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Journal of the History of Ideas, Volume 81, Number 1, January 2020, pp. 85-106
(Article)

Published by University of Pennsylvania Press



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*The Idea of the Upelekwa:
Constructing a Transcontinental Community
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Morgan Robinson

In the late summer of 1888, Owen Makanyassa directed his corps of printers as they set to work at the printing press of the Universities' Mission to Central Africa (UMCA). They laid out the type, stretched the paper, and rolled ink onto the pages of the inaugural issue of *Msimulizi* (The Reporter), a Swahili-language magazine written, printed, and read by the African students and teachers of the mission. The UMCA, an Anglican mission established on Zanzibar in 1864, had by 1888 constructed a series of stations both on the island archipelago and in mainland east-central Africa. After Makanyassa—a former slave who had worked at the mission press since 1867—collected the work of his printers, the first issue was sent out via the mail steamers which plied the coast, beginning its journey along an intellectual and affective network that was built and maintained by the mission's African adherents.

This essay presents a moment in the history of an idea: that of the *Upelekwa*, a Swahili word that came into print usage in the 1880s. In this brief history of the *Upelekwa*, I seek to demonstrate how, in the late nineteenth century, the African members of the Universities' Mission constructed, circulated, and embraced the concept—a term which, as we shall see, was in part the straightforward idea of a mission field, but which more precisely connoted a widely scattered but intimately connected community. The *Upelekwa* was a community of shared religion, yes, but also of shared

experiences and mutual obligations, and we can trace the outline of the idea in part through the circulation of the mission periodical *Msimulizi*. By observing how the magazine aided in the simultaneous construction and circulation of the Upelekwa worldview, the historian can, first, get a sense of how the mission's African adherents knit together its piecemeal efforts at conversion in east-central Africa; and second, we can witness how two generations of converts—former-slave students and their never-enslaved counterparts—melded their social networks into a single idea of community. This is more than another “creation of tribalism” story. The concept of the Upelekwa allowed adherents to feel part of a clearly differentiated community while also trying to expand the boundaries of that community.¹ This latter inclusivity was an inherent component of the evangelical project, and so the Upelekwa had to be flexible even as it was used to define the UMCA community. The idea of the Upelekwa helped to create, reinforce, and expand a reading public that extended beyond the pages of the magazine, making the work of the mission and its adherents possible.

The article begins with a bit of background about the Universities' Mission and its major Swahili-language periodical, *Msimulizi*. It then moves to the interpretation that I bring to the term, and how the idea of the Upelekwa fits into the broader literature on the circulation of ideas in late-nineteenth and early-twentieth century Africa. Finally, the article turns to three specific aspects of the magazine that reflect the construction and circulation of the Upelekwa concept: namely, the magazine's “personality,” its vocabulary, and the content of its articles.

THE UNIVERSITIES' MISSION AND *MSIMULIZI*

The Universities' Mission to Central Africa was established in 1857, in response to a purportedly rousing speech given by David Livingstone to the undergraduates at Cambridge. The mission was a joint venture of Cambridge, Oxford, Durham, and Trinity Universities. The initial aim of the UMCA was to evangelize among the populations of central Africa, a region from which the slave trade continued to remove thousands of people per year. The mission's first bishop, Charles Mackenzie, led a small expedition up the Zambezi and Shiré Rivers (in today's Mozambique and Malawi) in 1861. Things unraveled quickly, however, and when Mackenzie died in

¹ Eric Hobsbawm and Terence Ranger, eds., *The Invention of Tradition* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1983); and Leroy Vail, ed., *The Creation of Tribalism in Southern Africa* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1989).

January of 1862, his successor, William Tozer, decided to remove the mission's operations to the relative safety of Zanzibar.² In the mid-nineteenth century, the island archipelago of Zanzibar was a major trade entrepôt serving all of the western Indian Ocean.³ Goods flowed back and forth through the island from South Asia, the Arabian Peninsula, mainland east Africa, and even as far as Europe and the Americas. It was the seat of several foreign consulates, including that of Great Britain, and the islands' level of global connectivity made it a good place to regroup.

Choosing Zanzibar as headquarters for a Christian missionary society was somewhat counterintuitive. Zanzibar was, and remains, an overwhelmingly Muslim country. Since the 1830s, the islands had been home to the court of the Sultan of Oman, becoming a separate sultanate in 1856. Tozer and his remaining staff arrived on Zanzibar in 1864 during the reign of Sultan Majid bin Said, who was succeeded in 1870 by his brother, Barghash bin Said. Both sultans welcomed the missionary presence on Zanzibar—so long as the missionaries did not attempt to convert their Muslim subjects. In order to fulfill its mission, then, the UMCA had to find a different source of potential converts to build up its community before one day, as the leadership always assumed, returning to the mainland.

Thus, for the first several decades of its existence, the Universities' Mission filled its schools and its pews with former slaves. Alongside the trade in commodities such as ivory, cloves, dates, and cotton cloth, Zanzibar's merchants also traded in slaves. These enslaved people had mainly been captured in east-central Africa and brought to the market on Zanzibar, from whence they were sent to the Arabian Peninsula, South Asia, or to work the islands' spice plantations.

