

PEMBA, PLANTATIONS, POWER: A CRITICAL EVALUATION OF  
BRITAIN YEARLY MEETING'S FIRST AFRICAN MISSION

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ABSTRACT

In 1897 British Friends established the first African mission corporately endorsed by Britain Yearly Meeting—a commercial clove plantation employing freed slaves on the island of Pemba, off the coast of Tanzania. Rather than following existing missionary models which focused on conversion, education, and health, Quakers attempted an enterprising approach, developing an 'industrial mission' which could become financially self-sustaining. However, lacking experience on the African continent, with ambivalent support from Friends in Britain, and little engagement with the needs and desires of the freed slaves, meant that Quaker missionaries were not successful in winning converts nor in creating a sustainable plantation. This paper argues that the possibility for Quakers to bring something new and beneficial to the missionary field was mostly unachieved. Further, Friends may even have contributed to the power structures which stopped freed slaves from becoming truly liberated.

KEYWORDS

Slavery, power, industrial mission, Pemba, commerce, philanthropy.

British Quakers are not historically known for missionary work in Africa, particularly when compared to other groups and Christian denominations. Entering late and placing emphasis on personal improvement through honest labour, as much as salvation through Christ, Quakers pioneered their own approach to missionary work in the late nineteenth century at a commercial plantation, run according to Christian values and staffed by freed slaves. In discussing the motivations, the structure and the outcome of the Quakers' 'Industrial Mission' on the island of Pemba, this article considers the extent to which the Religious Society of Friends brought something new or different to the mission field, or whether existing models were simply replicated. On Pemba, the early Quaker missionaries aimed to offer new and innovative ideas, but due to a lack of experience on the African continent, ambivalence towards the concept of missionary work from within the wider Religious Society of Friends, and the persistence of colonial ideologies, any

radical changes Quakers might have brought to the missionary field were mostly underachieved. The primary measures of success I will use to evaluate the Quakers' Pemba mission are based on the numbers of converts won, the commercial and religious sustainability of the project, and the commercial and industrial success of the mission.

#### PRELIMINARY CLARIFICATIONS

As I begin to frame this article, it is important to recognise that there never was a homogenous approach to missionary work in Africa. With the influence of different denominations, working amongst diverse groups of people, throughout a vast continent, the construction and expression of missionary activity varied greatly. In general, however, the emphasis of European missionary work in East Africa lay in three key areas: proselytising, education, and health and hygiene.

The Religious Society of Friends was the first Christian mission based on Pemba, but other missionaries were present in Zanzibar and along the East African coast in the nineteenth century. These included French Roman Catholic priests, the Church Mission Society (CMS), the Universities Mission, and the Methodist Mission Society.

#### THE EAST AFRICAN AND QUAKERLY CONTEXT

Long before the arrival of the Religious Society of Friends in 1897, Christian missionary activity spread throughout the region of East Africa. The existence of Islam in Pemba and surrounding areas might also be significant to the mission's context. Arab traders had been present in East Africa, with intermarriage and conversions to Islam prevalent for many centuries before the influx of Christianity (Trimingham 1964). Islam had been spread without the assistance of paid missionaries although it was often supported by wealthy traders and plantation owners. In some instances, conversion to Islam did not require disavowal of, 'indigenous religious rite but merely the adding of new ceremonial [practices]' (Trimingham 1964: 59). Without missionaries, and therefore with perhaps rather limited understanding of the faith, conversion to Islam in East Africa did not appear to require the 'all or nothing' approach seemingly necessary for conversion to Christianity.

By 1844 the CMS had set-up a permanent mission station in Mombassa and made regular visits to Zanzibar (Royer 2010). Missionary activity included schooling and Bible translation, together with the building and running of churches (Frere 1874). By the 1870s, missionaries began addressing a growing problem in the area: the settlement of rescued and runaway slaves (Nwulia 1975). Quakers were by no means the first missionary group to work with freed slaves, although their approach was rather different. East African missions, according to British colonialist Sir Bartle Frere, lacked a crucial, industrial element to their work:

The most conspicuous defect seemed to me the want of a larger admixture of the industrial element—of more direct teaching how to live in this world, as well as how to prepare for that which is to come (Frere 1874: 61).

The Quaker mission at Pemba may appear to heed Frere's advice.

