internal matters, such as Christian music, and wider societal issues, including communication and development.

The first missionary to come to Taita solely for educational work was John Heselwood. He was assisted by the first African-trained teacher, Noah Manasseh, a Nyasa who had received his training at the Freretown School in Mombasa. The second African teacher, Peter Juma, later joined him. Other educators who followed included Christopher Mkamba, Albert Ngala, Arthur Jacca, and John Mark, who was later ordained. These teachers helped raise a new generation of educators among the Taita people, including Samuel Mgiriamba, Jonathan Mwashumbe, and William Mwamachi. From that time onward, many schools were established. By 1905, the education system had been divided into two zones: Mbale, under Maynard, and Wusi, under Verbi, who the Taita people affectionately referred to as "Berube."<sup>72</sup> When I was young, we used to sing:

*Berube Mzungu wa Ndege Haila! (Imperialist European by flight)*

*Wende cha Wulaya Haila! (went to Europe)*

*Wende diredia nguwo Haila! (went to bring us clothes)*

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<sup>68</sup> Samboja, 24.

<sup>69</sup> Samboja, 24.

<sup>70</sup> Joan Kituri, unpublished document sent to author, May 4, 2024, WhatsApp message.

<sup>71</sup> Samboja, 24.

<sup>72</sup> Samboja, B. K., "The Clearing of Jungles and the Climbing of Hills, Christian Mission Among the Taita in the Coast Province of Kenya" (M. Diss., University of Birmingham, 1996), 31-32.

*Ilailalaghe Haila; lailalaghe Haila.(say more about it).*

The Taita had well-defined roles in life and practiced their own form of religion, which they considered meaningful. However, the missionaries viewed their way of life as dark and evil. With the introduction of the Gospel and formal education, their traditional ways were rapidly transformed. Within a short period, much of Taita culture was eroded, giving way to new patterns of life. However, some onlookers were unhappy with the missionaries' efforts to discourage traditional African singing, dancing, drumming, and attire. To many, becoming a Christian seemed to mean adopting Western clothing. trousers, hats, boots, and carrying walking sticks. Many came to believe that the missionary religion meant wearing trousers. However, CMS missionary H.K. Binns was determined to correct this misconception. He urged that all mission employees be required to wear loin cloths. Even if it risked shaking the mission to its foundation, he insisted that the willingness to renounce European dress should be a test of who was truly on the Lord's side.

Later, the missionaries recognized their mistakes and began to change. They started showing a growing appreciation for many aspects of African culture.<sup>73</sup> Undoubtedly, education played a significant role in shaping many lives. Its introduction empowered Africans to challenge Western authorities on issues of equality. Jonathan Kituri was a pioneer in this effort, inspiring many among the Taita people, especially those from Weruga, who sought to emulate his passion for education. While the primary goal of education was to enable Africans to read the Bible, its impact on social life has been far greater than originally intended. Some church leaders, however, became obstacles to the gospel; for example, refusing to baptize a child because of the lifestyle of a parent struggling with alcoholism.

## **Training of Evangelists and Pastors**

The training of African evangelists and pastors began as early as 1907, when the first Mtaita, Jonathan Kituri, was sent for instruction in Wusi and later continued at the Divinity School: "He [Jonathan Kituri] was first sent to Divinity School in 1907 and came back as a catechist. He returned to the Divinity School in 1911, 1915, 1924, and 1930, and was ordained Deacon at the end of 1924, and priested at the end of 1930. Except for 3 months [up to 1941] the whole of his ministry has been in Taita."<sup>74</sup>

This marked the beginning of a period of change. From the outset, Archdeacon Maynard appears to have recognized Jonathan Kituri's potential as a leader. As part of his training as an evangelist, Jonathan was sent to the plains to preach to the laborers constructing the branch railway line from Voi to Taveta. He regularly attracted between 80 and 150 people who were eager to hear the good news. He is believed to have been the seventeenth man to be ordained in all of Kenya. Jonathan Kituri carried out his ministry from his home in Weruga until 1930, when Shadrack Mliwa, a deacon

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<sup>73</sup> Samboja, 21.

<sup>74</sup> Peter Bostock Annual Letter July 1941, message from Hellen Averly, granddaughter to Peter Bostock, to author, June 20, 2024, WhatsApp message.

from Taveta, briefly replaced him. Around this time, Jonathan Kituri was posted to Mbale. When Maynard retired in 1934, Jonathan Kituri remained the only clergy serving in the hills throughout that entire year.<sup>75</sup>

## Divinity School at Freretown, Mombasa

Rev. J. E. Hamshire arrived in Freretown in 1893 and later became the head of the Divinity School, which was established to train Africans for the clergy. The school was eventually relocated to Wusi. Among the first Taita students were Jonathan Kituri and Stephen Kilelu. The school was relocated to Mbale during the First World War because British East Africa needed the mission premises. After a few months in Mbale, the school was moved back to Freretown in Mombasa.

When Hamshire returned to England, Mr. Butcher assumed leadership of the Divinity School until it was later relocated to Limuru. The course lasted two years, during which students from across East Africa were deeply influenced by the missionaries, who raised them as Christians and trained them in Western civilization.<sup>76</sup> The number of ordinations also increased; eleven new deacons were ordained before the 1928 Synod, several of whom are still regarded as founding fathers in their respective regions. They were: Jeremiah Awori, Jonathan Kituri, Musa Auma, Shadraka Mliwa, Levi Gachanja, Samuel Ngui, Albert E. Jumma, G.S. Okoth, Joseph Kibwonge, Reuben Omuto, and Jusu Magu.<sup>77</sup>

By the 1930s, Africans were already drawn to mission work, and several African evangelists had begun to take leadership roles. Aside from the mission centers at Mbale and Wusi, established by missionaries after their arrival in Dawida in 1900, the only other center funded by the mission was at Mwakinyungu. This center served both as an elementary school and a church. By 1937, Jonathan Kituri's most prominent stations were Kigombo on the plains and Werugha in the hills. Both areas were led by Christian chiefs, Nimrod Mboje in Kigombo and Richard Mwangeka in Werugha. Jonathan Kituri had the privilege of Christening Mark the son of a missionary Peter Bostock.

At Werugha, Jonathan Kituri worked alongside Evangelist Mwalimu Nathaniel Mkombola. Nathaniel was deeply loved by the Werugha community and by people throughout the surrounding region, reaching as far as Mwanda. The vitality of the church at Werugha was likely a result of the passion and conviction that both Nathaniel and Jonathan inspired in others. It was at Werugha that the first stone building was constructed entirely through local funding and expertise, at a total cost of Kshs. 23,000. Of this amount, Kshs. 5,000 came from the CMS, Kshs. 4,000 from the District Education Board, and the remaining Kshs. 14,000 was raised by the local community, a remarkable feat at a time when a full day's labor, if available, earned only 33 cents. The foundations were laid in 1937, and it was fitting that Bishop Crabbe, during his first visit to Taita in August of that year, was taken to see the project and

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<sup>75</sup> Samboja, 26.

<sup>76</sup> Samboja, 31.

<sup>77</sup> Samboja, 31.

meet members of the Christian community.

Nathaniel Mkombola remained in Werugha, faithfully ministering as a respected evangelist until his death. He was known for engaging the local people during their traditional worship practices. After they had finished praying to their ancestral gods, Nathaniel would tell them that it was his turn to pray to his God- the God of the Christians. Because of the deep respect he had earned within the community, the elders were willing to listen to him. By 1937, the ministry had grown significantly. Rev. Jeremiah Kiwinda was based in Wusi, while Jonathan Kituri served in Mbale. Together, they oversaw the evangelistic work across Dawida, Sagalla, and Taveta, proclaiming the gospel of the Kingdom.

At the time, there were between 40 and 45 congregations. The leadership of these churches was entrusted to evangelists and elders. The evangelists were gathered for a week or a fortnight twice a year for instruction and fellowship. Jeremiah actively participated in these important training sessions. He was ordained as a deacon in 1929 and later as a priest in 1935. Under Jeremiah's energetic and wise leadership, the church in Taita experienced rapid growth during the 1940s. He consistently understood that a living faith in Christ must be accompanied by genuine care for the wider community and leadership in efforts that enriched everyday life. Guided by this conviction, monthly meetings were initiated between the clergy and the two Christian chiefs, Richard Mwangeka of Werugha and Nimrod Mboje of Kigombo. Chief George Sowa of Sagalla would occasionally join the meetings. The aim was to ensure that church leaders understood the rationale behind government policies, while chiefs became aware of the concerns and criticisms voiced by the people. Following the Second World War, mission funding declined significantly, highlighting the need for the church to become self-supporting. It was eventually agreed that wealthier regions should support those that were less resourced

This marked the beginning of the quota system. From that point on, the church grew in strength and confidence, increasing its giving more than tenfold within the first ten years. It was largely through Jeremiah's leadership that this significant advancement was embraced so positively by the entire church.<sup>78</sup> Later, Jonathan Kituri served as a chaplain to the armed forces during the 1940s and he may have retired either in 1942 or in 1945, after a long and distinguished ministry in the hills.<sup>79</sup>

## Conclusion

Despite facing numerous trials, Jonathan Kituri remained steadfast in his faith and committed to his calling. The loss of his wife during childbirth did not lead him to despair; instead, he continued to spread the Gospel with unwavering resolve. One of the most painful moments in his life came when a child of his suffered a mental breakdown while at Alliance High School. Yet, even in the face of such personal anguish, Jonathan Kituri never gave up. He held firmly to his trust in God, who had

<sup>78</sup> *Rabai to Mumias: A short history of the Church of the Province of Kenya 1844 to 1994* (1994), 29.

<sup>79</sup> *Rabai to Mumias*, 26-27.

called him into ordained ministry. Jonathan Kituri died at his home in Kighala-Weruga in 1964 and was laid to rest at the ACK Weruga church cemetery. His legacy endures, and in his honor, Canon Jonathan Kituri Secondary School in Weruga is named after him.

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# Nimrod Mwakitawa Mboje (1900-1986): Establishment of the Anglican Church Among Settlers in Shimba Hills and Kwale County<sup>80</sup>

By Kennedy Ofundi



Nimrod Mwakitawa Mboje emerged as one of the pioneering African figures in both religious and civic leadership in colonial and post-colonial Kenya. Born in the early years of the East African Protectorate, Mwakitawa's life journey from a humble boy in Mbololo to becoming a respected chief and one of the first African Anglican priests in East Africa exemplifies courage, faith, and a deep sense of public service.

## Early Life

Mwakitawa was born in Kirumasi Mraru village among the Taita (Dawida) people of Mbololo. Although his exact date of birth is unknown, it is estimated to have been between 1890 and 1900, during a time of severe famine. This circumstance gave rise to his name, "Mwakitawa," which means "one born during famine."<sup>81</sup> In 1952, during the State of Emergency, Mwakitawa arrived in the Shimba Hills, where he and others played a key role in establishing the Anglican Church in the region.<sup>82</sup>

At the age of twelve, between 1912 and 1914, Mwakitawa worked as an unskilled laborer on a sisal plantation in Voi (Woi), earning a monthly wage of six shillings. In addition to his wages, his employer provided him with five kilograms of ground maize meal, commonly referred to as *posho* or *unga*.<sup>83</sup>

## Schooling

Mwakitawa's father, Mboje of the Mwadime clan, was a forward-thinking man who

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<sup>80</sup> See Photo Index in Appendix 3.

<sup>81</sup> Samwel Kalema (Mwakitawa's son), interview by author, August 21, 2025, Taita Taveta, oral interview.

<sup>82</sup> Alice Masagho Chokwe (Mwakitawa's daughter), interview by author, September 18, 2023, USA, online interview.

<sup>83</sup> At the time, the term "*unga*" was not part of the Kiswahili language; "*posho*" was the widely used word. However, around this period, Lord Delamere had established a milling company in British East Africa in 1909, named UNGA Limited, an acronym for United Grinding Agencies. Over time, the word "*unga*" entered common Kiswahili usage and is now a standard term for maize meal.

embraced the winds of change sweeping across Africa through Western education. At a time when many were eager to gain knowledge to keep pace with social and cultural transformations, Mwakitawa, an ambitious young man, chose to educate himself in response to these shifts. While many African parents still viewed formal education as a waste of time, Mboje supported his son's desire to pursue learning and adapt to the changing world.

Mwakitawa resisted and rejected this notion, driven by his strong desire for education. He willingly gave up typical childhood pursuits such as cattle herding in order to pursue learning. He received his education from CMS missionaries under the guidance of Rev. Richard Absalom Maynard (1869–1953), where he was taught to read and write. In 1933, he graduated with an elementary certificate from the Common Entrance Examination (CEE), equivalent to Standard Two. At Mbale Mission Center, the literacy classes conducted by the missionaries focused primarily on reading the Bible, hymns, and liturgical texts, using instructional materials found in *Chuo Cha Kulomba kwa Wandu Wose* (the Book of Common Prayer).