Until 1873, when the British government and Sultan Barghash signed an anti-slave-trade treaty that closed the slave market on Zanzibar, the mission received individuals from slave dhows seized by the Sultan for some violation. Following the 1873 treaty, the Royal Navy began patrolling the coast for illicit traders; upon seizing illegal cargoes of slaves, the ships would drop groups of people at Zanzibar and other ports, some of whom ended up in the care of the UMCA.⁴ The ethnic groups (or in missionary

² Landeg White, *Magomero: Portrait of an African Village* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1987).

³ The archipelago of Zanzibar is made up of two main islands: Unguja and Pemba. The larger and more well-known of the two, Unguja, is often referred to simply as Zanzibar.

⁴ For more on "liberated Africans" in the Indian Ocean: Matthew Hopper, *Slaves of One Master: Globalization and Slavery in Arabia in the Age of Empire* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 2015).

parlance, “tribes”) most often cited in the records were Yao, Bondei, Zaramo, Makua, Zigua, Nyasa, Galla, Ngindo, and Zaramo, designations that corresponded loosely to ethnic and linguistic communities in the region. The mission’s schools on Zanzibar, including Kiungani for boys and Mbweni for girls, were thus multilingual sites where children with different mother tongues, and varied levels of exposure to Swahili, learned to read and write in Latin-script Swahili at the same time as they prepared for baptism, which generally followed after one or two years.⁵ Though the schools of the Universities’ Mission did include a labor component, the classroom emphasis was literary, intended to mold future Christian teachers, clergy, husbands, wives, fathers, and mothers.⁶ Former slaves made up the bulk of the mission’s students and adherents until the mid-to-late 1880s.

However, from the moment the mission opened its first mainland station at Magila in 1869, just inland from its island headquarters, an alternate pool of potential students appeared. The next major mainland settlement was at Masasi in the southeast (1876), followed by Likoma Island (on what is today Lake Malawi) in 1885. Consequently, by the time *Msimulizi* was put into print, the UMCA already had a network of stations scattered between these three main sites, and people, correspondence, and supplies moved between them. The mainland stations began to supply the mission with converts who had never been enslaved, either the children of Christian former-slave parents from Zanzibar or people newly converted on the mainland, leading to a demographic shift at the mission’s schools. This effect was compounded by the fact that the slave trade, by the mid-to-late 1880s, was tapering off (though by no means completely at an end). In 1884 HMS *London* was relieved of its duty patrolling the coast.⁷ Of course, slave-smuggling continued, but without the concerted patrols to capture smugglers, there were fewer and fewer former slaves to fill the UMCA’s classrooms. Kiungani had always been envisioned as a training center for African evangelists to be sent to the mainland, and by the 1880s increasing

⁵ For more on the UMCA education system: Morgan Robinson, “An Uncommon Standard: A Social and Intellectual History of Swahili, 1864–1925,” (PhD diss., Princeton University, 2018).

⁶ For an example of the Kiungani class schedule, see Bodleian Library, University of Oxford [hereafter BDL], UMCA Box List UX147–152, “School Lists at the Various Stations of the Mission, 1890.” For a comparative example of missionary education in East Africa: Paul Kollman, *The Evangelization of Slaves and Catholic Origins in Eastern Africa* (Maryknoll, NY: Orbis Books, 2005).

⁷ BDL, UMCA Box List A–F, A1(VI)A, letter from A. C. Madan to W. H. Penney, January 1, 1884.

numbers of students born free on the mainland came to the school for education in order to return to what the UMCA hoped would be an expanding mission field.

The influx of this second generation of students raised questions about ethnicity and the stigma of slavery. As one missionary letter-writer reflected: “I had always hoped that when *freed* and brought up as we bring them up the evil effects [of slavery] would be entirely removed. I doubt if I know whether it has been so except in very few cases. These lads here seem to realize bitterly how isolated they are in the world, how the family tie exists for all but them, how all the other boys have a home and country . . . of their own but they nothing of the kind.”⁸ It seems that for some of the former-slave students, the arrival of never-enslaved colleagues reiterated their marginalized status. Laura Fair has explored the residual stigma of slavery well into the twentieth century, and Jonathon Glassman followed the issue right up to the 1964 Revolution, showing how historical memories of slavery were used, and often racialized, by political parties.⁹ The correspondents of *Msimulizi* occasionally referenced slavery and the slave trade, condemning the continued illegal practice of the trade, and sometimes relating the stories of smuggled slaves coming under the purview of the mission.¹⁰ While the UMCA did not advertise a policy of taking in runaway slaves, it gladly received any individuals enslaved illegally and occasionally lobbied British officials on their behalf.

Meanwhile, as more mainland students came to the school, the missionaries feared for the precarious balance that seemed to exist between students of different ethnic groups, and references to “tribe” permeated their correspondence in this period.¹¹ The students themselves, including the *Msimulizi* correspondents, also used the concept of *kabila* (tribe), or specific ethnic names, to describe themselves and their classmates.¹² As the

⁸ BDL, UMCA Box List A–F, A1(VII–VIII), Letter from Godfrey Dale [?] to D. Travers, November 15, 1895.