Considering the long history of multi-denominational Christian missionary work in East Africa, Quakers were only conspicuous in their absence. Yet the move towards corporately recognised missionary work was fraught with uncertainty and disagreement amongst British Friends. In spite of a history of individual Friends travelling overseas to spread the Quaker message, it was not until 1868 that the Friends' Foreign Mission Association was founded. Even then, this group was created by a number of concerned individuals and did not fall under the auspices of Britain Yearly Meeting.

Practical and theological concerns had abated any significant Quakerly development in the mission field. Objections included the necessity of working too closely with other denominations (thereby weakening Quakers' distinct concerns) and the problem of paying ministers, which was anathema to Quakers' stance on clergy (Steere and Steere 1955). Further, the 'great separation' (Hodgkin 1916: 26) of American Friends in 1827, a theological division which permeates to the present day, must have weighed heavily in the minds and hearts of British Friends.<sup>1</sup> Their reluctance to make controversial decisions and risk a similar theological split was undoubtedly strong at that time.

Friends' entry into the mission field came from an unexpected source. In December 1895 a letter appeared in *Spectator* magazine from the explorer Mary Kingsley denouncing Protestant missionary work (Ormerod-Greenwood 1978: 13). In the magazine editor's response to this letter, it was suggested that Quakers ought to purchase land on Pemba from Arab slave-owners, and work with the Africans as an experiment in 'civilisation'. The challenge was accepted, without authority, and anonymously, by the then editor of the journal *The Friend*, Henry Stanley Newman (Ormerod-Greenwood 1978: 163). Newman wrote back to the *Spectator* with the suggestion that Quakers could supervise freed slaves in the model of an industrial mission. After some months of consideration, on 27 May 1897, Britain Yearly Meeting approved the mission, making Pemba the first mission directly recognised as part of the corporate organisation of the Religious Society of Friends in Britain (Ormerod-Greenwood 1978). At that time, British Quakers had 'no single foothold' anywhere on the African continent (Ormerod-Greenwood 1978: 163), a fact which cannot be overlooked when considering the outcome of the Pemba mission.

#### A MATTER OF MOTIVATION

This abrupt departure from a corporate policy of none-involvement in missionary work should be examined when discussing matters of motivation. The motivations behind the Pemba mission are perhaps indicative of how and why Quaker activities differed from other missionary groups. Davis (1975: 215) suggests, 'It would be difficult to exaggerate the central role Quakers played in initiating and sustaining the first antislavery movements'. Certainly Pemba's connection to slavery and the abolitionist movement was a key motivator in the Religious

Society of Friends' decision to move towards organised missionary work. As leaders in the fight to end slavery, Quakers felt a burden of responsibility regarding the transition from slavery to freedom. Friends questioned, what was to become of former slaves once freed? The campaign to end slavery was not merely a matter of social justice for Quakers, but was also understood as 'a great religious duty' (Newman 1896: 207). The words 'duty', 'responsibility' and 'rights' occur regularly in Quaker literature from this period and in discussion of the Pemba mission (cf. Newman 1896; Albright 1916). When used in this context, these terms do not simply apply to Quakerly conduct, but suggest the necessity of teaching and transmitting the notions of duty, rights and responsibilities to freed slaves.

Whilst I have suggested that Quakers in Britain were reluctant missionaries, theological and historical justifications might be argued to the effect that Quakers have always been an evangelical group. Such a notion is strongly suggested by Henry Hodgkin in his book *Friends Beyond Seas*. George Fox travelled throughout Europe and America—even preaching to slaves in Barbados—in his quest to spread the 'truth'. Hodgkin retraces the journeys of Friends including through a narrative of Mary Fisher's 1657 visit to Turkey. He even postulates that William Penn's founding of Pennsylvania was part of the missionary effort (Hodgkin 1916: 19). Few could deny the zeal of evangelism amongst early Friends, many of whom travelled far and wide, risking and facing persecution as they spread their message. Hodgkin (1916: 218) states of that time:

A living fact has been discovered, a great new experience has been given, and it must be communicated to everyone. Had George Fox, Francis Howgill, Edward Burrough and their contemporaries been told that their spiritual progeny were to become a small sect among other Churches, they would not have believed it.