While in Mbale, Mwakitawa's elders included Jeremiah Kiwinda, Silasi, Canon Kituri, Elizabadi Mwamburi wa Mrashui, and Samuel Rugendo. At the time, there was a leadership gap within the Christian community in Mbale, as few individuals could read or write, and many had a limited understanding of Anglicanism and the Offices of Instruction. Inalwa, the community's Christian leader, played a key role in instructing and guiding catechumens through the Offices of Instruction, covering the articles of faith, the sacraments, and other core teachings of the Church. Traditionally, catechism classes were conducted for adults in preparation for baptism. However, due to a shortage of missionaries and priests, the classes often spanned several years before the catechumens could fully grasp the required teachings.

## Baptism

Mwakitawa was baptized as an adult in 1925, taking the names Nimrod Juniah Mwakitawa Mboje. He received the sacrament of confirmation in 1926. Although the name of the bishop who confirmed him is not recorded, historical records indicate that Richard Stanley served as Bishop of Mombasa from 1918 to 1936, and it is likely that he administered the sacrament.

## Family Life

In May 1925, Mwakitawa married Priscilla Mtawe in one of the most elegant church weddings ever held in Taita land. Mwakitawa exemplified his values by leading from the front, setting a strong example through his family life. Together with Priscilla, they were blessed with eight children, seven daughters and one son: Adah Majala (a trained teacher), Nancy Wawasi, Agatha Mawondo (the first African woman in Kenya to earn a degree in education from Makerere University in 1959, and the first principal of Murray Girls), Sarah Mkwachu, Alice Masagho, Salome Mborimbo, Isabella Malemba,

and Samwel Kalema. His children speak fondly of their father, cherishing the positive memories and values instilled in them during their upbringing.

A similar trait was passed down to his grandchildren, among whom are distinguished professionals such as Professor Nimrod Mwakitawa, Professor Peter Mwakio, and Engineer Job Tole. Mwakitawa's daughter, Alice M. Chokwe, has a son, Timothy, who is a hotel manager in New York. Alice's daughter graduated from Kenyatta University and is now a teacher in New York, while another daughter, Ivy, runs an IT company in France. Another of Mwakitawa's daughters, Nancy Wawasi Mrashui, has a son, Mrashui, who currently serves as the Consul General of the African Mission to the DRC, and another son, Samuel Mrashui, who works in the Human Resources Department at the Kenya Ports Authority.

Samwel Kalema has a son, Mboje, who is a successful businessman based in Voi. One of his daughters, Dina, serves as a state counsel. Another of Mwakitawa's daughters, Isabella Kioko, is married to a member of the first cohort of county leaders in the Machakos County Public Service Commission. Isabella's son, Kioko, is a Certified Public Accountant (Kenya) working in Silicon Valley, USA. Her daughter, Priscilla Kioko, runs a law firm and serves as the secretary of the Lower Eastern branch of the Law Society of Kenya. Another daughter, Maria Kioko, is the proprietor of Nimrod School, located on Nimrod Road in Machakos.

One of Mwakitawa's greatest achievements was the way he raised his children. While many clergy struggled with issues of indiscipline and misconduct among their children, Mwakitawa successfully brought up his family in the fear of God. All his children attained substantial education, up to the college and university levels, and went on to become respected leaders in their communities. A particularly cherished milestone was the celebration of his 50th wedding anniversary with Priscilla in 1975, a joyful occasion witnessed by their children, grandchildren, relatives, and friends.

## **Black Administrator in Kenya Colony**

The Imperial British East Africa Company, which initially administered East Africa on behalf of Britain, went bankrupt in 1895, prompting the British Government to take over the region and declare it a protectorate. This status remained until 1920, when Kenya was formally established as a colony under the authority of a British governor. During this colonial period, Mwakitawa was recruited into the colonial civil service as a chief's clerk in Mbololo. He was later transferred to the District Commissioner's offices in Voi and Sagalla, serving in similar capacities between 1927 and 1938. Subsequently, he was appointed chief of Mbololo Location in Taita Taveta, a highly prestigious position for an African at the time. In this role, Chief Mwakitawa served as the local representative of His Majesty King George VI, through the colonial governor of Kenya, Sir Walter Harragin (1890–1966).

Mwakitawa ensured that all colonial policies were communicated and implemented at the grassroots level. The Chief's Act granted him significant authority as a government representative in the local administration. During his tenure as chief

of Mbololo (1938–1951), he made substantial contributions in education, health, and agriculture. He strongly advocated girls' education and firmly believed in equal rights for both boys and girls. Mwakitawa also spoke out boldly in *barazas* (public meetings) against female genital mutilation, early childhood marriages, and alcoholism. This earned him respect and admiration as a visionary Black administrator who embraced progressive change, even at a time when the Colonial Government opposed regressive African practices.

On matters of health, Mwakitawa promoted discipline and hygiene within the community by ensuring that every household constructed a pit latrine for proper disposal of human waste. At the time, it was customary in the area for each family to use a designated section of the forest for defecation. Separate areas were assigned for children, adults, and even in-laws, a practice known locally as *kuenda Isakenyi*. This unsanitary custom contributed to frequent outbreaks of waterborne diseases such as diarrhea, dysentery, and cholera. In response, firm and decisive action was taken against those found defecating in the open.

In agriculture, Mwakitawa played a pivotal role by donating two acres of land to Kighombo School, enabling children to gain practical farming experience. Additionally, at Mwakiki, a farmers' demonstration school was established where local farmers learned modern agricultural techniques, including the use of animal and compost manure, as well as the cultivation of drought-resistant crops such as sorghum and cassava to combat malnutrition and hunger. Following in her father's footsteps, one of his surviving daughters, Alice Masagho, donated a five-acre plot in the Mkelekeleni area of Shimba Hills to a church, to be used as a farmers' school.

## The Move to Shimba Hills

Kenya inherited a dual system of land tenure characterized by racial and tribal distinctions, a practice established by the colonial administration from early on. This policy was formally codified in 1939 with the issuance of the Kenya Highlands Order in Council and the Kenya Native Areas Order in Council, following the recommendations of the 1933 Carter Land Commission. These two orders explicitly favored Europeans by reserving specific areas for their use while delineating separate regions to be allocated to Africans.

The areas were commonly referred to as the White Highlands and the Native Reserves, respectively. Most land within the White Highlands was held in large estates under ninety-nine-year leases from the Crown. In contrast, all land within the Native Reserves was held under various customary tenure systems belonging to the ethnic communities that inhabited them. To address this disparity, the colonial government implemented a dual land reform policy aimed at facilitating land ownership and resettlement within the former White Highlands. As part of this initiative, Shimba Hills was designated Crown land, and people from different ethnic groups were enlisted to acquire land through the newly established Shimba Hills Settlement Scheme.

Mbololo is an arid and semi-arid land (ASAL) area characterized by poor and unreliable rainfall, making it unsuitable for agriculture, unlike the more fertile Shimba

Hills. When the colonial government declared Shimba Hills Crown land, people from Mbololo were invited to settle there; however, only a few families accepted the relocation. Rumors circulated that the colonial authorities had discovered minerals in Mbololo and intended to move the local population. Subsequently, people from Ukambani were settled in the Shimba Hills Settlement Scheme, followed by groups from other regions of Kenya. Among those relocated were the Kamba, Kalenjin, Abagusii, and Dawida communities. Today, the Abagusii and Kamba remain in the area.

Among the families from Mbololo who relocated to Shimba Hills were five Christian catechumens: Nimrod Mwakitawa Mboje, David Tole, Johane Nyange, Gilbert Mkoji, and Elijah Mwalagaya. Additionally, other Dawida families worked for the colonial government at the Shimba Hills Settlement Scheme in various roles, including drivers (Nebart Mwachonyi), surveyors (Nicodemus), agricultural extension officers (Jesrael Mwakamba, Hezekiah, and Peter Mwakio), health workers (Eliakim), and office staff (Mwandambo). These individuals formed the core of the first Anglican Church members in Shimba Hills, organized around Mwakitawa. Initially, prayer services were held at Mwakitawa's home. This building, the "holy place," should be preserved as the cradle of Anglicanism in Kwale.

## **Christianity in Shimba Hills**

Christian missionaries arrived in Kwale in 1904, beginning their work in Golini. However, their presence and influence in the region remained limited for some time. It was not until after the 1950s, following the resettlement of black settlers from various parts of Kenya in the Shimba Hills, that a more significant Christian presence emerged. As a result, a need arose for a local place of worship. At the time, the nearest church was Manyimbo Parish, located within the Mombasa Archdeaconry. Special arrangements were made for government staff to travel to Mombasa every Saturday for shopping. A few Christians who had migrated from Taita joined them and used the opportunity to attend Sunday services in Mombasa. They traveled in a government vehicle marked "On Her Majesty's Service" (OHMS).

This continued for some time until Bakari, a pioneering businessman in Shimba Hills, opened a shop that stocked all the essential provisions. As a result, OHMS no longer needed to make shopping trips to Mombasa, and the idea of establishing a place of worship in Shimba Hills began to take shape. A group of farmers, civil servants, and drivers, led by Mwakitawa, David Tole, and Gilbert Mkoji, started gathering in Christian homes for Sunday worship. They first met at Mwakitawa's house, then at Mukewa's place, and later at the local primary school. There, Mwakitawa and the others led the services, which included scripture reading, hymn singing, and sharing the word.

However, the Mukewa church site was eventually taken over by other Christian denominations. As a result, the Anglican adherents returned to Mwakitawa's home. Concerned about the frequent relocations, Mwakitawa requested the government to allocate a permanent plot for the construction of an Anglican church. The current site

of St. Matthias Church was subsequently identified, and construction began. Between 1967 and 1969, Bishop Mwang'ombe recommended that Mwakitawa attend the Coast Bible School (CBS) in Makupa.

As Mwakitawa continued his studies, many things became clearer to him, and his faith and spiritual life deepened each day. He developed a strong passion for learning and was especially familiar with the Swahili hymnal *Nyimbo Standard*, as well as proficient in leading worship using the BCP. At CBS, Mwakitawa and his fellow students were trained to lead morning and evening prayers, administer infant and adult baptism, preach the Word, officiate weddings and funerals, conduct pastoral visits, and perform the unction of the sick. He was ordained in 1967.

Shimba Hills was home to the only Anglican Church in the area, known as Digo Parish. From there, the church expanded its reach to Mwaluvanga, Mafisini, Kinango, Perani, Shimoni, Lungalunga, and many other locations across Kwale County. The first priest of Digo Parish, Mwakitawa, played a key role in this growth. He traveled extensively throughout the county, preaching the Word of God and establishing Christian prayer groups, often using his own family resources to reach distant communities far from Shimba Hills. Mwakitawa was hospitable and generously hosted many families who came to Shimba Hills, including that of his successor, Joel Kombo.

After retirement, Mwakitawa's deep desire was for the Church of Christ in Shimba Hills to grow strong and steadfast, so that the Almighty God could use it as an instrument of salvation. His retirement message likely reflected Christ's love for the people of Shimba Hills, something that remains evident in the community's life today. He mentored many clergy who went on to assume leadership roles in the church, including Ramtu, Nyamawi, Maneno, and Zani, all of whom were nurtured under his guidance. In the far-flung areas of the Digo Parish where he ministered, children were named after him as a mark of honor, among them Nimrod Taabu of Citizen TV, Kenya. After retiring from active ministry, Mwakitawa's health gradually declined. He was over 80 years old and had become frail. He died peacefully in 1986, followed by his wife in 1989.

Nimrod Mwakitawa Mboje's life was a remarkable testament to the integration of faith and public service. As a visionary chief, he championed health, education, and agricultural development during the challenging era of colonial rule, consistently advocating for dignity, equity, and reform. As a devoted clergyman, he became a spiritual pillar in the Shimba Hills and Kwale region, guiding the growth of the Anglican Church from modest house fellowships into a vibrant network of parishes. His unwavering faith, principled leadership, and deep compassion for people left an enduring mark on Kenya's religious and civic landscape. Mwakitawa's legacy lives on in the churches he helped establish, the schools he supported, and the lives of those he mentored, empowered, and inspired. His story remains a compelling witness to the lasting impact one faithful life can have on a community, a region, and a nation.

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# The “Shero” of Her Time! Maryam Majala Mwang’ombe (1910-2016)<sup>84</sup>

by Dorcus C. Kiundu



Maryam Majala Mwang’ombe was a committed and influential women’s leader who significantly advanced women’s leadership in the Anglican Church in Coastal Kenya. She mentored and empowered many, leaving a lasting legacy. Passionate about holistic ministry, she focused especially on children and youth, while also promoting community development through health and agriculture initiatives.