⁹ Laura Fair, *Pastimes and Politics: Culture, Community, and Identity in Post-Abolition Urban Zanzibar, 1890–1945* (Athens: Ohio University Press, 2001); and Jonathon Glassman, “Racial Violence, Universal History, and Echoes of Abolition in Twentieth-Century Zanzibar,” in *Abolitionism and Imperialism in Britain, Africa, and the Atlantic*, ed. Derek Peterson (Athens: Ohio University Press, 2010), 175–206; and Glassman, *War of Words, War of Stones: Racial Thought and Violence in Colonial Zanzibar* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2011).

¹⁰ For instance: *Msimulizi* no. 4, April 1889, 47–51; and *Msimulizi* no. 10, April 1890, 164–68.

¹¹ For instance: BDL, UMCA Box List A–F, A1(VII–VIII), letter from Godfrey Dale to D. Travers, February 1, 1895; and fragment of letter to D. Travers, June 2, 1896.

¹² For instance: *Msimulizi* no. 10, April 1890, 170–71; and *Msimulizi* no. 34, April 1894, 756.

Kiungani student Yohanna Abdallah wrote in an 1894 letter, “We are so many boys in this house, and of different tribes, Yaos, Makuas, Boondeis and Nyasas; but we all speak Swahili language; I myself is a Yao boy.”¹³ The never-enslaved students of the second generation were likely more attuned to ethnicity than were their former-slave predecessors, who had been engaged in a process of “social rebirth” following the ruptures of enslavement.¹⁴ This ethnic and social differentiation was what the contributors to *Msimulizi* tried to bridge with the concept of the Upelekwa.

Even after this generational transition from former-slave to never-enslaved students, however, Zanzibar remained a crucial part of the UMCA imagination, the home of its theological and teacher-training colleges, and the hub through which both African and European members of the mission circulated with regularity. The magazine, too, moved along this network, which had been built on existing trade routes, and which the mission utilized to establish stations throughout the region. After being sent out from Zanzibar, *Msimulizi* would first cross the Zanzibar Channel to reach subscribers at the Magila station, in the hilly region of the Usambara Mountains. The magazine would then come ashore some eight hundred kilometers south of Magila, where it was carried up a tree-lined road to the station at Masasi. Finally, eventually, a boat would arrive at Likoma, a small island just off the eastern shore of Lake Nyasa (Malawi) and four hundred kilometers west of Masasi; among the supplies unpacked onto the sandy harbor would have been copies of *Msimulizi*.¹⁵ Despite traveling hundreds of kilometers—over sea and land, at times stuck at ports or delayed by rains, sometimes waterlogged or otherwise degraded by the elements—over time the bimonthly arrival of *Msimulizi* became an expected event, the magazine a regular caller that made immediate the community of adherents scattered all over east-central Africa. The circulation of the magazine thus helped to transform the UMCA network from a series of roads and stop-offs into the idea of an interwoven Upelekwa.

Msimulizi was at heart a newsletter, meant for an internal audience of

¹³ BDL, UMCA Box List A–F, A5, letter from Y. B. Abdullah to Isabel Hall, January 2, 1894.

¹⁴ I borrow the concept of social rebirth from Walter Hawthorne, “‘Being Now, as It Were, One Family’: Shipmate Bonding on the Slave Vessel Emilia, in Rio de Janeiro and throughout the Atlantic World,” *Luso-Brazilian Review* 45, no.1 (2008): 53–77; and John Mason, *Social Death and Resurrection: Slavery and Emancipation in South Africa* (Charlottesville: University of Virginia Press, 2003).

¹⁵ For an extended study of the mission stations on Lake Nyasa: Charles M. Good Jr., *The Steamer Parish: The Rise and Fall of Missionary Medicine on an African Frontier* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2004).

fellow UMCA members, rather than an evangelical or fundraising tool. School exams, teaching appointments, and football matches were reported with the same diligence as religious rituals, services, and holidays. The “Barua ya Kueleza” (letter of explanation) that opened the first issue in October of 1888, explained that the magazine was modeled on school magazines in England which aimed at both current students and alumni.¹⁶ The example likely came from the European missionary teachers, many of whom had attended English boarding schools. However, as Stephanie Newell has demonstrated in her study of Ghanaian popular fiction, the modeling and adoption of literary styles and genres is often a technique rooted in dynamic local contexts rather than mere mimicry.¹⁷

The initial run of *Msimulizi* lasted from October 1888 to August 1896; it was the first periodical printed in eastern Africa in Latin-script Swahili, and each issue was about sixteen pages long. Students and teachers on Zanzibar and the mainland divided the work of compiling the magazine. Each station chose an *Mletaji habari* (a “supplier of news” or correspondent); this individual was tasked with collecting and writing up the news of his or her area and sending it to Zanzibar.¹⁸ None of the correspondents were full-time reporters but, rather, wrote in their free time between teaching or preaching. The Zanzibar correspondents were student-teachers at the island’s boarding schools. As teachers, these individuals were leaders at their local stations: literate in Swahili and likely also speaking a local language, they had traveled to Zanzibar for school and at some stations were one of only a few official representatives of the mission. However, the influence of the correspondents did not extend very far beyond the stations. In the magazine as well as personal correspondence, African adherents referred to neighboring communities of *washenzi* (barbarians), and the stations were often islands of Christianity only slowly incorporating outsiders.¹⁹

Though the magazine was produced wholly by the African teachers and students of the mission, the European missionaries did exercise some editorial oversight. This is most apparent in the few cases when a missionary actually penned an article for the magazine. Some of these contributions

¹⁶ BDL, *Msimulizi* no. 1, October 1888.