Hodgkin considers 'the failure of missionary work' to be due to 'overloading the message with non-essentials' (1916: 226). Here he recognised an opportunity for Quakers, arguing that the simplicity and flexibility of the Quaker approach ought to assist Friends newly entering the missionary field. These ideas have been expanded by others, such as Steere and Steere (1955: 8) writing many years later, who suggested that Friends' 'inward experience of the indwelling of Christ...should give them a surpassing freedom in the mission field'.

The main protagonist involved in the genesis of the Pemba mission, H.S. Newman, writing of the challenge set by the editor of *Spectator*, states, 'a prudent community like the Society of Friends hesitated before they accepted such a suggestion' (1898: 164). Ironically, Newman himself did not hesitate, but responded to the editor almost immediately. It is possible to concede that Newman as an individual Quaker, and perhaps even the Religious Society of Friends more widely, felt not only a sense of obligation, but were flattered to be publicly challenged in such a manner. After all, the suggestion that Quakers could assist in the 'civilising' of Africans appeared to be a great compliment. Rather than highlighting any special reasons why Quakers might be uniquely positioned to assist freed slaves, however, Newman's commentary highlights motivations framed in standard missionary (and even colonial) discourse. Like many before

him, Newman emphasised the notion of obligation alongside privilege. According to Newman (1898: 11), ‘the negro [*sic*]...needs some superior race alongside him to enable him to rise’. Newman appears to accept, on behalf of the Religious Society of Friends, their share of ‘the white man’s burden’.<sup>2</sup>

Newman recognised that calls issued by Quakers to abolish slavery did not always tally with the interests of Britain and its colonies. As Frederick (1980: 25) has pointed out, ‘The campaign against the slave trade...could hardly have succeeded if it had threatened to be an economic disaster for Britain’. Perhaps sensing the need for support from the colonial authorities of Zanzibar, Newman utilised the argument of commerce and British trade interests to underlie the necessity of the Pemba mission, stating: ‘When a vast amount of labour has been accomplished under slavery, it is not a simple matter to stem this kind of drift’ (Newman 1896: 209). Entrenched colonial ideologies underpin Newman’s argument that the ‘rise of the African’ ought to be beneficial to British people:

While benevolently considering how much good we can do to the peoples we govern, in developing the magnificent natural resources these vast territories contain, we do not leave out of consideration the interests of our island home (1989: 75).

For Newman and other abolitionists, commerce and freedom went hand in hand. Newman’s reverential support of the British government<sup>3</sup> is perhaps unexpected from a member of the Religious Society of Friends—a group which rarely maintains cosy relations with state authority. In Newman’s defence, his positioning might be read as tactical, aimed at assisting the progress of the Quaker mission at this early stage of its development. As will be discussed, the Friends who became missionaries on Pemba were not nearly as obedient to the colonial authorities as Newman.

#### PROTESTANT WORK ETHIC

The Quaker solution to the plight of freed slaves was to provide employment and the potential for personal self-improvement, through labour. Their ‘industrial’ work in Pemba presents another strand in the history of Quaker philanthropy, which has been closely linked to commerce. As dissidents, for many years it was impossible for Quakers to study at English Universities and thereby to enter many professions. This led English Friends into business, often with extremely successful results. Such business models were frequently realised through a combination of commerce and philanthropy. For example, in 1879, Quaker businessman George Cadbury relocated his confectionary factory from inner-city Birmingham to a site in the open Worcestershire countryside, in order to realise his ambitious social objectives (Bournville Village Trust 2013), which included the creation of the Bournville<sup>4</sup> community. Meanwhile, Joseph Rowntree’s confectionary business in York had made him a rich man, so in 1904 he set up three charitable trusts in order to use his wealth for social good. Rowntree’s approach to charity was matter-of-fact, yet pioneering. Wary of what he termed ‘the charity of emotion’ (*Quaker Faith and Practice* 23.17), in a memorandum laying out his expectations for

the Joseph Rowntree Foundation he writes of the need to ‘search out the underlying causes of weakness or evil in the community, rather than remedying their more superficial manifestations’ (Joseph Rowntree Foundation 2013). Rowntree states that the Foundation’s money should not be used for the building of Quaker Meeting Houses, suggesting that the actions and legacy of such Quaker philanthropists understood Christianity as something more than the sole, or even the primary solution to social ills. Rather, Christianity must be understood as just one part of a larger project, aimed at ending structural injustice.