## Early Life and Family

Maryam Majala Mwang’ombe was born on January 28, 1910. She was the daughter of Joshua Mwazo and Miriam Mbala. Her father, Mwazo, popularly known as “Eto,” was a trained CMS evangelist at Wusi Mission Church. He was also a mason and one of the early Christians who helped build Emmanuel Wusi Mission Church. Maryam was the second-born child in a family of eight. Her siblings were John Mwamrizi, Linah Wavua, David Wakalo, Rhoda Dali, Samuel, Solomon Mwanjala, and Love Mbole. Maryam attended school at Wusi Mission and completed her elementary education in 1929. Her father, a strong advocate for education regardless of gender, encouraged all his children to take education seriously. After completing school, Maryam was taken in by Archdeacon Peter Geoffrey Bostock, then the missionary at Wusi Mission, to serve as a house-help and caretaker for his children.

Bostock was born on December 24, 1911, and was seconded to Kenya in 1935, where he joined Vladimir Vassil Verbi, the founder of the Wusi Mission, now one of the largest churches in Taita. The well-known Murray Girls’ High School is also located in this area. Bostock was ordained as a deacon in 1935 and served with the Church Missionary Society in Kenya from 1935 to 1958. By the time he returned home, he held several key positions: Archdeacon, Vicar General, Examining Chaplain to the Bishop of Mombasa, and Chairman of the Christian Council of Kenya (1957–1958).

Maryam was a dedicated Sunday school teacher. She later met Peter Mwang’ombe while he was teaching at Wusi Primary School, and the two eventually got married. Shortly after their marriage, Maryam accompanied her husband to St. Paul’s University in Limuru, where he underwent theological training. Both Maryam and Peter were beneficiaries of the CMS missionaries, whose influence shaped their lives and ministry. Maryam worked closely with the missionaries, who empowered her and helped raise her educational standards.

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<sup>84</sup> See Photo Index in Appendix 4.

The Lord blessed them with ten children: Ben Mwakota Mwang'ombe (banker), Catherine Mbala Mwang'ombe (Sunday school teacher), Newman Kinango Mwang'ombe (priest), Jerusha Madedo Suero (manager/administrator), Joshua Mwazo Mwang'ombe (manager), Nimrod Mwakitawa Mwang'ombe (neurosurgeon), Emily Soko (Sunday school teacher), Harold Mwashighadi Mwang'ombe (priest), Faith Mvono Braganza (manager), and Charity Lukundo Mwang'ombe (secretary). Additionally, two of her granddaughters were ordained as priests in the Anglican Church and now serve as missionaries in other churches.

### **Mothers' Union Leadership**

In 1963, her husband, Archdeacon Peter Mwang'ombe, was consecrated as the Bishop of Mombasa, the first African to hold that position in the diocese. As the Bishop's wife, Maryam assumed the presidency of the Mothers' Union (MU) in 1964, succeeding Gladys Beecher. She had been a member of the MU since 1954. At the time, the Movement faced a lukewarm reception at the Coast, hindered by entrenched cultural barriers. With the tenacity and wisdom reminiscent of the biblical Abigail, Maryam initiated a process of cultural adaptation among Coastal Bantu women, particularly among the Taita, Taveta, and Miji Kenda communities. Her visionary leadership became evident as she strengthened the Movement by organizing leadership workshops to build the capacity of MU leaders.

While serving as president, Maryam mobilized women to attend leadership workshops and training sessions at the parish level. These trainings lasted for three months, after which successful participants were admitted into the MU. Determined to ensure the MU thrived in its women's ministry, Maryam remained steadfast in training leaders and building capacity for both church and community service. She consistently emphasized that MU members must dedicate their lives to Christ, stressing that no one can be a beacon of light unless they are connected to the source of light—Jesus Christ, the true vine (John 15). To her, the MU was an organization for born-again mothers, a message she tirelessly repeated at every gathering. Maryam also promoted the observance of the MU midday prayer to participate in the global prayer link.

Maryam was an active and committed women's leader who led by example. In 1965, Peninah Serwanga was appointed as the Diocesan MU Coordinator. Together, the two women combined their skills and efforts to implement a Training of Trainers (TOT) program, equipping leaders to train MU members at the Archdeaconry and parish levels. This initiative resulted in a significant increase in MU membership throughout the Diocese.

Maryam acted as the Provincial MU President for a time before Archbishop Festo Olang' was enthroned in 1971, after which Mama Eseri Olang' became the first Anglican MU President in Kenya. Around the same period, Rev. Peninah Serwanga was elected the first African Provincial MU Secretary, succeeding Sister Irene Lockett of Church Army Africa, Nairobi.

Owing to her wisdom and remarkable performance, Maryam was fondly

referred to as *Kinara* (a beacon of light). This title was indeed fitting. To the MU members, she was a source of inspiration and guidance. Her exemplary leadership was far-reaching, encompassing not only spiritual formation and holistic human development but also community empowerment through health initiatives and improved agricultural practices.

Maryam's spirituality was holistic and exemplary, consistently leading from the front. Through her life and witness, she inspired many women to come to Christ. She strongly emphasized spiritual growth, both among MU members and the wider community. This led to the establishment of weekly Bible study sessions at Wakefield House in Majengo, King'orani. Maryam was always neatly and modestly dressed, encouraging MU members to present themselves smartly, with black shoes and handbags, along with the designated white headgear as a reflection of God's glory. She regularly reminded them to wear their full uniforms during all MU events. This emphasis on uniformity and presentation extended even to the clergy within her sphere of influence. For her, the MU uniform was not merely a symbol of identity but also a visible expression of commitment and boldness in the faith, in line with 2 Timothy 1:8.

Maryam had a deep passion for both children's and youth ministry. She actively involved trained MU members in teaching Sunday school and mentoring the youth to become strong ambassadors for Christ. She was quick to recognize and nurture talents among the young people within her jurisdiction. Notably, she identified Zablon Sifa, the youth ministry chairperson at the Cathedral, and appointed him to collaborate with MU members to strengthen youth work. At the same time, she entrusted Samson Masaku with the leadership of the children's ministry. Under her leadership, MU members remained fully engaged in promoting a holistic approach to ministry throughout the Diocese.

### **Girls Friendly Society**

The Girls' Friendly Society (GFS) was a unique and impactful ministry dedicated to nurturing young girls. It was established in the Diocese of Mombasa in 1960 by Grace Camm, a CMS missionary based at the Mbale CMS Station in Taita. In a remarkably short time, GFS membership grew rapidly across the diocese, spreading like wildfire. The bishop was deeply impressed by the large number of girls participating and being prepared for commissioning. Due to the overwhelming growth, he delegated the responsibility of enrollment and commissioning to the Archdeacons within their respective Archdeaconries. The first twelve girls in the diocese were admitted into GFS at Mbale by Archbishop Leonard Beecher. Among them was Peninah Serwanga, who later became a minister and is now retired.

In those days, the MU department was responsible for coordinating children's and youth affairs across the diocese. The GFS functioned as a special section within these two groups. However, the volume of work was so great that the MU office could not manage all the responsibilities on its own. The late Rev. Jefferson Mwadime was appointed to serve both in his parish ministry and concurrently oversee the youth docket. Later, archdeaconry leaders were appointed to support him in this role.

Among them, Rev. Zablon Sifa made a tremendous voluntary contribution. He worked closely with the Diocesan Youth Coordinator and was provided with transport through the MU vehicle. Accompanied by MU members who supported Maryam, Rev. Sifa's efforts to coordinate and mentor the youth were greatly facilitated.

In the Lower Coast, Eunice Mupe was among the first girls to be admitted into the GFS at the Mombasa Memorial Cathedral. She exhibited exceptional leadership qualities and quickly became a favorite among MU members. Recognizing her strong Christian principles and values, Maryam took it upon herself to mentor Eunice and prepare her for greater responsibilities. Eunice grew steadily in her faith, eventually becoming a prominent GFS leader in the diocese and later a cherished MU leader and mentor.

The MU supported and guided her during her wedding, as she served as the diocesan role model for the youth. Given MU's responsibility for coordinating children and youth ministry, Maryam worked to ensure that the GFS would thrive. She recognized the need for young girls to be nurtured and mentored both in the Word of God and in life skills.

### **Fight Against Female Genital Mutilation**

During the early years of Maryam's leadership, it was evident that the gospel of Christ was taking root. The Diocese experienced growth, and many people were coming to faith in the Lord. However, as in the early church, cultural and traditional practices continued to exist alongside the new faith. Among these were female genital mutilation (FGM) and early marriages, customs that deprived young members of the community of the opportunity to realize their full potential in life.

As Christianity spread along the Coast region and Christian values took root, the Diocesan Synod passed a resolution to eradicate FGM among its members. Christians who engaged in this harmful practice would face excommunication from Holy Communion and removal from positions of leadership within the Church. The Synod entrusted the Diocesan MU leadership with the responsibility of spearheading efforts to eliminate FGM. Archdeacons and Vicars, together with their wives, were expected to work closely with the MU to accelerate the complete eradication of the practice among girls within the Christian community. This traditional rite was condemned as a violation of the human rights of girls and women, as well as a barbaric and un-Christian practice.

In those days, "the cut" symbolized a girl's maturity, and those who underwent the rite were typically married off soon afterward. With the rise of campaigns against FGM, girls who refused the practice often fled from home or were expelled by their families, leaving them vulnerable. Under the leadership of Maryam, Christian medical doctors, primarily from St. Luke's Hospital in Kaloleni, as well as from other hospitals in Mombasa, played a key role in raising awareness among believers about the dangers of FGM and the serious health risks it posed to girls and women. School teachers also proved to be instrumental allies in this important cause.

## **Mama Ngina Girls School**

Maryam joyfully transformed a house near the Bishop's residence into a girls' hostel, creating a safe haven for vulnerable and helpless girls who had fled their homes to escape FGM, as well as those attending school in Mombasa without a secure place to stay. She lovingly mentored these rescued girls with motherly care and Christian compassion.

After some time, Maryam sought land to build a hostel for the girls. Her efforts were rewarded when the then Provincial Commissioner, Isaiah Mathenge, granted MU a plot for constructing the Mama Ngina Hostels, which later became the well-known Mama Ngina Girls' High School. Subsequently, some of the rescued girls enrolled in secretarial courses and secured jobs to support themselves. These achievements are significant and should not be overlooked.

## **Collaborating With Professionals**

Another key factor that contributed to Maryam's success was her engagement with professionals. By delegating responsibilities, she was able to enhance the well-being of people both in the church and in society. This group included clergy and dedicated believers who were entrusted with the spiritual care of communities within specific areas. It also included Christian-trained schoolteachers, who played active roles in Sunday School, outreach ministry, and mentoring in schools.

Medical personnel were primarily engaged in addressing health-related issues, such as maternal and child healthcare, nutrition, and improving community livelihoods. These services also served as avenues for spreading the good news. Agricultural officers educated farmers on improved farming techniques and promoted kitchen gardening, particularly among urban residents. Members of the MU likewise encouraged one another to put into practice what they had learned from professionals.

## **Mothers' Union Income Generating Projects.**

During that period, all MU activities were fully funded by the London head office, covering salaries, vehicles, housing, and nearly all operational needs. Mariam foresaw the risks of overdependence on donor funding, recognizing the potential crisis should financial support be withdrawn.

Together with her Diocesan MU Council, they initiated various income-generating projects (IGP). This initiative was warmly embraced by MU members across the diocese, with individual parishes developing projects tailored to their unique needs and capacities. These ventures included poultry farming, rabbit rearing, and gardening. Some communities built girls' hostels and nursery schools. In the Upper Coast region (Taita/Taveta), women engaged in horticultural farming. Additionally, certain areas offered adult literacy classes for a small fee, while others established sewing and knitting workshops. Beyond their economic benefits, these projects provided a valuable space for women to gather, share testimonies, and support one

another through life's journey.

One major benefit of these projects was that they enabled groups to meet their diocesan obligations. Each group was required to remit a portion of their IGP earnings to the MU head office as diocesan subscriptions. Additionally, they gave a tithe of all their income to their respective parishes. At the end of the year, the remaining funds were divided among members on what became popularly known as “share-out day.” This initiative motivated the women to work with greater enthusiasm and even attracted those who had initially been skeptical, drawing them into the movement.

When Maryam shared this idea at the MU Diocesan council, the ladies were filled with joy and praised the Lord for such a brilliant concept. They all rose to sing the well-known anthem, *“Tukutendereza Yesu”* (We Praise You, Jesus!) This moment was both an eye-opener and a blessing for future generations. What Maryam had envisioned came to fruition. Thanks to the positive impact of the gospel of Christ in Kenya, more dioceses were eventually established. However, Mary Sumner in London could no longer financially support all these new dioceses. Thankfully, the Diocese of Mombasa was prepared for this challenge. Thank God for the vision and foresight of Mama Maryam! Her son, Rev. Newman Mwang’ombe, testified, saying, “We were there. We were her children. I have fond memories of her zeal for the work she did for the Mother’s Union.”