¹⁷ Stephanie Newell, *Ghanaian Popular Fiction: “Thrilling Discoveries in Conjugal Life” & other tales* (Athens: Ohio University Press, 2000).

¹⁸ BDL, *Msimulizi* no. 1, October 1888, 4–5.

¹⁹ For instance: BDL, *Msimulizi* no. 19, October 1891, 477; and *Msimulizi* no. 46, April 1896, 964 and 977. See also the letters of UMCA adherents Agnes Sapuli and Cecil Majaliwa from the Masasi region: BDL, UMCA Box List A–F, A5, Letters from Africans.

were obviously propagandistic, such as an article praising the British form of government, while others offered updates on the regional political situation.²⁰ The correspondents knew that their audience included European readers and frequently referenced the priests-in-charge at the various missions as local decision-makers. As with ethnicity, racialized distinctions appeared in the pages of *Msimulizi*. Correspondents sometimes referred to themselves and their fellow adherents as *watu weusi* (black people), and the racial politics was just as complex in the mission as it was across the region by the late nineteenth century.²¹ But while notions of race were used to differentiate between the African and European branches of the mission, they were not used in *Msimulizi* to subordinate Africa and Africans. There was, for instance, the celebratory article describing the ordination of Cecil Majaliwa, “our first black priest,” or the article announcing the holiday of Saint Athanasius of Alexandria for which students were given the day off “kwa sababu ni mtu mweusi” (because he was a black person).²²

As regularly as possible, the correspondents sent their reports to the *Mtengenezaji wa Msimulizi* (the “arranger of *Msimulizi*,” or editor). The main job of the editor was to chase down tardy correspondence or subscription fees, as well as generally organize the process of collection and printing.²³ As one editor reminded correspondents: “We will try to supply you with enough papers for the whole year on which to write your news for *Msimulizi*; but you must not write on both sides of the paper. Each person must write as he is able between 2 and 4 pages with news each trip, if he comes to have a lot of news then he must add another paper.”²⁴ Once the editor had collected the reports from his correspondents, the workers at the Zanzibar press would print the magazine, after which it was sent out via mail steamer or other transport boat.²⁵ Though Zanzibar was a well-connected place, visited regularly by steamships and by the 1870s part of

²⁰ BDL, “Bandera ya Kwini,” *Msimulizi* no. 17, June 1891, 440–41; and *Msimulizi* no. 42, August 1895, 900.

²¹ For instance, BDL, *Msimulizi* no. 6, August 1889, 88.

²² BDL, “Kuamriwa Kasisi Wetu Mweusi wa Kwanza,” *Msimulizi* no. 9, February 1890, 129–30; and *Msimulizi* no. 23, June 1892, 556.

²³ For instance, BDL, *Msimulizi* no. 36, August 1894, 780; and *Msimulizi* no. 39, February 1895, 823.

²⁴ “Tutajaribu kuwaletea karatasi za kutosha kwa mwaka mzima za kuandika habari zenu kwa *Msimulizi*; lakini msiandike pande zote mbili za karatasi. Killa mtu andike awezavyo karasa 2 hatta 4 zenyi habari killa safari, akijiliwa na habari kubwa bassi akaongeze karasa ngine,” BDL, *Msimulizi* no. 14, December 1890, 375. All translations from the Swahili are my own.

²⁵ “Killa miezi miwili tumepewa ruhusa ya kukusanya habari za hapa Uguja, ndio za Mkunazini na Mbweni na Kiungani, na kupata pia habari za pande za Boonde na za Nyassa na za Newala na miji ya kule,” BDL, *Msimulizi* no. 1, October 1888, 4–5.

the international telegraphic network, mail could still get lost or damaged, and news could feel slow in coming. The communications network on the mainland could be even more tenuous, affected by the rainy season, political upheaval, or simple mis-timing. The apparent orderliness and regularity of the printed copies of *Msimulizi* belies the great effort that went into its production and delivery.

THE IDEA OF THE UPELEKWA

Scattered throughout the issues of *Msimulizi*, there was one word in particular that not only defined “the mission,” but also encompassed the driving force behind these connected projects of evangelism and community construction and maintenance—and that word was *upelekwa*. Its definition is, at one level, straightforward: it means mission, specifically Christian mission, and the contributors to *Msimulizi* used it as such. The various dictionaries and translations produced by the UMCA linked the idea of Christian mission to the verb stem *-pelekwa*, meaning “to be sent.” For example, the mission’s 1870 and 1875 versions of the *Handbook of the Swahili Language* included the form *mpeekwa* as a definition for missionary, while the 1884 version added *mpelekwa* as “a person sent, missionary.”²⁶ Mission teacher A. C. Madan’s 1894 *English–Swahili Dictionary* gave *mpelekwa* as missionary, and *upelekwa* as one possible definition for mission, while his 1903 *Swahili–English Dictionary* defined *mpelekwa* as “a person sent, a messenger.”²⁷ I have only regularly encountered the term *upelekwa* in *Msimulizi*, however. And while it was used to translate the English word “mission,” a closer look at the parts of the Swahili word and its use in the magazine suggests a greater significance.