More often than not, Quaker philanthropy linked societal development with personal moral improvements, gained through meaningful labour. As Comaroff (1997: 8) suggests, the ‘Christian political economy...was, above all, an optimistic theory of value that put capitalist business to the pursuit of salvation’. Frederick (1980: 45), somewhat cynically, suggests, ‘The Quakers’ concern for slaves and their belief in the social value of capitalism were inseparable’. Certainly, one might claim irony in the success of a Quaker business such as Cadbury, which was assisted by slave-cultivated produce including sugar and cocoa. Undeniably, these Quakers were people of their time and appeared accepting of the early stages of African and transatlantic slavery. However, they were amongst the earliest and loudest voices when calls for abolition began. As Davis (1975: 250) argues:

[T]he possession of wealth does not cast doubt on the moral sincerity of Quaker abolitionists. They were, after all, a pioneering minority who were among the first modern capitalists to recognize both the social responsibilities of wealth and the social consequences of economic action.

The link between commerce and Christianity—crucial to the Quakers’ mission in Pemba—was not unique to the Religious Society of Friends. As Historian Andrew Porter (1985: 598) states, ‘the imperialism of the Gospel and of Free Trade, went hand in hand’. By the late eighteenth century, the ideology of free labour was penetrating British industry both at home and abroad. Workers were now seen as significant both in terms of being producers and consumers. The model of free labour ‘conveyed a sense of self-worth created by dutiful work’ (Davis 2006: 248).

As many as four decades before Quakers ventured to Pemba, David Livingstone was amongst those espousing the dual benefits of Christianity and commerce for the African people. For Livingstone, ‘Christianity, commerce and civilization had interests in common, and could therefore unashamedly support one another’ (Nkomazana 1998: 44). Livingstone even considered the potential for an industrial mission, of sorts, when in 1856 he envisaged the development of a cotton plantation in the Zambezi region. Roland (1952: 13) argues that the outcome of this venture ‘was a disaster so serious that it temporarily discredited Livingstone as a missionary theorist’. Perhaps as a result, few Protestant missionaries led industrial projects in Africa, in spite of the spiritual value placed on work and the civilising effect attributed to commerce. A welcome letter to new recruits from the London Missionary Society, for example, clearly stated:

Encourage industry and lawful commerce in your people, but do not become personally involved in trading transactions; and have nothing to do with the land... keep your own hands perfectly free (cited in Frere 1874: 92).

Rather than following existing missionary models, Quaker enterprise in Britain appears to be the frame of reference for the Pemba mission. Employees at Cadburys, for example, were taught ‘habits of order and pleasant manners which might reach beyond their work hours’, with male employees encouraged to save money and remain teetotal (Windsor 1980: 81). Put simply, Quaker enterprise valued the welfare of their staff, perhaps as much as they valued capital gain. And their notion of staff welfare was firmly based on Christian ideals of work, discipline and personal improvement.

In this vein, Quaker work in Pemba sought to combine ‘the *hand*, the *head*, and the *heart*’ (Newman 1898: 11, emphasis in original). Hence missionary activity was not aimed simply at conversion (the heart) but combined the civilising efforts of a reformed work ethic (the hand) with valuable education (the head). Although far from alone in this Weberian model which connected ‘the spirit of modern economic life with the national ethics of ascetic Protestantism’ (Weber 2001: xxxix), Quakers, perhaps more than any other missionary group, embodied the principles of the ‘Protestant work ethic’.

#### THE ‘INDUSTRIAL MISSION’

Following the discussion above, it is possible to argue that one way in which the Quaker mission differed from more traditional missionary models is the weight it placed on commerce. Whilst such a connection in itself does not make the Quaker mission unique, the role of commerce in Pemba maintained equal, if not primary importance in the structure of the mission. Rather than recruiting a minister (which British Quakers did not have), a preacher or even a school teacher, priority was given to recruiting a businessman. It therefore fell on Lincolnshire farmer Theodore Burt to lead Friends in their new role as missionaries in Pemba. Like other Quaker philanthropic work, the primary ambition was not to win souls, but more broadly, an ambition to improve lives— two concepts which become inextricably connected. Burt would lead a mission focused on improving lives through the provision of honest, Christian labour.