Maryam’s efforts had a significant impact across the entire Coastal Diocese, earning her widespread respect for her leadership and accomplishments. She was courageous and relentless in her passion for ministry, often visiting senior Government of Kenya offices to seek funding and donations in support of God’s work, determined to see her vision fulfilled. She was a source of inspiration and encouragement to both the young and the old, which enabled her to move seamlessly from parish to diocesan responsibilities. Maryam exemplified servant leadership, grounded in firm principles. This iron lady consistently had something meaningful to offer every group she encountered—children, youth, men, and women alike. She died on July 15, 2016.

### **Maryam’s Rich Legacy**

What Maryam and her husband Peter Mwang’ombe accomplished cannot all be shared here and now. The legacy these pioneers left behind deserves to be celebrated. Although we may not have witnessed their work firsthand or been directly influenced by their spiritual contributions in ministry, we now catch a foretaste of the great impact they made. Today, we build upon the foundation they laid. As Scripture reminds us in 1 Corinthians 3:13-14, “each one's work will become clear; for the Day will declare it, because it will be revealed by fire; and the fire will test each one's work, of what sort it is. If anyone's work, which they have built on, endures, they will receive a reward.” It is our responsibility to ensure that their legacy is not buried but is both appreciated and perpetuated. It is fitting to acknowledge and appreciate the work Maryam Mwangombe did for Christ in this diocese during her lifetime. She left a lasting impact on the lives of many.

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This article, received in 2025, was written by Very Rev. Dr. Canon Dorcus C. Kiundu Sub-Dean (PhD, Old Testament, University of Oakland, Australia), ACK Mombasa Memorial Cathedral and a researcher with DoMRI. This biography was originally written for the 2024 Kenya Christian Biographies Conference, held at ACK Mombasa Memorial Cathedral on April 23-24, 2024 under the original title “Mama Maryam Mwang’ombe (1914-2016): First African Anglican MU President; Advocacy against FGM among the Coastal Bantu Women.”

# Education, Pastoral Ministry and Politics: The Missional Legacy of Nathaniel Mweri Baya (1911-1994)<sup>85</sup>

By Ferdinand Manjewa M'bwangi



Nathaniel Mweri was a prominent Anglican priest and educator. Mweri's life journey epitomizes the transformative interplay between Christian mission, formal education, and sociopolitical engagement during the colonial period. Through a dynamic pastoral career that spanned remote rural regions and urban centers like Nairobi and Mombasa, Mweri helped plant churches, establish schools, mentor future clergy, and engage in nationalist struggles. His unique model of ministry, which blended evangelism, social advocacy, and grassroots development, made him a pivotal figure in the growth of Christianity and public life on Kenya's coast and beyond.

## Mweri's Family

Mweri was born in 1911 in Ulaya Ndogo village, Kilifi County, along the coast of Kenya. Nathaniel was his baptismal name, while Mweri, his clan name, means "glory," "clean," or "a holy person." He belonged to the *mbari ya Mwabaya Mwaro* (the clan of Mwabaya Mwaro). His father, Baya wa Yaa (also known as Tsawe Jumwa), was nicknamed "Baya Kizaya" (a broken pot). His mother was Sidi Mkambe Tsuma, also known as Hawa Jumwa.

Mweri married Naomi Sidi Kombe, and together they had nine children, five girls and four boys: Loice Kache, Silas Mweri, Isaac Morris Charo Mweri, Betty Kadi Kenga, Pauline Mwenda Rimba, Dorothy Kadzo Nganje, Hilda Nyevu Muramba, Benjamin Mweri, and George Jefwa Mweri.

## Mweri's Spirituality

Mweri was a well-built, sober, and charismatic young man, known for his orderly lifestyle and deep spiritual commitment.<sup>86</sup> He was firmly grounded in the Bible and devoted to prayer, and is fondly remembered for his slogan, "*riri pia rindakira*" (this too shall pass), reflecting his unwavering faith in God's intervention. Mweri was notably prayerful; one could often hear him praying early in the morning. He regularly read the Bible, often doing so before beginning his day's work. To him, prayer and Bible reading were inseparable practices.

Mweri's pastoral ministry was marked by manifestations of divine power,

<sup>85</sup> See Photo Index in Appendix 5.

<sup>86</sup> Japheth Karisa Chengo, interview with author, March 27, 2024, Kaloleni, phone conversation and Owen Yaa Baya, interview with author, March 18, 2024, Kilifi County, personal interview.

including instances of healing and deliverance. One such case involved a woman in Marekebuni, who had been seriously ill. Mweri would visit her regularly for prayer until she eventually recovered. In another instance, when his grandchild suffered from asthmatic attacks, Mweri would administer Holy Communion to the child even before formal confirmation, demonstrating his pastoral sensitivity and deep trust in the sacraments.<sup>87</sup>

## Ministerial Formation

Before joining formal schooling, Mweri worked as a traditional cattle herder, tending his father's livestock. In 1904, Church Missionary Society (CMS) missionaries Florence Deed and A. L. Mason established a mission station at Kaloleni with the aim of introducing Western medicine to the Giriama people, providing formal education in literacy, and promoting conversion to the Christian faith.<sup>88</sup>

Around 1936, Dr. David Gerald Milton-Thompson, who served both as a medical doctor at St. Luke's Hospital and as a missionary at St. John's Kaloleni Parish,<sup>89</sup> as well as principal of St. John's Intermediate School, visited the home of Nathaniel Mweri in Bungale, Magarini Constituency. He was accompanied by his translator, Kagujo, from the village of Forodhoyo. During the visit, Thompson found Nathaniel in the grazing fields and asked if he was interested in attending school. Although Mweri agreed to the invitation, his curiosity was more piqued by the missionary's Land Rover than by the idea of education, as he had no understanding of what education entailed at the time. Thompson invited him to board the vehicle so they could return to his home and consult his parents. However, upon their arrival, they found Nathaniel's mother at home while his father was likely away hunting.<sup>90</sup>

When Mweri informed his mother that he intended to go with the missionary to Kaloleni to pursue education, she wept bitterly in protest. However, her tears did not deter him from pursuing the opportunity to develop a relationship with the missionary. Likewise, his father opposed the idea of his son leaving home to join St. John's Intermediate School. Both parents were deeply reluctant to allow Mweri to accompany the missionary. When Mweri joined St. John's Intermediate School, his visits at their home were met with disapproval from his father. However, despite his dissatisfaction, he did not prevent Mweri from returning to school. He likely chose to tolerate his son's decision, allowing him to continue with his education at St. John's Kaloleni.<sup>91</sup>

Mweri joined St. John's Intermediate School in 1936. During his time there, he learned to read and write and was introduced to the Gospels, which led to his

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<sup>87</sup> Alphonse Mwaro Baya, interview with author, March 27, 2024, Bishop's office, ACK Diocese Mombasa, personal interview.

<sup>88</sup> Gordon Hewitt, *The Problems of Success: A History of the Church Missionary Society 1910–1942* (London: SCM Press, 1971), 21.

<sup>89</sup> Government of Kenya, *The Kenya Gazette*, vol. LXXI, no. 37 (August 25, 1969).

<sup>90</sup> Owen Yaa Baya, interview with author, March 18, 2024, Kilifi County, personal interview.

<sup>91</sup> Owen Yaa Baya, interview with author, March 18, 2024, Kilifi County, personal interview.

conversion to the Christian faith. After four years of formal education, he received his intermediate certificate around 1940. Mweri was ordained as a deacon on January 1, 1938, and later ordained to the priesthood on December 18, 1939, at ACK Immanuel Church, Kengeleni, Kisauni Parish, by the Rt. Rev. Reginald Grabbe, the third Bishop of the Anglican Diocese of Mombasa.<sup>92</sup>

Following his ordination, which marked his transition into a Christian teacher-clergy, Mweri was posted to Marafa School, a missionary center located in the expansive Magharini Constituency of Kilifi County. At Marafa, Mweri adopted a holistic mission strategy that combined teaching in primary schools with church planting. He also taught religious education, and his work was well received by the local community. As his influence grew and many people began following him, Mweri initiated a small Anglican congregation in Marafa.<sup>93</sup>

Mweri's mission bore both personal and ministry fruit. On the one hand, it was during his time teaching in Marafa that he met the love of his life, Naomi Sidi, who was then his student. On the other hand, Mweri had to endure significant hardship. Before receiving any means of transport, he walked long distances to teach in schools scattered across the region, including Bungale, Dakacha, Chakama, and even parts of Ganze such as Kaupanga Primary School in Malindi. His situation improved when Thompson, a school inspector at the time, visited and provided him with a bicycle, enabling him to expand his evangelistic outreach more efficiently.<sup>94</sup>

Around 1946, Thompson made another visit to Marafa. During this visit, he was deeply impressed by the extensive pastoral and evangelistic work carried out by Mweri, in addition to his teaching in various schools. Recognizing his dedication, Thompson offered Mweri an opportunity to pursue theological training at Limuru Divinity School, now known as St. Paul's University, Limuru. Mweri accepted the offer and traveled to Limuru with his wife, Naomi Sidi, and their two children, Silas Mweri and Loice Kache.<sup>95</sup>

## **Mweri's Pastoral and Missional Work**

Mweri successfully completed his divinity studies at Limuru Divinity School between 1946 and 1949. Armed with a St. John's Intermediate Certificate and a Diploma in Divinity, he was well prepared to take on more complex church responsibilities. He first served in Nairobi before returning to the Kenyan coast. Mweri ministered at St. Stephen's Church, Jogoo Road, from 1952 to 1968, a period that coincided with the state of emergency declared by the British colonial government during the Mau Mau uprising (1952–1960).

At the time, the pastoral area under St. Stephen's parish was vast, covering

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<sup>92</sup> Alphonse Baya, Interview with author, February 27, 2024, at the Bishop's office, ACK Diocese of Mombasa, personal interview.

<sup>93</sup> Owen Yaa Baya, interview with author, March 18, 2024, Kilifi County, personal interview.

<sup>94</sup> Owen Yaa Baya, interview with author, March 18, 2024, Kilifi County, personal interview.

<sup>95</sup> Owen Yaa Baya, interview with author, March 18, 2024, Kilifi County, personal interview.

Nairobi, Kajiado, Narok, Machakos, and Mtito Andei. This region now forms five separate Anglican dioceses: Nairobi, Kajiado, Machakos, Makueni, and Kitui. Mweri also witnessed a significant ecclesiastical milestone in 1960, the formation of the Anglican Province of Kenya, which emerged from the Diocese of Mombasa. This transition occurred under Bishop Leonard Beecher, who succeeded Bishop Richard Crabbe as head of the restructured Diocese of Mombasa.<sup>96</sup>

Mweri employed a combined strategy of church services and train evangelism to reach communities across a vast area, a model he borrowed from Bishops Grabe and Beecher, who had similarly ministered to expansive regions in East Africa. While serving as vicar of St. Stephen's Church, Mweri would begin his Sunday service at the church, then board a train, stopping at various stations to conduct services. He would hold a service in Machakos on Monday, continue by train to the next stop, conduct another service, and repeat this pattern until he reached Mtito Andei. There, he would hold the final service before boarding a return train to Nairobi, stopping at locations he had skipped on the way to conduct additional services. Through this method, Mweri played a crucial role in establishing numerous Anglican churches along the railway line from Nairobi to Mtito Andei.<sup>97</sup> At times, trains would make special stops to allow him to preach and baptize, after which he would rejoin the journey.<sup>98</sup>

In addition to his roles in preaching, teaching, and baptizing, Mweri also played a significant role in the political struggle for Kenyan independence. From a political standpoint, he actively supported the Mau Mau movement. Not only did he use the church as a space to nurture the spiritual and intellectual lives of his congregation, but he also offered it as a refuge for Mau Mau fighters, where they could receive food, clothing, and weapons. Mweri became the priest of the Mau Mau, and his church in Nairobi, particularly in areas such as Kariako, Kaloleni, and Pumwani, served as a strategic meeting point. During church services, sympathizers would discreetly deliver supplies, including food, clothing, and firearms. The church was considered a safe haven, and the Mau Mau regularly sought Mweri's prayers before returning to their mission.<sup>99</sup>

For navigating the delicate balance between the colonial government and the Mau Mau, Mweri eventually paid a price. On one occasion, the Mau Mau attended a church service and began praying in the traditional Kikuyu manner. This unsettled some colonialists present in the congregation, prompting a police raid on the church during which Mweri was arrested. Clad in his clerical collar, he was recognized by the police commandant as his priest and was promptly released. Following Kenya's attainment of independence, Mware had the honor of offering a prayer during the independence celebrations on December 12, 1963, alongside Archbishop Leonard Beecher and

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<sup>96</sup> Alphonse Mwaro Baya, March 27, 2024, at the Bishop's office, ACK Diocese of Mombasa, personal interview.

<sup>97</sup> Owen Yaa Baya, interview with author, March 18, 2024, Kilifi County, personal interview.

<sup>98</sup> Alphonse Mwaro Baya, March 27, 2024, at the Bishop's office, ACK Diocese of Mombasa, personal interview.

<sup>99</sup> Owen Yaa Baya, interview with author, March 18, 2024, Kilifi County, personal interview.