First, the verb stem: *-pelekwa*. This is the passive construction of the verb *-peleka* (to send, deliver, transmit). The prefix *u* can be used to change nominal, adjectival, or verbal roots into abstract concepts. It can be used, for instance, to create an abstract noun from an adjectival root, like *uhuru* (freedom) from *huru* (free, independent); likewise, the prefix can turn a

²⁶ In Swahili, the ‘*m*’ prefix is used most often to designate an animate noun. See Edward Steere, *A Handbook of the Swahili Language as Spoken at Zanzibar* (London: Bell and Daldy, 1870); and Steere, *A Handbook of the Swahili Language as Spoken at Zanzibar*, 2nd ed. (London: George Bell and Sons, 1875).

²⁷ A. C. Madan, *English–Swahili Dictionary, Compiled for the Use of the Universities’ Mission to Central Africa* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1894); and Madan, *Swahili–English Dictionary* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1903).

verbal root, such as *-penda* (to love) into a noun, *upendo* (love).²⁸ For the term *upelekwa*, the prefix changes the verbal root—“to be sent”—into a noun, a noun which can mean “the sent” or “that which is sent.” The prefix *u* can also be used to indicate the name of a country or territory, in the sense that these constitute a collective or community. In many cases in *Msimulizi*, the word was capitalized, leading me to believe that it was used to refer to just such a community, that is, “the place to which one is sent,” or the mission field. This territory would be understood as a unified thing. The mission community, scattered as it was, was one collective entity, connected by the act of being sent.

Moreover, when referring to the UMCA, the contributors to the magazine would often use the phrase “Upelekwa wetu.” A straightforward translation would be “our Mission.” But embedded within the phrase are important insights into the nature of the community created by the adherents of the UMCA. One is the question of *who* was included within this community. Of course, the universalist project of Christian evangelism was in action here: Christians were, in this view, both a specific community of believers *and*, potentially, everyone. The adherents used the concept of the Upelekwa to knit together the mission’s evangelical efforts: Upelekwa, with its connotation of territorial unity, demonstrated the sense of shared community emanating from the scattered mission stations. In the context of the magazine, we can also read “Upelekwa wetu”—being both capitalized and including a marker of possession—as indicating the students’ sense of ownership. We see here evidence of a collective project of community maintenance and future-oriented community construction. Though a sense of community no doubt existed even before *Msimulizi* began its print run, the magazine’s appearance in the 1880s and 1890s marked a turning point, when two distinct generations of adherents started knitting together. Upelekwa, a word which appeared at least once in over half of the forty-eight issues, became a way to talk about the existing community as well as the collective hopes for that community’s future, and we can use the magazine as one way to observe this concept in action.

My understanding of the work being done in *Msimulizi* incorporates three elements from the recent literature on the circulation of ideas within colonial and post-colonial Africa: the creation of publics; the limits of circulation; and a focus on the intellectual and social history of specific words or phrases. As many Africanists have pointed out, the histories of texts

²⁸ For more on Swahili prefixes: John Mugane, *The Story of Swahili* (Athens: Ohio University Press, 2015), 108–9.

in Africa have rarely followed a straightforward, Andersonian “print-to-nationalism” political story.²⁹ Print technology and standardized languages, in many African contexts, were introduced by European missionaries, but both tools were adapted in various ways to suit local and regional, individual and community needs; the “nation,” as such, was not in the initial imagination of either the missionaries or their African interlocutors. Of course African communities were not left unchanged by printed and translated texts. Language and text were themselves debated, and served as fodder for other debates. In one example, Derek Peterson demonstrated how Protestant participants in the East African Revival of the 1930s and 40s used conversion and public confession to reengineer time and space, creating a future-oriented community of fellow believers across vast distances.³⁰ This was a community of mutually obligated “cosmopolitans” who used technologies such as bicycles, automobiles, and letter-writing to bridge their separation.

While Peterson took a broad view of the community construction taking place during the East African Revival, including orality, written text, and performance, Karin Barber has focused on texts, and in particular on the information that the historian can glean by paying attention to the ways in which authors address their audiences.³¹ Barber uses Mikhail Bakhtin’s concept of “addressivity,” or “the quality of turning to someone,” to explore the construction of an audience—or a reading public—inherent in each text, drawing examples from newspapers, history books, and other genres from West Africa.³² By addressing readers as a certain *kind* of public, she argues, an author helped to constitute them as such. That is, these texts

²⁹ See Benedict Anderson, *Imagined Communities: Reflections on the Origin and Spread of Nationalism* (London: Verso, 1983); Isabel Hofmeyr, *The Portable Bunyan: A Transnational History of The Pilgrim’s Progress* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2004); Peterson, *Creative Writing: Translation, Bookkeeping, and the Work of Imagination in Colonial Kenya* (Portsmouth, NH: Heinemann, 2004); and Emma Hunter, *Political Thought and the Public Sphere in Tanzania: Freedom, Democracy and Citizenship in the Era of Decolonization* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2015).