By 1 March 1899, less than two years after Britain Yearly Meeting’s approval of the mission, there were 247 former slaves living on the Pemba estate, with additional jobs provided for a number of non-residents (Nwulia 1975). The estate farmed cloves as well as mango, vanilla and eucalyptus. The plantation, consisting of seven thousand trees, was staffed entirely by paid, freed slaves. The aim and purpose of the industrial mission was ‘to provide a place where men and women can live and work under Christian influence’ (Heath 1945: 5). Exemplifying the protestant work ethic, Quakers’ holistic approach to Christian missionary work went beyond models which focused only on education and health, instead



teaching that to be pure of soul was to be busy of hand. Hard work could bring one closer to God, as Newman (1898: 158) expressed: 'good work may be quite as powerful a witness to the Gospel as good words'. Even during a poor harvest, when there was not enough labour for all of the workers, the Quakers found a way to keep the former slaves busy, as the Monthly Minutes of November 1899 (LSF) reflect: 'cloves have come in slowly... The greater number of work people have been employed in cleaning the ground, building the new house at the orphanage [etc.]'.

The transition from slaves to freed workers, however, did not take effect as easily as the Quakers had anticipated, and along with missionary staffing difficulties (due to sickness, death and the difficulty of recruiting new staff from England), the mission soon suffered financial hardship. In spite of this, diverging from the original aim of becoming a self-sustaining industrial mission, there began a move towards more traditional missionary activities. An orphanage opened, a dispensary was established, and schooling and carpentry classes for local youngsters became part of the activities. Few records remain of the spiritual life of the mission at this time, and although the estate did have a small Meeting House, a second was not built until 1924.<sup>5</sup>

#### THE VALUE OF FREEDOM

On 6 April 1897, the Sultan of Zanzibar issued a decree formerly and legally abolishing slavery. As Friends were to discover, however, without adequate resources to enforce this decree, in many areas the ruling was all but arbitrary. Part of the Quakers' missionary activity in Pemba therefore—a natural development from their abolitionist campaigning in England and the Caribbean—was to ensure that slavery came to a timely halt. The Pemba Quakers faced the hostility of former slave owners and many disgruntled members of the British authorities, who saw them as upsetting the delicate balance of control on the island. For not only did Quakers give shelter and jobs to runaway slaves, they also loudly voiced their concerns about continued slavery in Zanzibar, reporting their findings back to England. They became the 'watch-dog' on Government action against slavery (Ormerod-Greenwood 1978; Cooper 1980). Many missionary groups raised their concerns and offered shelter to runaways, but perhaps something distinct about the Quaker mission is that it held abolitionist campaigning amongst its key activities, undermining the status quo maintained by the British authorities and perpetually making a nuisance of themselves.

Quaker action led to the direct freeing of at least one thousand men and women in Pemba (Ormerod-Greenwood 1978), and their campaigning offered indirect assistance to thousands more. Whilst this tremendous humanitarian achievement ought to not be downplayed, one must question the value of this new-found freedom. Visiting Friend Catherine Albright reports back to British Quakers that the Pemba mission demonstrated how 'kindly management took the place of cruelty and oppression' (Albright 1916: 5). Yet it is possible to argue that former slaves simply transitioned from the slave master, to a new master. For



didn't the Quaker master control the wages, the working hours and their living conditions? Wasn't he the land owner and plantation manager? The notion that slaves would become willing and capable waged workers was conceived of entirely by these Quakers and other British commentators. It is perhaps surprising that Friends did not draw on their experiences of abolition in the mid-eighteenth century in Jamaica and throughout what was then called the West Indies. Just as in Pemba, Quaker abolitionists, such as Anthony Benezet, the Dillwyns, the Pembertons, and the Gurneys, had long connected transatlantic campaigning against slavery to religious themes of self-renunciation and personal improvement (Davis 1984: 136). Yet the abolition of slavery in the West Indies soon led to ambivalence; from the 1840s onwards, it became ever more apparent that former slaves' unwillingness to accept emerging systems of labour would damage the economy, as well as harm former perceptions of the emancipating morality of free labour. As a result Davis (1984: 220) suggests the emergence of 'two official contradictory dogmas':

[T]he 'moral' success of emancipation, and an interpretation of economic failure that not only cast doubt on moral success but also justified an oppressive system of indentured immigration, long-term labour contracts, discriminatory taxes, and falling wages.