Cardinal Maurice Otunga.<sup>100</sup>

## Mweri's Return to the Kenyan Coast

The next phase of Mweri's pastoral and missional life began with his return to the Kenyan coast. From 1969 to the early 1990s, he served in various capacities within the Diocese of Mombasa. During this period, Mweri witnessed the leadership transition of five bishops, two Western missionary bishops and three Kenyan African bishops. As a priest, he ministered across several regions along the Kenyan coast, including among the descendants of the first generation of freed slaves. He served as parish vicar at St. Andrew's, Malindi, in 1969; at Kaloleni Parish in the 1970s; and at ACK Emmanuel Church, Kengeleni in Kisauni, Mombasa, from 1980 to the early 1990s, ministering especially among communities historically linked to the freed slave settlements.

In the 1840s, Sir Bartle Frere purchased 600 acres of land in Mombasa to resettle freed slaves. However, over time, much of this land was illegally acquired by private individuals, with only the Church compound remaining intact. Between 1925 and 1930, the freed slave community was relocated from the area near Kongowea Market to the present-day Free Town, near Kisimani.<sup>101</sup> Mweri later served in Taita-Taveta as a priest and education secretary, overseeing school management. During his tenure, he was based at Sungululu, Mbale, and was responsible for approximately five schools in the region, including Mwaghogho and Mwandango.

The peak of Mweri's church ministry came in 1981, during the transitional period following the resignation of Bishop Peter Mwang'ombe and before the consecration of Chrispus Nzano as Bishop of Mombasa. During this interim, Mweri and Canon Kituri, who had been canonized at the same time, alternated in serving as the Archbishop's Commissary in the Diocese of Mombasa. Each served in this role for 10 days at a time, continuing in rotation until Nzano's consecration.

## Mweri's Commitment to Education and Community Development

Mweri was deeply committed to education, both for his immediate family and the surrounding communities. A passionate advocate for learning, he ensured that all his children and grandchildren attended school. Notably, one of his grandchildren, Hon. Owen Baya, Member of Parliament for Kilifi North Constituency and Deputy Leader of the Majority in the Kenyan Parliament, stands as a testament to this legacy. Mweri played a foundational role in establishing several schools in his region, including St. Andrew's Primary School Malindi, Dabaso Primary School, Gede Secondary School, and Ngala Memorial Girls' Secondary School in Dabaso. He also served on numerous school boards and generously supported the education of other children whom he

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<sup>100</sup> Owen Yaa Baya, interview with author, March 18, 2024, Kilifi County, personal interview.

<sup>101</sup> Tom Jalio, "Mombasa's Free Town People and Their Land Claims," *The Star*, February 17, 2020.

fostered or assisted through school.<sup>102</sup>

Besides promoting education as a means to combat ignorance and poverty, Mweri was deeply committed to redeeming his community through pastoral ministry. His dedication is evident in his active involvement in Bible literacy programs, hymn translation, and mentorship initiatives. He was not only the priest who received the first copy of the Kiswahili Bible at Wilson Airport in Nairobi but also the founding chairman of the Giriama Bible Translation and Literacy Committee, which produced the Giriama hymn book *Maira ga Kumulika Mulungu* (Hymns for Praising God). Additionally, he mentored several individuals who went on to pursue theological education and ordained ministry, including Ven. James Changawa, Bishop Julius Kalu, Ven. Malau, Ven. Samuel Nyamawi, Ven. Justin Muramba, Rev. Robert Mangi, Rev. Samuel Mangi, and Rev. Capt. David Mole.<sup>103</sup>

## Mweri's Final Days

In 1994, shortly after his retirement from active church ministry, Mweri fell ill and was briefly hospitalized at St. Luke's Makupa Hospital. In his final days, he suffered kidney failure and died at the Coast General Hospital, Mombasa. In recognition of his lifelong dedication to holistic church mission and his role as a founding member, the local churches requested that his body be laid to rest on the grounds of ACK St. Stephen Church Dabaso. The family honored this request, and he was buried at the church compound in Dabaso village, Kilifi.<sup>104</sup> Notably, his death and burial coincided with the establishment of the Taita-Taveta and the present Mombasa Dioceses.<sup>105</sup>

Nathaniel Mweri's life and ministry reflected a holistic mission philosophy that integrated education, evangelism, and civic engagement. His early ministry in Marafa laid the groundwork for a legacy of church planting and Christian education across Kilifi County and using innovative train evangelism to reach vast pastoral areas during a politically volatile era. During the Mau Mau uprising, Mweri supported the independence movement and utilized his clerical role to provide both material and spiritual support to the freedom fighters. He helped establish numerous schools and played a foundational role in Bible literacy and hymn translation among the Giriama people. His mentorship nurtured future church leaders, and his advocacy for education left a generational impact.

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<sup>102</sup> Benjamin Mweri Baya, interview with author, March 11, 2024, at ACK St. Thomas, Kilifi parish, personal interview.

<sup>103</sup> Alphonse Mwaro Baya, March 27, 2024, at the Bishop's office, ACK Diocese of Mombasa, personal interview and Owen Yaa Baya, interview with author, March 18, 2024, Kilifi County, personal interview.

<sup>104</sup> Benjamin Mweri Baya, interview with author, March 11, 2024, at ACK St. Thomas, Kilifi parish, personal interview.

<sup>105</sup> Owen Yaa Baya, interview with author, March 18, 2024, Kilifi County, personal interview.

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# Rose Mlale Mwadime (1938-2013): Championing Mothers' Union Ministry in the Anglican Church of Kenya, Dioceses of Nairobi and Mombasa

By Evans Mwangi

Rose Mlale Mwadime (1938-2013) had a transformative impact on the Mothers' Union in the Anglican Church of Kenya (ACK) Dioceses of Nairobi and Mombasa through her visionary leadership and unwavering enthusiasm. She championed women's economic empowerment, fostered unity among women in the church, and served as a catalyst for social change.

## Early Life and Family

Rose was born on October 3, 1938, the firstborn in a family of eight siblings, six boys and two girls. She was raised in a moderately well-off household; her paternal grandfather owned a large livestock ranch. Rose began her education at a local primary school before progressing to Murray Intermediate Girls' School, the most prestigious school in Taita-Taveta at the time. She later joined a local teachers' training college. Upon completing her training, she began her teaching career at Mkwachunyi Primary School. Those who knew her during this time describe her as a firm, hardworking, loving, and caring teacher. Rose integrated academics, social ethics, and Christian discipleship in her teaching.<sup>106</sup>

Rose was known for riding a bicycle from home to school, an unusual sight in her village at the time. In those days, it was rare to see a woman riding a bicycle in Taita, despite the considerable distance between Rose's home and the school where she taught. Public transportation was virtually nonexistent in that part of Taita, as was the case in many regions of Kenya at the time. As she cycled through the villages, Rose often endured curious stares, ridicule, and harsh criticism from the villagers. Her mother, Mary Saru, became the subject of mockery as many believed she had made a foolish choice by sending her daughters to school, leaving no one to help with farm work. Mary allowing Rose and her other daughter to train and become teachers was considered a great embarrassment, and some even saw it as foolish for her to consent to their education.<sup>107</sup>

Later, Rose married Jefferson Willy Mwadime. In the early years of their marriage, Jefferson was admitted to St. Paul's Theological College in Limuru, Kenya, where he trained as a full-time priest to serve in the ACK. Upon completing his ministerial training, he was posted to ACK All Saints Parish in Mbale, Taita-Taveta,

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<sup>106</sup> Bryson Samboja, interview by author, February 10, 2024, Kwale, email correspondence.

<sup>107</sup> Elias Kombo, interview by author, March 10, 2024, Taita-Taveta, phone conversation, and Sera Nzano, interview by author, March 10, 2024, Nairobi, phone conversation.

within the Diocese of Mombasa. This appointment marked the beginning of Rose's active involvement in Mothers' Union work.<sup>108</sup>

## **Christian Missions and the Rise of Rose as an African Woman Leader**

In East Africa, women responded to the arrival of European missionaries in diverse ways. Some African girls received education from European women attached to the overseas missions, while others were denied such opportunities. In many cases, young women were married off early by their parents to prevent them from attending school, even if they desired an education. Missionary women, on their part, employed the language of spirituality to frame and humanize their engagement with the African landscape, offering a distinct response to the environment.

Missionaries believed that African women should be trained to create proper Christian homes for their husbands, who were expected to be more educated than women. Like their European counterparts, African women were seen as primarily responsible for managing the household. Some African women served as church leaders. For example, William Jones held a leadership role at Rabai Mpya, a mission station established by early missionaries about 15 kilometers from Mombasa City. The establishment of churches and mission centers in the interior of East Africa by Africans from Bombay, who were employed and compensated by missionaries, significantly contributed to the spread of Christianity among African women.

Overall, African women actively responded to the arrival of European missionaries by pursuing education, serving as church leaders, and significantly contributing to the establishment of churches and mission centers throughout the interior of East Africa, even after the countries gained independence. Rose was one of the few women who, supported by her parents, seized the opportunity to become a devoted Christian and pursue her education despite discouragement from her peers. Rose later became a prominent advocate for women and families within the ACK Dioceses of Nairobi and Mombasa. Her lifelong dedication to the Mothers' Union had a profound impact on the communities she served, establishing her as a respected leader and a champion of social change.

In mid-1965, Rose and her husband had the opportunity to travel to England for a year of further training in Christian ministry. During this time, Rose acquired valuable insights and developed strong organizational skills, particularly in family and women's ministry. This experience greatly equipped her for the work she would undertake with the Mothers' Union in later years, enabling her to serve with confidence and effectiveness.<sup>109</sup>

Rose experienced firsthand the struggles and challenges faced by women and families in her Taita community. Moved by a deep sense of empathy and justice, she

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<sup>108</sup> Elias Kombo, interview by author, March 10, 2024, Taita-Taveta, phone conversation

<sup>109</sup> Sera Nzano, interview by author, March 10, 2024, Nairobi, phone conversation.

began a journey to address these issues, one that eventually led her to the work of the Mothers' Union later in life. With unwavering dedication, she committed herself to uplifting the lives of other women, exemplifying compassion, service, and solidarity.

## Rose's Organizational Skills

Rose's exceptional organizational skills, which greatly contributed to her efforts to bring about positive transformation within the Mothers' Union in both the ACK Diocese of Nairobi and the Diocese of Mombasa, were largely shaped by a year-long training program she underwent in England. Rose had a remarkable talent for organization. She skillfully planned and coordinated various activities aimed at supporting women and families. Whether it was organizing workshops to teach new skills or sourcing funds for women in need, Rose consistently found practical ways to make things happen. Her ability to collaborate with others further strengthened her impact and effectiveness.<sup>110</sup>

While in England, Rose had the opportunity to interact with women from other parts of Africa as well as from other developing countries. She also spent considerable time socializing and engaging with English women. According to Rose's youngest daughter:

The training in England enabled my mother to acquire a multicultural viewpoint on life, which enlarged her thinking and reasoning capacity. Among the areas she was trained in were home-nursing, food & nutrition, first-aid, etiquette, Christian ministry, and how to conduct Bible Study, among other areas. These skills and others helped her to transform mothers who became better in their general and church life. My mother was a good role model to women in the church and to us, too, as her daughters.<sup>111</sup>

Rose was highly competent in addressing women's issues with effectiveness and insight. She related easily with people of all ages, genders, backgrounds, and levels of education. Her work in the two dioceses clearly demonstrated that she was well-equipped and dedicated to the mission of the Mothers' Union.<sup>112</sup>

## Rose's Spiritual Insights

Rose gave her life to Christ at a very early age and later led her parents and grandparents to accept Jesus Christ as their Lord and Savior. This earned her deep respect from her family and marked the beginning of her Christian ministry. She later became a prominent leader in the Mothers' Union.<sup>113</sup> Rose's faith in God was central to her life.

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<sup>110</sup> Anglican Church of Kenya Diocese of Nairobi: MU, File No: 1- 1959-1979.

<sup>111</sup> Sera Nzano, interview by author, March 10, 2024, Nairobi, phone conversation.

<sup>112</sup> Sera Nzano, interview by author, March 10, 2024, Nairobi, phone conversation.

<sup>113</sup> Elias Kombo, interview by author, March 10, 2024, Taita-Taveta, phone conversation.

Jesus was her guiding priority, influencing everything she did. She believed that supporting women was a powerful expression of love and kindness, reflecting the teachings of her faith. Regularly praying and reflecting, she sought ways to impact women's lives positively. Her faith gave her strength and courage to persevere, even in the face of difficult and seemingly impossible challenges.<sup>114</sup>

Rose organized Mothers' Union prayer groups, encouraging women to pray alongside their other activities within the dioceses she served as a Mothers' Union leader. To deepen the faith of women in rural areas, she also established Bible study groups for them. This initiative helped the women grow in their Christian faith and values, leading to a positive transformation in their lives. Rose was truly a transformative leader in her Mothers' Union ministry.