³⁰ Peterson, *Ethnic Patriotism and the East African Revival: A History of Dissent, c.1935–1972* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2012).

³¹ Karin Barber, “I. B. Akinyele and Early Yoruba Print Culture,” in *Recasting the Past: History Writing and Political Work in Modern Africa*, ed. Peterson and Giacomo Macola (Athens: Ohio University Press, 2009), 31–49. See also: Barber, *Africa’s Hidden Histories: Everyday Literacy and Making the Self* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2006); and Barber, *The Anthropology of Texts, Persons and Publics* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2007).

³² Mikhail Bakhtin, *Speech Genres and Other Late Essays*, trans. Vern McGee (Austin: University of Texas Press, 1986), 99, quoted in Barber, “I. B. Akinyele and Early Yoruba Print Culture,” 40–41.

were not simply reactions to imperial concerns, nor to local pressure; rather they were trying to shape the concerns of their readers, and the historian can read through the texts the various projects in which authors and their readers were engaged.

Isabel Hofmeyr, also concerned with genre and addressivity, explored the translation and circulation of one very well-known text—*The Pilgrim's Progress*—throughout the global arena of the Protestant movement. The very “portability” of Bunyan, she demonstrated, means that the historian must “pay close attention to how texts [like translations of *The Pilgrim's Progress*] dramatize the limits of their circulation.”³³ In so doing, the historian can examine how a community, such as members of a certain missionary society, “could workshop versions of themselves” via translation, a process that very quickly left the hands of the European missionaries. Attention to the limits of circulation, both the physical circulation of texts as well as the “dramatization” of those limits within a text itself, also allows the historian to “detect the cosmic arena in which African Protestants placed themselves.”³⁴ Hofmeyr’s study of Bunyan’s metaphorical travels around Africa is particularly pertinent for the intellectual history of UMCA adherents: the first Swahili translation of *The Pilgrim's Progress* was published by the Religious Tract Society on behalf of the Universities’ Mission in 1888, the same year that the first issue of *Msimulizi* appeared.

Emma Hunter put the above theories into practice by tracking the changing uses of several Swahili words over the nationalist and early independence years in Tanzania, to show the kinds of social and political work being done with and by these concepts. Describing her project as “intellectual history from below,” a history that focuses on the practical meanings of specific words, Hunter looked at changes in usage and definitions over time and how these evolutions both reflected and influenced politics.³⁵

My task here is related to but distinct from that of these four scholars: like Hunter, I examine a specific word, but I limit my focus to a particular moment in time to examine the social influence of the word and the kind of work being done with it. One can use the idea of the Upelekwa, and its appearance in *Msimulizi*, to explore the bounds of the cosmic arena of UMCA converts, as per Hofmeyr. With the Upelekwa, a reading public was being simultaneously created, reinforced, and expanded. The combination of print and the affective ties expressed by the term created a worldview

³³ Hofmeyr, *Portable Bunyan*, 25.

³⁴ Hofmeyr, *Portable Bunyan*, 26.

³⁵ Hunter, *Political Thought and the Public Sphere in Tanzania*, 7 and 10.

that contributed significantly to community maintenance and expansion. It was the Upelekwa—a religious, social, geographic, linguistic, and affective entity—that *allowed* the mission’s evangelical work to happen.

The remainder of this article explores three ways in which we can see the Upelekwa concept in action through the mission’s Swahili-language periodical. Feeling around the text for the limits of the concept thus reveals the boundaries of the community as they were understood by the magazine’s readers and contributors.

UPELEKWA IN ACTION: THE PERSONALITY OF MSIMULIZI

The magazine’s second editor, Hugh Mtoka, conceived the idea of personifying the magazine in his introductory editorials, penning articles from the point of view of the newsletter itself. Mtoka had been enslaved as a young boy, eventually coming under the care of the mission at Zanzibar and entering Kiungani in 1886. His middle name—Swinton—was a legacy of the English parish that sponsored his education. Mtoka became a Reader (a layperson who assisted in teaching and services) in 1893 and was ordained as a deacon in 1895. He served as editor twice, first through the sixteenth issue and again from October 1894 through 1895. In between, he worked on the mainland, where he returned again after 1895. Mtoka died in Chiwata in 1899, leaving a wife and one child.³⁶ Five of his introductory editorials were written “by” the magazine, with titles like “Anena Mwenyewe! Msikieni!” (He speaks himself! Listen!) and “Mimi hapa, Msimulizi!” (I am here, the Msimulizi!).³⁷

The other editor to employ the technique of personifying the magazine was George Swedi, whose *Msimulizi* was a confrontational character, chastising contributors for their lack of punctuation and bad penmanship.³⁸ The

³⁶ See A. E. M. Anderson-Morshhead, *The History of the Universities’ Mission to Central Africa, 1859–1896* (London: Universities’ Mission to Central Africa, 1897), xxv, 187, and 331; Anne Marie Stoner-Eby, “African Leaders Engage Mission Christianity: Anglicans in Tanzania, 1876–1926,” (PhD diss., University of Pennsylvania, 2003); BDL, UMCA Box List A–F, A1(XIV), letter from Dora Mills to Randolph, May 24, n.d.; and BDL, UMCA Box List A–F, A5, Letter from Agnes Sapuli to Cyril Child, October 22, 1899.