On Pemba, there is little evidence to suggest that provisions for the wants and needs of freed slaves were developed in consultation. Instead, colonial values of labour and liberty were imposed on them, just as slavery had been imposed before that. Upon visiting Pemba nearly thirty years after the founding of the mission, Silcock (1925: 60) notes, 'bare necessities in the way of food, clothing, and shelter can be had so easily... [A]ny form of work, is unwelcome'. Hence working on the Quaker plantation was neither the priority nor the aspiration of many former slaves. Indeed, in spite of their admirable abolitionist campaigning and their attempt to account for the needs of freed slaves, some Quaker attitudes were little different from those of Britain's colonial authorities. Mission initiator H.S. Newman, for example, demonstrates the colonial attitude when he writes:

Everything points to the establishment of one leading axiom in all African affairs, and that is, that *the future development of tropical Africa must be the work of the natives themselves under enlightened European supervision.* (Newman 1898: 49, emphasis in original)

Without doubting the sincerity of their motives, it remains possible to argue that the Quakers' industrial mission undid one violent power structure, but replaced it with a second unequal structure. Certainly freed slaves working at the plantation were granted a much improved status and living conditions under Quaker rule, and they had been emancipated from previous cruelty and enslavement. However, the problematic circumstances of these African workers reaffirmed a social and economic structure constructed according to the colonial binary of white man (read: civilised leader) and black boy (read: godless, uncivilised and in need of discipline). As Cooper (1980: 61) has argued, 'The idea

of freedom in antislavery ideology embodied a very particular—and narrow—concept of economic and social morality'. However well-intended, the Pemba Quakers worked within a colonialist framework and thus failed to address problems of power. In Pemba and beyond, imbalance of power held former slaves in poverty and restricted the 'true' emancipation of the African people. As Davis (1975: 253) claims, British Quakers, 'helped to create a moral climate in which a highly ethical purpose could disguise the effects of power'.

#### AFTER SLAVERY, AFTER INDUSTRY

By 1909 it was deemed that slavery had been eradicated in Zanzibar, and the important role of Christianity in this feat was symbolically marked with the building of a cathedral on the site of the old slave market ([quakersintheworld.org](http://quakersintheworld.org) 2013). With slavery defeated, some Friends began to question the continuing existence of the Pemba mission. Many, however, believed that the resources already in place ought to continue to benefit local people. As Silcock (1925: 60) explains, 'we have helped in the fight against slavery... [T]he need now is to help them towards the full social life for which man was created'. In spite of continued staffing and financial difficulties, the Pemba missionaries continued to expand their work beyond the original industrial scope, with greater emphasis placed on the missionary staple of education—whether or not it was what the locals desired. A boys' home built beyond the plantation at Chake Chake, for example, attempted to offer 'education that is badly needed but not—at present—much in request' (Silcock 1925: 60). In their attempts to help the people of Pemba, the Quaker missionaries offered all (and sometimes more than) they could manage, with Hodgkin (1916: 177) claiming that, 'At times portions of the work had to be closed down owing to the fewness of those [missionaries] left'. The inexperience of Friends in the missionary field was beginning to show. Hodgkin (1916: 177) quotes Albright, who visited the mission in 1910 as part of a deputation of British Friends:

[T]he resident missionary...must, if possible, be father and mother, teacher and doctor, employer and friend to any man, woman or child in the neighbourhood who happens to appeal to him.

The Quaker missionaries appeared to be over-stretched, yet had little success to show for their work in terms of converts won, nor had they created an economically sustainable industrial mission.

The mission had never been financially viable and when mission leader, Theodore Burttt decided to leave Pemba in 1931, a move was made to divide the estate into small holdings, with local famers establishing a cooperative marketing programme (Ormerod-Greenwood 1978: 179). Yet this model also had limited success. By 1954, it was proposed that the Chake Chake Meeting House be turned into a community centre and eventually all of the plantation land should be sold. Finally, in 1963, the last British Quaker left Pemba, and Quaker missionary activity on the island ceased.