### **Rose's Transformational Impact on the Mothers' Union Ministry in the Anglican Church of Kenya Dioceses of Nairobi and Mombasa**

Rose's impact on the Mothers' Union in the ACK Dioceses of Nairobi and Mombasa was truly transformative. Through her visionary leadership and tireless advocacy, she championed initiatives that tackled critical issues such as gender inequality, poverty, healthcare access, and education.

### **Rose's Mothers' Union Ministry in Taita, Mombasa Diocese**

Leaving her family in the care of relatives, Rose traversed the hills, valleys, and plains of Taita, seeking out women to teach and evangelize, equipping them to fulfill the objectives of the worldwide Mothers' Union, which are: To uphold the sanctity of marriage as a lifelong relationship; To awaken in all mothers a sense of their great responsibility in the training of their boys and girls; To organise in every place a band of mothers who will unite in prayer and seek by their own example to lead their families in purity and holiness in life.

Rose organized annual prayer and teaching gatherings for women across both the lower and upper Coast during those early years, aiming for their complete transformation. She firmly believed that the church's role was to transform the community, and that this could be achieved most effectively by empowering women holistically. Through her guidance, women learned to pool their limited resources and gradually build self-reliance, fostering holistic growth in their lives.<sup>115</sup>

### **Rose's Mothers' Union Ministry in Nairobi Diocese**

In December 1970, Rev. Jefferson Mwadime, Rose's husband, was appointed to serve at ACK St. John's, Pumwani, in the Diocese of Nairobi. Consequently, Rose and their

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<sup>114</sup> Bryson Samboja, interview by author, February 10, 2024, Kwale, email correspondence.

<sup>115</sup> Elias Kombo, interview by author, March 10, 2024, Taita-Taveta, phone conversation.

children relocated to Nairobi, where she continued to champion Mothers' Union work with unwavering dedication. Bishop Kombo, one of her former students, remarked on her transition to the ACK Diocese of Nairobi:

For Rose to have moved to Nairobi, this was the beginning of a new era in an urban set-up. Having trained in England, the transition wasn't much of a challenge except a change in the language of communication from kidawida and Kiswahili in her home area Taita to communicating in Kiswahili & English in Nairobi, the capital city of Kenya. It was quite a shift in lifestyle, but Rose took this change in stride and became a darling of the ladies at St. John's Pumwani, Nairobi, later.<sup>116</sup>

At ACK St John's Parish, Rose served as the chairperson of the Mothers' Union department. She worked closely with women from diverse backgrounds, including those from wealthy, middle-class, and poor families. St John's Parish bordered the Majengo Slums in Nairobi, home to many low-income residents, while nearby Pumwani and Eastleigh are predominantly middle-class neighborhoods. The parish also serves other areas in Eastlands, which are largely lower- and middle-income residential communities. Beyond the parish boundaries, Rose's Mothers' Union work extended to Bahati, Ziwanzi, Landimawe, Shauri Moyo, and Muthurwa.<sup>117</sup>

One of Rose's most significant contributions was the creation of community-based support networks for mothers and families facing adversity. These networks offered practical help alongside emotional and spiritual support, nurturing solidarity and resilience within marginalized communities such as Majengo.

During this period, Nairobi was segregated into residential areas based on race, with designated neighborhoods for Africans, Asians, and whites. The Majengo slums, predominantly inhabited by poor Africans, faced numerous challenges affecting women, including alcoholism, prostitution, and thuggery. Domestic violence, unstable relationships, and polygamy were common realities. Rose worked tirelessly to transform the lives of these women, beginning by building close, trusting relationships despite their difficult lifestyles. She then taught them how to establish small businesses to generate income for survival. Rose was particularly close to one woman from Majengo, so much so that she named her last-born daughter after her, Naomi Chepkoech.<sup>118</sup>

Rose also served as the Mothers' Union Coordinator for the Diocese of Nairobi. In this role, she oversaw a wide geographical area that included Nairobi, Machakos, Kithangathini, Syongila, Ulkia, Kitui, Kajiado, Loitokitok, and Isinya. Within Nairobi, the parishes under her care included All Saints' Cathedral, St. John's Pumwani, St. Barnabas, St. Stephen's, and Jericho. Rose empowered the Mothers' Union women to engage in various income-generating activities, such as jumble sales, fundraising events,

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<sup>116</sup> Elias Kombo, interview by author, March 10, 2024, Taita-Taveta, phone conversation.

<sup>117</sup> Sera Nzano, interview by author, March 10, 2024, Nairobi, phone conversation.

<sup>118</sup> Sera Nzano, interview by author, March 10, 2024, Nairobi, phone conversation.

and the production of handcraft items. She guided them on how to market and sell these products within their respective parishes. The proceeds were used to support the needy in their communities, while twenty percent of the funds raised was retained to support other Mothers' Union initiatives.<sup>119</sup>

Rose consistently reminded Mothers' Union members of their responsibility to ensure that their parish church buildings were well maintained and beautiful, both inside and out. She emphasized the importance of placing fresh flowers on the altars and taught that keeping altar vestments clean and in good condition was part of their sacred duty. Under her influence, the mothers not only bought new church furniture but also took the initiative to repair what could be restored.<sup>120</sup>

To foster fellowship, Rose encouraged mothers to organize tea parties and invite their husbands, neighbors, and members of other denominations beyond the ACK. Under her leadership, Mothers' Union members actively participated in church planting and the construction of worship sanctuaries. They also served as ushers during Sunday services and taught Sunday school. Additionally, the Mothers' Union ladies took the initiative to provide guidance and counsel to youth groups within their parishes.<sup>121</sup>

### **Mothers' Union Ministry in Mombasa**

In January 1976, the Rev. Jefferson Mwadime was appointed the first African Provost of the ACK Mombasa Memorial Cathedral. His wife, Rose, along with their children, accompanied him back to the Coast of Kenya, this time to the Lower Coast. Rose resigned from her Mothers' Union position in the ACK Diocese of Nairobi. Upon settling in Mombasa, she became the chairlady of the Mothers' Union at ACK Mombasa Memorial Cathedral. One of the first projects she undertook at the Cathedral was the transformation of a nursery school that had been initiated by the then Bishop's wife, Mariamu Mwang'ombe.

Rose, a well-trained teacher with additional relevant experience, played a key role in firmly establishing the project. To inspire confidence among other mothers, she enrolled her own daughter in the Cathedral's nursery school. This act encouraged the rest of the mothers to follow suit, leading to increased enrollment. Under Rose's firm supervision, along with her professional and spiritual guidance, the school experienced rapid growth. It soon gained a reputation for excellence, attracting other parishes within the Diocese who came to the Cathedral nursery school for benchmarking.<sup>122</sup>

Apart from her involvement with the school, Rose played a key role in uniting all the mothers at the Cathedral in Mombasa, fostering a strong sense of mutual support among them. She also held regular meetings with the youth and members of the Cathedral choir to address the challenges they faced both in their personal development

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<sup>119</sup> Anglican Church of Kenya Diocese of Nairobi: MU, File No:3- 1974- 1979.

<sup>120</sup> Anglican Church of Kenya Diocese of Nairobi: MU, File No:2- 1970.

<sup>121</sup> Anglican Church of Kenya Diocese of Nairobi: MU, File No:3- 1974- 1979.

<sup>122</sup> William Nzano, interview by author, March 16, 2024, Mombasa, email correspondence.

and in their service through music ministry. Later, Rose was elected as the Provincial Mothers' Union treasurer.<sup>123</sup> Her official service in the Mothers' Union concluded in 1994 when her husband, the Very Reverend Canon Jefferson Willy Mwadime, retired from active church ministry and returned to his rural home in Taita.

Rose died in 2013, leaving behind a legacy of compassion, courage, and service. Though her physical presence is no more, her spirit lives on in the countless lives she touched and the lasting impact of her work. Rose's legacy stands as a powerful testament to the transformative difference one individual can make through faith, perseverance, and an unwavering commitment to social justice.

## **Rose's Rich Legacy**

Rose Mlale Mwadime dedicated her life to making a meaningful impact on mothers within the church. Beginning with modest efforts, she emerged as a remarkable organizer, strengthening the work of the Mothers' Union in two key church regions. Guided by a deep faith in God and an unwavering work ethic, she transformed the lives of many women. Under her leadership, the Mothers' Union grew in influence and became a greater support to families. Rose's legacy reminds us that with faith and determination, we can bring lasting change to our communities.

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<sup>123</sup> Charity Kinyeki, interview by author, Mombasa, March 15, 2024, phone conversation.

This biography, submitted in July 2024, was researched and written by Rev. Dr. Evans Mwangi (PhD, Religious Studies, ANCCI University, Amarillo, Texas, USA), a full-time priest serving at ACK St. Joseph of Nazareth, Aldina, in the Diocese of Mombasa. He also serves as a part-time lecturer at Mount Kenya University and Bishop Hannington Institute in Mombasa. This biography was originally presented during the 2024 Kenya Christian Biographies Conference, held at ACK Mombasa Memorial Cathedral April 23-24, 2024 under the original title of “Rose Mlale Mwadime (1938-2013): A Champion of Mothers Union Work in ACK Dioceses of Taita-Taveta, Nairobi, and Mombasa.”

# The Legacy of Margaret Sidi Kadzomba (1942-2004) and her Impact on Church Growth<sup>124</sup>

By Everlyn Chadi Kombe



Margaret Sidi Kadzomba (1942-2004) worked among the Agiryama people in Kenya's Coast Province, significantly contributing to the growth of the church. Influenced by the Agiryama belief that problems stemmed from witchcraft, she taught Christianity as a way to overcome it. Despite facing persistent patriarchal challenges, she inspired many men and women to engage actively in church and community life. With unwavering faith and determination, Margaret became a valued evangelist committed to advancing God's purpose as a humble servant.

## Early Life and Faith

Margaret Sidi Kadzomba was born in 1942 and passed away in 2004. She was raised in Kaloleni village, in Kilifi County, among the Agiryama people. The Agiryama are one of the nine subgroups collectively known as the Mijikenda, a Bantu-speaking community that inhabits the coastal ridge of Kenya. The term *Mijikenda*, meaning “nine subtribes” or “nine villages,” refers to the following subgroups: Adigo, Aduruma, Akambe, Akauma, Ajibana, Aribi, Arabai, Achonyi, and Agiryama.<sup>125</sup>

Margaret came to faith during an open-air evangelistic crusade led by the late Reverend Benson Shisoka. At the time, she was living in Kiembeni, Mombasa County, and soon after, she joined Kiembeni Baptist Church, where Rev. Shisoka was the pastor. She was baptized there and grew steadily in the teachings of the church. In time, she discerned her calling and served faithfully and tirelessly until her passing away.

## The Challenge of Patriarchy

Kiembeni Baptist Church emerged from the Southern Baptist tradition, which is historically rooted in patriarchy.<sup>126</sup> As a result, the role of women in ministry has been, and remains, highly restricted. For instance, the Kenya Baptist Convention, whose

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<sup>124</sup> See Photo Index in Appendix 6, page 79.

<sup>125</sup> Johnson Mwangudza has highlighted key elements of the Agiryama culture in his book, which has been instrumental in understanding Margaret Sidi's worldview, given her Agiryama background.

<sup>126</sup> According to the *Dictionary of Feminist Theologies*, patriarchy refers to systems of legal, social, economic, and political relations that affirm and enforce the authority of male heads of households over dependent members. (Letty M. Russell and J. Shannon Clarkson, *Dictionary of Feminist Theologies* (Westminster: John Knox Press, 1996).

constitution is modeled on that of the Southern Baptist Convention, prohibits women from holding leadership positions that involve teaching or exercising religious authority over men, citing scriptural justification for this stance.

Patriarchy remained a persistent challenge Margaret faced in ministry. Women were only recognized as “ministers” if they prepared and served tea, meals, or snacks during pastors’ meetings, an expectation she firmly rejected. As a result, she was often at odds with church leadership. Nevertheless, she never allowed such limiting ideologies to hinder her from fully expressing her calling. She had unwavering faith in her God-given assignment and pursued it with determination. At times, some church elders even went so far as to label Margaret a temptress.<sup>127</sup>

They often referenced the story of Eve in Genesis and related it to the passage in Matthew 5:28-29. However, these elders never saw themselves as at fault. They argued that by consistently attending every ministry event, even during her “unclean days,” she was causing men to look at her lustfully. Arguably, her ministry was a deliberate effort to challenge and deconstruct patriarchy. In many ways, her work aligned with the mission Mercy Oduyoye championed. Margaret fought tirelessly for equality, paving the way for women to serve God without facing injustice.

### Kipangajeni

Margaret became a valuable evangelist who made a significant contribution to mission work. However, her efforts and role have not been sufficiently recognized or appreciated. Despite facing opposition within the church, she embraced the role of a local missionary, traveling to preach the gospel. Between 1991 and 1993, she frequently visited Kipangajeni, Kwa Mzee Mtinda wa Nguma, where she established a home fellowship. Her approach to spreading the gospel was sensitive to the customs of the Agryama people, aiming to foster a distinctly Agryama form of Christianity.