³⁷ BDL, *Msimulizi* no. 2, December 1888, 14; *Msimulizi* no. 8, December 1889, 112; *Msimulizi* no. 9, February 1890, 128; and *Msimulizi* no. 39, February 1895. The other example is from issue no. 36, under the heading “Kiungani.”

³⁸ BDL, *Msimulizi* no. 18, August 1891, 443–44.

son of John Swedi, the first African deacon ordained by the UMCA and a prominent figure within the mission, George spent his childhood moving between Zanzibar and the mainland as his family followed his father's work, before entering Kiungani in 1885. Following his tenure as editor, Swedi moved to the Magila region to teach, and he married in 1893.³⁹ The comparative biographies of these two editors is telling: they represent the two generations of UMCA students—one a former slave, one the child of a prominent clergyman—and both used their editorials to “speak” to the entirety of the Upelekwa. Their personified editorials were one literary technique by which the editors knit together the disparate mission stations, putting the Upelekwa concept immediately into the hands of each and every reader.

In the first personified editorial, which opened the magazine's second issue, Mtoka-as-magazine explained:

Thus I am happy that in every place my friends have received me with happiness, and told me, come, friend, come again, every two months come to our homes and report to us. So for this reason I have come again this second time, and this journey I come free like the first, you receive me like a gift, but the third journey you will want to pay one pice, apologies sir, (or six pice per year) because my journey has expenses, there is no alternative.⁴⁰

Mtoka intended for the magazine held in the hand to “speak” directly to the reader. And how could one deny such a close confidant something as trivial as a subscription fee? It was a shrewd tactic to be sure. But beyond explaining the importance of paying for the subscription, Mtoka put the voice of the magazine and the community that it represented into the minds of its readers, while simultaneously reminding them that it would return again. Likewise, in the eighth issue, Mtoka (again personifying the magazine), began familiarly with the question, “Hey, Sir, how are you?” (“Ee Bwana wee, u hali gani?”). He then went on to describe his travels between

³⁹ BDL, UMCA SF Box List, SF No.79 I-II, “Register of Old Boys”; *Msimulizi* no. 29, June 1893, 663; and UMCA Box List A-F, A1(VII-VIII), letter from Dale to Viner, December 16, 1894.

⁴⁰ “Bassi nina furaha kama killa upande rafiki zangu wamenipokea kwa furaha, na kuniambia, njoo, rafiki, njoo tena, killa miezi miwili njoo kwetu utusimulie. Bassi ndio maana nimekuja tena hivi sasa marra ya pili, na safari hii ninakuja burre kama kwanza, unipokee kama zawadi, lakini safari ya tatu utataka kulipa pesa moja, urathi, bwana, (au pesa sita kwa mwaka) kwani safari yangu ina gharama, haina buddi,” BDL, *Msimulizi* no. 2, December 1888, 14. A pice was a fraction of a rupee.

the mission stations, invoking the mission's scattered community and the magazine's own role in connecting it:

I have come to you again with conversation about this journey; and my own news is I see very good, because I think that now I have the age of one year since my birth, and truly since being just an infant my work has been only traveling and reporting. I have arrived from time to time in each city of our Mission, I have chatted with many people, and I have been happy to get the news of their fellows from all around, because indeed I gave them much, until they see me now as a friend seen often. Even when I am here on Unguja [Zanzibar]—because I was born, you know, on the island of Unguja—the Correspondents do not miss sending me their news, they do not forget me, except maybe once or twice I have been passed by a place.⁴¹

Mtoka went on to remind subscribers to pay their dues, and concluded with “Well my dear friend, these words, are mine; and I am very busy, because I am required to reach about 350 people each journey—even in Europe I reach 20 people. So, allow me Sir, I am your Msimulizi.”⁴² That final line could be a formulaic farewell, but it also indicates a sense of ownership on the part of contributors and readers. The mission's network spanned many different, overlapping communities, and the magazine reinforced this aspect of the language: it “spoke” to Bondeis and Makondes and Ziguas, to former slaves and those never enslaved, and it spoke to all of them as “theirs.” These personalized and direct references to the ethnic, linguistic, and geographic diversity of the UMCA community demonstrate the idea of the Upelekwa in action.

This editorial also offers the first indication of the actual circulation numbers of the magazine, a number which at first glance seems small. But

⁴¹ “Nimekujia tena kwa maongezi safari hii; na habari zangu mwenyewe nionavyo njema sana, kwani nafikiri kama sasa nimepata umri wa mwaka mmoja tangu kuzaliwa kwangu, na kweli tangu kuwa mchanga tu kazi yangu kusafiri na kusimulia tu. Nimefika marra kwa marra kwa killa mji wa Upelekwa wetu nimezungumza na watu sana, wamefurahi kupata habari za ndugu zao pangine pote, kwani ndizo niwapazo sana, hatta huniona sasa kuwa kama rafiki wa kutazamiwa sana. Hatta nilipo huku Unguja—kwani mimi mzalia, ati, wa kisiwa cha Unguja—Waletaji habari hawakosi kuniletea habari za kwao, hawanisahau, illa labda mmoja wawili wamepitiwa mahali,” BDL, *Msimulizi* no. 8, December 1889, 112.