## CONCERNS, CONVERTS AND CONTINUATION

As previously mentioned, Quaker assistance in the freeing of thousands of slaves should be considered a major success of the mission project. The issue of slavery was a fundamental corporate concern for British Quakers long before they ventured to Pemba, and it is perhaps this connection that ensured that the mission was originally established. Yet many argued that the abolition of slavery was only part of their missionary project. Newman (1898: 109) stresses a trinity of ambitions:

May our highest achievement be that we have liberated the African from slavery and degradation of centuries, that we have opened channels for commercial development and civilisation that shall make his emancipation a genuine redemption, and above all, that we have brought to at least part of Africa the glad tidings of Christianity!

The Quakers evangelising project, however, was not entirely successful. In the first decade of the mission, there were no converts, until in 1906 a tiny group began to confess their new-found faith. This group later grew to a small community of around one hundred but would not come to be the self-sustaining church the British Quakers had hoped for (Ormerod-Greenwood 1978: 175). This fact does not make Quakers any less successful than many other missionary groups, including missionary great Robert Moffat who, according to Livingstone, had little success in 'the first ten years of his ministration' (Monk 1860: 171). Quakers had believed, however, that they were working to empower Africans to sustain their own 'truly indigenous Church' (Hodgkin 1916: 178). Ormerod-Greenwood (1978: 175) suggests that it was impossible for former slaves to sustain a church. He observes that the qualities and effort required could not be delivered by former slaves who lacked self-belief, social cohesion or financial ability. Yet if the matter was so simple, that slaves could not maintain a religious institution, what of Silcock's observation of Pemba's 'elaborate and well kept up' (1925: 56) mosque? As noted above, Islam spread amongst local people, without the assistance of missionaries, in a way that Quakerism seemed incapable of doing. The fact that many such mosques, however, had the financial backing of wealthy Arab traders was an advantage that Quaker missionaries were without.

The notion that Quakers ought to be especially well-suited to missionary work due to their emphasis on simplicity and the personal nature of their message appears, conversely, to have hindered the development of a self-sustaining, indigenous Quaker community. Non-doctrinal, non-clerical religious traditions require strong structures and methods of administration in order to be self-sustaining. George Fox's early emphasis on administration and structure, termed 'Gospel Order' (Hatton 2007: 241-60), has been cited as a key factor in the continuation of the Religious Society of Friends, which emerged amongst many other now defunct groups of religious dissidents. It might be argued that the Quakers in Pemba, who tried to be 'father, mother, employer and friend', that is, tried to be

something to everyone, failed adequately to empower their local converts and thus failed to establish leadership amongst their new church. By not only failing to challenge, but actively reinforcing prevailing power structures that placed the European as leader and the African as follower, how could an empowered, autonomous, indigenous church gain foothold?

It may be noted, however, as a counter-argument, that the largest population of Quakers in the world is to be found in Kenya.<sup>6</sup> The missionary history associated with Quaker expansion in Kenya, however, is quite different from that of Pemba. There is little room to address this matter, but in brief, the original Quaker mission to Kenya was established by American Friends of an evangelical tradition.<sup>7</sup> The majority of Quaker Meetings in Kenya run 'programmed' meetings for worship, which include singing and sermons, and employ Pastors. This top-down structure appears to have been more successful in transitioning to the African context than the egalitarian approach of Britain's Liberal Quakers. It is interesting to note that a recent move to re-establish the Pemba Yearly Meeting has been made, assisted by Kenyan Friends (Friends World Committee for Consultation 2008). Half a century after British Quakers withdrew from Pemba, a small revival may be underway.

Following the argument above, in principle the Quaker way had potential to offer an approach to Christianity more sympathetic to existing traditional African religions and practices. Without an authoritarian, dogmatic system of belief and practice, Quakers might have hoped to engage an African audience unaccustomed to strict religious adherence such as that offered by 'High-Church' missionaries like the Roman Catholics. Yet it would appear that in reality, the opposite is true: orthopraxic traditions such as Islam and Catholicism, which are relatively easy to become familiar with through following certain actions and rituals, have gained more converts in Pemba than Quakerism. It is difficult to know or measure the extent to which Quakers brought their distinct theological message to Pemba. For all the initial concerns of working too closely with other denominations, Frere (1874: 8) suggests that:

in presence of the great superstitions [of Africa,...] the differences of discipline or of dogma which divide us so sharply here at home, are so dwarfed that all seem to fight under one banner.