Margaret was distinguished by her zealous spirit and steadfast dedication. She was willing not only to live but also to die in obedience to her faith and commitment to Christ. Rain or scorching sun could not deter her; she labored faithfully under all conditions. In Kipangajeni, she joyfully embraced her God-given mission, thinking little of herself and focusing wholeheartedly on the people she believed she was called to serve. Rather than waiting for them to come to church, Margaret would go out to meet them where they were. She even ventured into the Mangweni, a place where the traditional local liquor, *mnazi*, was sold and people gathered to drink and make merry. There, she would engage them in conversations about Jesus and sing with them in Agryama. Some of the songs she composed spontaneously, drawing on their responses and using familiar Agryama tunes, but with biblical messages woven in. She welcomed the use of their traditional musical instruments, such as the *ndonga* and *kayamba*, to

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<sup>127</sup> Jane, Interview with author, November 14, 2023, personal interview. Jane was a member of Kiembeni Baptist Church and a close friend of Margaret Sidi.

create beautiful melodies that resonated with their hearts.<sup>128</sup>

The Mangweni fellowship was one of the ways Margaret shared the unfathomable love of Jesus Christ with all who would listen. She consistently emphasized the reality of the one true and living God, who alone is worthy of worship. Through this ministry, many individuals previously consumed by drinking *mnazi* (palm wine) encountered Jesus Christ. One such person, a *mgema* (traditional palm wine tapper), came to faith in Christ, joined the Kipangajeni AIC church under Pastor Joshua, and remains a committed believer actively serving in ministry to this day.

Margaret faced the challenge of lacking formal education. Orphaned at a young age, she was raised by a cousin who treated her as a housemaid. Nevertheless, she clearly understood that the ultimate goal of evangelism was to guide a convert from the point of decision to becoming a committed believer. She ensured that each new believer was firmly rooted in a local church fellowship. In line with this conviction, she worked closely with local pastors to ensure that converts were trained and equipped to take their place as productive members of the body of Christ.

Margaret assisted the ministers in organizing follow-ups, and she managed to establish a sound and effective discipleship program. She also provided counseling aimed at getting rid of the Agiryama traditional elements that do not add value to life. These had to be replaced with new biblical principles to ensure that those who had believed do not become nominal Christians. Margaret supported the ministers by coordinating follow-up visits and launching a sound, effective discipleship program. She also counseled new believers to shed unhelpful Agiryama traditional practices, replacing them with sound biblical principles to ensure their faith matured.

Among the Agiryama people, religion permeates every aspect of life so thoroughly that it is nearly impossible to separate it from daily activities. This affirms John Mbiti's assertion that Africans are notoriously religious. Margaret understood that the community's religious beliefs were deeply ingrained in their identity, giving them a profound sense of belonging. For instance, when a man sought to marry, he was required to pay a bride price accompanied by numerous rituals—some intended to cover even future children born from the union. Soon after the marriage, further rituals were conducted with the help of a medicine man to cleanse the home and install spiritual protection.

To most Agiryama people, failure to perform these rituals was believed to bring misfortune upon a marriage. Margaret had a deep understanding of the community's socio-religious beliefs and practices, and she presented the Gospel with cultural sensitivity. While remaining faithful to the message of Christ, she guided the people toward a biblical worldview. She labored tirelessly to help them come to a genuine acknowledgment of Jesus Christ. As a result, many began to seek God in earnest, leading to a true transformation. Margaret also established a similar fellowship in Nguutatu, Kwa Hussein Deri village, beginning in 1993. She visited the village every

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<sup>128</sup> Rev. Shadrack Dhuli, interview with author, November 6, 2023, personal interview. Rev. Dhuli was one of the key informants and a leader at Kiembeni Baptist Church. He currently serves as the Senior Pastor of Christ Formation Church in Kilifi.

Friday to lead evangelistic fellowship, and this ministry was equally successful.

### The Challenge of Witchcraft

Kipangageni was one local area deeply affected by the fear of witchcraft. Most homesteads were protected by the power of *fingo* and *vingango*. *Fingo* referred to a form of totemic power, while *vingango* were ancestral spirits. People also wore *hirizi*, charms believed to offer protection. Even the village elder played a role in maintaining, sustaining, and perpetuating this traditional belief system. This belief in witchcraft had held the community back from development.

Margaret was cautioned to be careful because of the dangerous power of witchcraft in the area. She was told that even trained clergy had previously worked there but were unable to overcome the forces that held the people captive. As a result, the villagers relied on protecting themselves from witchcraft. Witchdoctors were consulted at every major stage of life: from pregnancy, childbirth, naming, and initiation, to marriage and death, with rituals performed to ensure the wellbeing of the community. These beliefs were deeply woven into the fabric of society, giving rise to a variety of animistic practices.

Margaret relied on the power of the living God throughout her mission. Although she faced numerous challenges, including physical illness, moments of confusion, and opposition from church leaders, her persistence ultimately led to victory. Her witness in the region has historically demonstrated that Christianity is a powerful agent of transformation, capable of significantly improving the standard of living of the people. The teachings and preaching she shared were deeply connected to the local culture; rather than seeking to change the culture, she aimed to nurture Christians within their own cultural context. This approach aligns closely with the principles of contextualization as articulated by various missiologists.

### Denominational Barrier

Due to her limited formal education, Margaret did not engage with many of the questions that typically concern missiologists, such as strategic planning for evangelization or fundraising. Her approach was simple and Spirit-led. She would wake up with a sense of mission, ask those around her for transport fare, and as soon as she had enough, she would leave Kiembeni and travel to Kipangageni. She often stayed there for one or two weeks, spending her time going from place to place, telling people about Jesus. Those who responded positively and chose to follow Christ were connected to local churches. Margaret ensured they were nurtured in their faith and encouraged to grow into fruitful believers. Although she came from the Baptist tradition, she never allowed denominational boundaries to limit her work. She placed new converts in any nearby church and collaborated with the local pastors to facilitate their integration and spiritual growth.

Margaret's ministry at Kiembeni Baptist Church faced significant challenges,

primarily because she did not strictly adhere to Baptist denominational principles. As a result, her work was undermined and made increasingly difficult, ultimately prompting her to leave the church. She later joined Ushindi Baptist Church, where she was warmly welcomed and fully embraced. Under the leadership of Bishop Joseph Maisha, her ministry expanded significantly, and she planted a home-based church in her own homestead within Kiembeni Estate, where she took on a leadership role.

Margaret ministered faithfully through counseling, teaching, encouraging others, praying, and offering various forms of support. Her impact was so profound that fellow believers affectionately referred to her as Mama Kiembeni, a title reflecting her deep spiritual influence in the area. As the fellowship grew, however, a new challenge emerged: some members expressed the need for a male pastor. Although Ushindi remained a Baptist church, and patriarchal attitudes resurfaced, the matter was addressed constructively, thanks to Bishop Maisha's support for women in ministry.

However, this situation still impacted her ministry. She worked closely with Bishop David<sup>129</sup> of the New Testament Church, who agreed to the request to provide a male minister from his congregation. Since Bishop Maisha would not send them a male pastor, Bishop David appointed Pastor Amos. Together, they served the growing fellowship. When Margaret's home could no longer accommodate the expanding congregation, they acquired land, constructed a church building, and relocated. Margaret passed away while still serving in this church, which remains standing to this day.

### **Halfway House Ministry**

The Halfway House ministry refers to the compassionate work Margaret carried out among individuals who were broken-hearted and in need of healing on their journey toward wholeness. She dedicated herself to addressing the deep traumas people faced, helping them transition from a state of dysfunction to becoming functional and active members of both the church and the wider society. Margaret undertook this ministry in collaboration with the church, the Nguutatu and Kipangajeni ministries.

Margaret desired to demolish the satanic strongholds of witchcraft on people. Whenever she began the process of healing, she would not give up on a person until the person became a fully functional and self-supporting individual. She believed that if one is in the process of deliverance, other believers must be praying and follow-up on the individual. A lack of follow-up may lead to the individual going back to the old appetites of the flesh. As a result, the individual may experience more distress and stronger enslavement than before (Luke 11:24-26).

Margaret was deeply committed to breaking the satanic strongholds of witchcraft in people's lives. Whenever she began the process of healing and deliverance, she remained steadfast, walking with the person until they became a fully functional and self-supporting individual. She firmly believed that deliverance required the ongoing

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<sup>129</sup> Bishop David (not his real name), interview with author, January 17, 2024, personal interview.

support of other believers through prayer and consistent follow-up. Without this support, she warned, individuals could easily relapse into former fleshly desires. Such a return, she noted, could result in even greater distress and deeper bondage than before (cf. Luke 11:24–26). In line with this belief, she served at Wema Children’s Center in Bamburi and at the Compassion International at Kiembeni Baptist Child Development Center.

At Wema Center, she visited every Wednesday from 1999 until her death in 2004, offering counseling and prayer to children undergoing rehabilitation. Many of these children had suffered severe abuse, leaving them with deep psychological and emotional wounds. She saw her counseling work as part of discipleship and holistic ministry, taking time to work with each child individually. Inspired by Scripture, especially James 2:16, she was deeply committed to helping each one move toward healing and wholeness.

In addition, she rescued destitute children who had been abandoned by their parents or guardians. Depending on their specific needs, she would register them in appropriate care centers. Those living around Bamburi and with a place to stay were enrolled at the Kiembeni Baptist Children Development Center, where she served as their guardian. Those without a place to live were taken to Wema Center, which provided residential care.

One of the children Margaret rescued was Mary Zawadi. At the age of nine, Mary had been brought to Kiembeni Estate to work as a house girl. During one of her evangelistic visits, Margaret discovered the abuse Mary was enduring at such a tender age. Upon further inquiry, she learned that Mary was an orphan and had been sent to work by her aunt, who would come at the end of each month to collect Mary’s wages. Although Mary did all the work, she was never told how much she earned and was subjected to constant torment and abuse.

Margaret reported the situation to the local chief, and Mary was rescued. She was registered with Compassion International-Kiembeni, and Margaret took her into her home. Mary received an education and was fully restored to wholeness. Today, she is happily married and actively serving God at the Redeemed Gospel Church in Likoni. She testifies to God’s goodness and the transformative role Margaret played in her life.

This is just one example of many who were transformed through the Halfway House ministry. Margaret embraced the responsibility of discipleship, recognizing the essential need to cooperate with God in the process of making people whole. This aligns with the principle that mission flows from the triune nature of God. Human institutions like the church are called only to participate in the mission initiated and sustained by God, motivated by God’s love for humanity. Margaret understood herself as a servant privileged to advance God’s purpose in the world. She held a deeply sincere theological perspective focused on liberating people. Her ministry was grounded in biblical principles of God’s mission (Luke 4:18) and embodied a Gospel-centered approach. She remained unwavering in her commitment to the Gospel, refusing to compromise its truth.

## Margaret's Rich Legacy

Margaret Sidi Kadzomba's life and ministry stand as a powerful testament to faith, resilience, and transformative service amid significant cultural and institutional challenges. Despite facing patriarchal opposition and limited formal education, she faithfully pursued her calling with unwavering dedication, contextualizing the Gospel in a way that honored her Agiryama heritage while confronting deeply entrenched traditional beliefs like witchcraft. Her tireless evangelistic work, compassionate discipleship, and commitment to healing broken lives not only transformed individuals and communities but also challenged restrictive norms within the church. Margaret's legacy continues to inspire, reminding us that true ministry flourishes when rooted in love, cultural sensitivity, and steadfast obedience to God's mission.

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This biography, submitted in July 2024, was researched and written by Mrs. Everlyn Chadi Kombe (MAATH, Applied Theology, University of Birmingham, UK), who has been a part-time lecturer in Pwani University, Kenyatta University (Mombasa Campus), Kenya Baptist Theological College, Bible Training Center for Pastors (BICP), and Bishop Hannington Institute for Theology and Development Studies. This biography was originally presented during the 2024 Kenya Christian Biographies Conference, held at ACK Mombasa Memorial Cathedral April 23-24, 2024 under the original title "The Role Played by Evangelist Margaret Sidi Kadzomba (1942-2004) on Church Growth."

## Book Review

***The Church of Central Africa Presbyterian 1924–2024: A Centenary Assessment***  
Edited by Kenneth R. Ross and Mwawi N. Chilongozi. Wellington, South Africa: Mzuni Press, 2024. Paperback. Pp iv, 513. \$ 47.

Commemorating a century of continuous Christian witness, ***The Church of Central Africa Presbyterian 1924–2024: A Centenary Assessment*** offers more than a historical account of the Church of Central Africa Presbyterian's (CCAP) growth from Malawi into Zimbabwe and Zambia. It presents a rich narrative of faith, resilience, missionary strategy, contextual theological formation, ecclesial collaboration, and the vital contributions of CCAP women to the church's life and mission. Edited by renowned Scottish missiologist and church historian Kenneth R. Ross and distinguished Malawian theologian Mwawi H. Chilongozi, this volume brings together the insights of nineteen scholars from various disciplines. The essays, originally presented at a research conference hosted by Zomba Theological University from April 19-21, 2023, are organized into three thematic sections: CCAP History, CCAP Women, and CCAP Concerns, each examining key dimensions of the CCAP's centennial significance.