Quakers in Pemba seemed content to fall back on tried-and-tested missionary practices of education, hygiene and health. Beyond providing jobs, through a somewhat unsuccessful plantation, the Quakers failed to offer any radical new ideas to the African missionary field at that time. So whilst not writing specifically of the Religious Society of Friends, Comaroff and Comaroff's (1997: 7) words may well ring true that, 'Nonconformists in Britain, it turns out, were conformists abroad'. Perhaps this helps to account for the fact that the history of Quaker missionary work includes many more examples which turned out like Pemba than like Kenya.

## CONCLUSION

In establishing an 'industrial mission' and seeking to empower freed slaves through commerce, Quakers had forged an innovative path amongst missionaries. Paradoxically, finding limited success in this model, the Quakers soon fell back on traditional missionary activities. British Quakers knew little of the African continent neither as missionaries nor as plantation owners. Yet they purchased a large area of land, attempted to work with the local people and imagined it possible to make a profit to fund their missionary work. Their lack of experience, ambivalent support from Quakers back in Britain and insufficient ability to evangelise locals ultimately led to a flawed mission model, which lacked strategy and direction and failed to win converts.

Quaker missionary work in Pemba was a direct continuation of the concerns of British Quakers in their campaigning to end slavery. Whilst the work of many other missionary groups was sparked by an evangelical zeal to spread the word of God indiscriminately, it took a clear and tangible connection between Quaker concerns at home and abroad before the Religious Society of Friends in Britain entered the mission field. In doing so, Friends utilised a model of industry which linked Christianity and commerce, which had proved hugely successful for individual British Friends at home but was not easily transposed. So whilst Quakers had envisaged a new model in missionary activity, their preoccupations soon turned to concentrating on education and health, like so many missionaries before them.

The radical social justice of Rowntree, Cadbury and other Quaker philanthropists did not transport successfully to the Africa context. Instead of examining the structures that enabled poverty, instead of searching for fundamental new approaches to African development, Quaker missionaries in Pemba adopted default missionary models and accepted colonial power structures. One thing, however, which clearly sets Quaker missionary work apart is their tireless and controversial campaigning for the emancipation and the rights of slaves. The significant role played by Quakers in ending slavery in Pemba, Zanzibar and beyond cannot be overestimated. This Quaker venture into missionary work, therefore, on the one hand assisted in freeing thousands of Africans; on the other hand, it missed an opportunity. The strength of colonialist ideology outweighed Rowntree's advice to uncover the causes of social unrest. Therefore, whilst working towards an ethical goal, the Quakers in Pemba reinforced the power structures which would render true emancipation of the African people as yet unachieved.

## NOTES

1. For more on the American theological division, known as the Hicksite Reformation, see Ingle 1998.

2. The term 'white man's burden' originally comes from an 1899 poem by Rudyard Kipling. This term, however, has since been widely used to describe the prevalent attitude of many nineteenth- and twentieth-century Western Europeans. This attitude describes the

'burden' of belonging to a 'superior' race and nation, and thereby being required to care for 'inferior' races.

3. Newman's reverential attitude towards the Government is demonstrable throughout *Banai: The Transition from Slavery to Freedom in Zanzibar and Pemba*, 1898. In one example, he states with hyperbolic flourish, 'England and English officials hate any appearance of a mere paper reform. What our Government announces it endeavours to carry out' (1898: 6).

4. The village of Bournville was established by Cadbury not as a factory village, but as a social experiment aimed at proving the value of quality housing within a green, natural environment. The village created a diverse community, with one-bedroom flats alongside five-bedroom houses; differing ages and social classes lived side-by-side (Bournville Village Trust 2013).

5. The second Meeting House was built at Chake Chake (Silcock 1925) outside the boundaries of the mission station, suggesting an increasing preoccupation with expanding missionary work throughout Pemba.

6. Approximately 134,000 of around 350,000 Quakers worldwide live in Kenya. For more statistics on Quakers around the world, see the Friends World Committee for Consultation website (Fwccworld.org).

7. The division of American Friends in the nineteenth century made way for a wider theological and practical application of Quaker values. Generally, American Quakers fall into three main groups: Evangelical, Conservative and Liberal Friends. The majority of contemporary British Quakers would be classed as Liberal. For more, see Dandelion 2008: 108.

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