Before going into sections, the first two chapters of the volume lay out its structure and introduce 100 years of CCAP, paying attention to how “the CCAP has made and continues to make strides in building the kingdom of God in this part of the world.” The CCAP was founded on September 16, 1924 through the Livingstonia and Blantyre Presbyteries’ union. In 1926, the Nkhoma Presbytery of the Dutch Reformed Church Mission joined the union. These three original presbyteries were reconstituted as synods in 1956. Subsequent expansions led to establishing the Harare Synod in Zimbabwe in 1965 and the Zambia Synod in 1984.

The first section, focused on history, comprises five chapters that explore key moments in the development and expansion of the CCAP. These include analyses of the 1924, 1956, and 2002 constitutions, illuminating the church’s evolving identity. Special attention is given to the Harare Synod in Zimbabwe and the Synod of Zambia, highlighting how the CCAP negotiated its Malawian roots in distinct national contexts. The section also critically reflects on the church’s achievements and internal tensions throughout the twentieth century.

The second section, which is in four chapters, examines one of the most underexplored dimensions of CCAP historiography: the role and contributions of women. It demonstrates that, although women were historically excluded from formal leadership positions in the early stages of the church, they nonetheless played indispensable roles in its growth and development, particularly through evangelistic outreach, educational initiatives, and organized efforts within the Women’s Guild. Notably, the issue of women’s ordination to the ministry of Word and Sacrament has seen significant progress, with four of the five synods now permitting the ordination of women. Despite these advances, the section also acknowledges the continued

resistance women face, much of which is rooted in enduring patriarchal cultural structures that shape ecclesial life and authority.

The third and final section, comprising nine chapters, critically examines several distinctive features of the CCAP while drawing attention to ongoing tensions and areas of institutional weakness. These chapters underscore key dimensions that warrant reflection and potential reform as the CCAP enters its second century. The focal points are the church's Biblical vision, theology of praxis, approaches to ministerial formation, homiletical practices, musical traditions, evangelistic efforts, and its pursuit of reconciliation and ecclesial unity.

The *Church of Central Africa Presbyterian 1924–2024: A Centenary Assessment* offers a rich and multidimensional account of the CCAP's centennial journey. By drawing on contributions from scholars across various disciplines, the volume provides a well-rounded and critical analysis of the church's historical development, theological identity, and contextual mission. One of its most commendable strengths lies in its intentional focus on the often-overlooked contributions of women, thereby addressing a significant gap in CCAP historiography. While a broader comparative engagement with other African or global Presbyterian traditions would have further strengthened its scholarly impact, the volume remains a significant and timely resource. It is highly recommended for theological institutions, church leaders, and scholars of World Christianity, African ecclesiology, and mission studies.

The author of this review, Samaila Ayuba, is a PhD student at Boston University School of Theology at the Center for Global Christianity and Mission.

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Compiled by Beth Restrick, Head, BU African Studies Library

**Ministry in the Anglican Tradition: The Twentieth Century (Anglican Studies).** Kater, John L. Fortress Academic, 2025. [Amazon.com](#). \$127.22 (hbk.) ISBN-10: 1978716478, ISBN-13: 978-1978716476

**Abstract:** This book offers a global perspective on how Anglican ministry evolved throughout a century marked by radical upheavals and dramatic changes in theological, social, and political perspectives. That history begins with the end of the Victorian era, when Anglicanism had spread around the world but was deeply enmeshed with colonialism and it was assumed that it was shaped and defined by its North Atlantic history. Kater explores how the Anglican Way became rooted in widely different contexts and identifies the many pressures and movements that challenged that history—including two world wars, a global Depression, anti-colonialism and the struggles against the many forms of oppression and discrimination that marked the century. This book is the story of how Anglican ministry has been broadened and deepened by its constantly growing diversity even as that diversity has brought new challenges.

**Christians in the City of Nairobi: an African City and the Future of World Christianity.** Mugambi, Kyama and Mark Shaw. Bloomsbury Academic, 2025. [Bloomsbury.com](#) \$16.97. ISBN: 9781350296558.

**Abstract:** In this book Kyama Mugambi and Mark Shaw examine the diverse expressions of Christianity in Metropolitan Nairobi, a city boasting a population of ten million, which is one of the most religiously pluralistic cities in the world. Founded in 1899 as little more than a train depot for the Uganda Railway, Nairobi has come a long way; mosques, megachurches and temples serve as the backdrop for examining Christianity and public life in this vibrant city.

This volume covers all the major Christian traditions practiced in the city, including Protestantism, Orthodoxy and Catholicism. The city is a laboratory of a new global pluralism, and a vital center of a new global Christian pluralism specifically. Mugambi and Shaw argue that this kind of pluralism is reshaping religion everywhere in the majority world.

Other themes include the role of women in Christianity, Kenyan Independent Churches, and the Christian youth movement. The book illuminates how through Christianity, Africans have begun to come to terms with modern urban realities, including religious pluralism, hypothesising how this process could unfold in other parts of the world.

**Shrouded Witness Unearthing the Mission Praxis of Reuben Omulo.**  
Omondi, Francis. Langham Publishing, [S.l.], 2025. [Langham Publishing](#), £28.99.  
ISBN: 9781786410092

**Abstract:** The history of Christianity in Africa has often been told as a story of Western missions. As such, the contributions of local converts in shaping mission praxis and impacting the success of Christian witness on African soil has often been ignored. In this study, Dr. Francis Omondi seeks to rectify historic omissions by exploring the role of African converts, such as Reuben Omulo, in establishing the Anglican Church in the Nyanza Province of western Kenya. Utilizing Johannes Kritzinger's encounterological approach, Omondi presents the growth of the church in Central Nyanza as the result of complex and dynamic encounters between Luo culture and Church Mission Society (CMS) theology. Examining seven areas of belief and praxis, such as contextual understanding, interpretation of religious and cultural tradition and perspectives on the role of religious leaders, he explores how CMS missionaries were impacted—and ultimately transformed—through their encounters with the Luo people, and vice versa. Filled with practical implications for the church in Kenya and beyond, this study highlights the radical and often surprising power of encounter, as the gospel becomes incarnate in all cultures and all places.

**The Anglican Tradition from a Postcolonial Perspective.**  
Pui-lan, Kwok. Seabury Books, 2023. [Amazon.com](#) \$70.70 (hbk.) ISBN-10:1640656294, ISBN-13: 978-1640656291

**Abstract:** From a major scholar, a postcolonial perspective on key current and historical issues in Anglicanism, foregrounding the voices of theologians and church leaders from the Global South. In recent years, the Anglican Communion has been consumed by debates about gender, sexuality, authority, and biblical interpretation, which have frequently divided along North/South lines. Much of these controversies stem from the colonial history of Anglicanism. Written by a pioneer in postcolonial theology, this groundbreaking volume challenges Eurocentrism and racism in the Anglican Communion by highlighting the voices of theologians and church leaders from the Global South. The *Anglican Tradition from a Postcolonial Perspective* scrutinizes Anglican theology and history to advocate for the decolonization of the Church. It examines controversies on Christianity and the social order, economic justice, worship, gender and sexuality, women's leadership, and the Church's mission in a religiously pluralistic world.

## Open Access Resources

Joshua, Stephen Muoki and Christopher Mutati. **Africans on the Vanguard: Historicizing the Origin of Anglicanism in Akamba of Kenya.** *Studia Historiae Ecclesiasticae*. Vol. 50 No. 3 (2024). DOI: <https://doi.org/10.25159/2412-4265/13840>

**Abstract:** The establishment of Anglicanism in Ukamba during the 19th century was by default as far as Church Missionary Society (CMS) activities were concerned.

Despite its 1844 presence in the neighbouring Coastal region, it was not until the close of the century that CMS-affiliated congregations started to emerge in Ukamba. Contrary to Africa Inland Mission's (AIM) Peter Cameron, who on 12th December 1895 went straight into Ukamba and bypassed the Coast, Church Missionary Society's Ludwig Krapf repeatedly failed in establishing a Christian Mission Station in Ukamba. Consequently, Kamba converts in the Coastal region returned home as evangelists and established *kitoro* (defiant) churches independent of missionary support. Activities by these Kamba evangelists in successive years are undocumented and untold in London Missionary reports. Oral narratives in the custody of family and friends are fast fading away. These include those of Jeremiah Muti, Joshua Muoka, Nathaniel Kamusa, Paul Muyu and James Muthoka. The article relies on oral history and archival materials to reconstruct the story of early Anglicanism in Ukamba. The story of Jeremiah Muti, key among Ukamba early Anglican evangelists, is a critical case in highlighting the untold African agency in the early missionary enterprise.

Kamau, Patrick Maina, Katola, Michael T., Waweru, Humphrey M. **Cultural Revival Among Kikuyu Christians: Impact and Implications in the 21st Century.** Murang'a University, *Sprin Journal of Arts, Humanities and Social Sciences*, Vol. 3, No. 5, May, 2024.

**URI:** <http://repository.mut.ac.ke:8080/xmlui/handle/123456789/6602>

**Abstract:** The Kikuyu people were exposed to Christianity in the year 1900 following the arrival of Reverend McGregor. Subsequently, an overwhelming majority of individuals have adopted Christianity, with more than 90% identifying themselves as Christians. Nevertheless, the amalgamation of Western and Christian cultures throughout history has posed difficulties for the revival of Kikuyu traditional rituals. However, Anglican Christians have observed a revival of Kikuyu cultural traditions in Murang'a County, Kenya, during the twenty-first century. This return signifies a deliberate embrace of traditions that were previously forsaken. The objective of this study is to discover and examine the revived cultural traditions within the Anglican community, such as the reverence of ancestors, the categorization of individuals by age, the act of sacrificing animals, traditional marriage ceremonies, and the use of traditional brew. The study investigates the impact of cultural revival on Kikuyu Christianity through qualitative methodologies, including observation and interviews. The primary findings indicate that cultural revitalization entails both benefits and drawbacks. On one side, it assists in resolving identity challenges and enhances relationships with the community and family. Nevertheless, it also cultivates duplicity, undermines the Christian belief system, and engenders discord within the Christian community. These findings emphasize the necessity for dialogue among Kikuyu Christians to reconcile traditional behaviors with Christian principles. This will promote an authentic African Christianity that embraces Christian values while recognizing and integrating indigenous heritage. This study adds to the current discussion on the relationship between culture and religion in modern African settings by examining the intricacies and impacts of cultural resurgence in Christian communities.

## Photo Appendix

### Appendix 1

#### Florence Deed Photos



Florence Irene Instone Deed



A group of the first Christian converts at Jila, 1935<sup>130</sup>

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<sup>130</sup> Photo from Elder Samuel Chengo's personal archive.

## Appendix 2

### Photos of Jonathan Kituri



Rev Canon Jonathan Kituri



Rev Jonathan Kituri, Mwa Josiah Kisigwa, Rev Jeremiah Kiwinda, and Peter Bostock at Mark's Christening.



Jonathan Kituri, Mwa Josiah Kisigwa, and Jeremiah Kiwinda

Peter Bostock, and his wife holding Marck

## Appendix 3

### Nimrod Mwakitawa Mboje – Photos



Nimrod Mwakitawa Mboje and his wife, Priscilla Mtawe



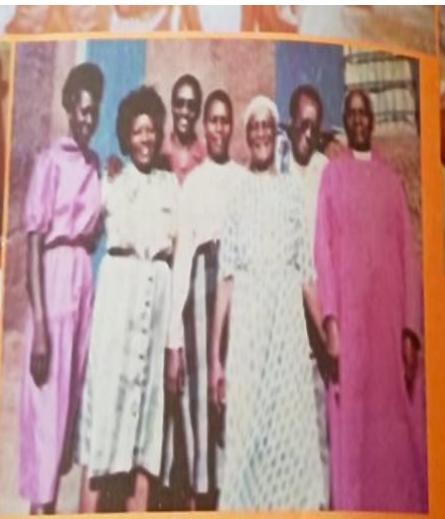
A School in Mbololo, Taita Taveta County, named in honor of Nimrod Mwakitawa Mboje

## Appendix 4

### Maryam Majala Mwang'ombe – Photos



Maryam



Maryam and her family at their Voi residence



Maryam and MU Leaders



MU Retreat with Rev. Kalume, the preacher of the day

## Appendix 5

### Nathaniel Mweri Baya – Photos



Ven Canon Nathaniel Mweri Baya



ACK St Stephen Dabaso



Nathaniel Meweri's grave

## Appendix 6

### Margaret Sidi Kadzomba – Photos



Margaret Sidi Kadzomba