⁴² “Bassi somo, maneno hayo, ni yangu; nami nashughulika sana, kwani sharti niwafikie watu kama 350 killa safari—hatta Ulaya nafika kwa watu wapata 20. Bass uwe rathi, bwana, mimi hiapa Msimulizi wako,” BDL, *Msimulizi* no. 8, 113.

while the circulation was around 350, including some 60–120 African teachers and advanced students, the magazine actually reached an audience beyond only its subscribers. We know, for instance, that the editors were constantly reminding subscribers to pay their dues and urged readers to purchase their own copies of the magazine. It seems that people often shared the magazine, and the editor chastised them for it.⁴³ Jonathon Glassman described a similar tactic used by newspapers in Zanzibar in the 1950s. While those editors tried to shame readers into buying their own copies, readers continued to share newspapers or read them aloud in public spaces.⁴⁴ Perhaps *Msimulizi*, too, was read aloud at mission stations and other gathering places, increasing not just the circulation of the magazine's content, but also awareness of the wider Upelekwa. This is especially believable given the magazine's conversational style. All of the readers within the ambit of the UMCA world would have been able to understand, and most would have been able to read, the Swahili in which it was written.

It is more difficult to ascertain *how* readers responded to the idea of the Upelekwa as contained in the magazine, and the kinds of conversations it generated. *Msimulizi* itself offered the impression of consensus. There are, however, occasional glimpses of dissension, as when the station at Likoma began printing a rival magazine in 1891, followed soon thereafter by the press at Magila.⁴⁵ Despite this competition from sister stations, *Msimulizi* and its producers were vested with a singular sense of authority: each issue included a complete list of the teachers and contributors from the various stations; copies of *Msimulizi* were collected and placed in the library at Kiungani; and the mission's English-language periodicals often included translated extracts from the magazine—all of which added to its perceived significance. In myriad ways the Upelekwa crept into both the oral and literate cultures of the UMCA communities scattered across the region. The magazine, both a vehicle and a constituent of the Upelekwa, followed the mission's adherents wherever they went, "speaking" to readers with an uncanny sense of immediacy.

⁴³ For instance, BDL, *Msimulizi* no. 9, February 1890, 128–29.

⁴⁴ Glassman, *War of Words, War of Stones*, 150.

⁴⁵ For the good-natured but rivalrous exchange, see BDL, *Msimulizi* no. 17, June 1891, 431–32; *Msimulizi* no. 18, August 1891, 443; and *Msimulizi* no. 19, October 1891, 480.

UPELEKWA IN ACTION: THE FAMILIAL VOCABULARY OF THE MAGAZINE

Along with the conversational structure of the magazine, the lexicon of *Msimulizi* reflected the pervasiveness of the Upelekwa concept and its effectiveness in creating a collectivity out of ethnic, linguistic, geographic, and generational diversity. In particular, the use of familial terms explicitly tied the magazine's readers together. Anne Marie Stoner-Eby touched upon the use of such vocabulary in her investigation of the UMCA teachers in the region around Masasi, examining the use of the word *ndugu* (sibling, kin, relative, comrade).⁴⁶ "It was a community defined by the word *ndugu*," she wrote. "The teachers from the Rovuma region used *ndugu* to describe their fellow teachers, students, and Christians in the Rovuma region and across eastern Africa." The use of this familial term, she argued, created a sense of the UMCA community as children under the same mother. The importance of "family, clan, and village" had not been undermined, but rather the concept expanded to include all UMCA Christians.⁴⁷ *Ndugu* appeared frequently in *Msimulizi*, in just the ways described by Stoner-Eby.

Other familial terms permeated the magazine, including the words *jamaa* and *kundi*. *Jamaa* means "a number of persons gathered or connected together, family, society, company, assembly, gathering, meeting."⁴⁸ The word was used in most cases in *Msimulizi* to refer to a specific person's family, as when mainland students would return home from Zanzibar to visit *jamaa zao* (their families). It was not unusual, though, to use the word to refer to the broader "family" of the station, the mission, or even the "family" of Christians. For example, "Ninathani mtapenda kusikia habari ya jamaa wetu mmoja Mmasihiya" (I think you will like to hear the news of our single Christian family).⁴⁹ A correspondent from Masasi combined multiple sentiments of *jamaa* in his description of an anticipated visit from the Bishop: "Truly our brothers, as you know, in each Station of our Mission every year indeed there is the happiness of every Christian, because our family is welcomed into the main Family."⁵⁰ Here he referred to the family of the station, of the Mission, and of "every Christian." His Masasi

⁴⁶ Stoner-Eby, "African Leaders Engage Mission Christianity," 185.

⁴⁷ Stoner-Eby, "African Leaders Engage Mission Christianity," 189–90.

⁴⁸ Madan, *Swahili-English Dictionary* (1903).

⁴⁹ BDL, *Msimulizi* no. 4, April 1889, 59.

⁵⁰ "Kweli ndugu zetu, kama mjuavyo, katika killa Station ya Upelekwa huu killa mwaka namu kuna furahi kwa killa Mmasihiya, kwa maana jamaa zetu watakaribishwa katika Ujamaa ulio mkuu," BDL, *Msimulizi* no. 18, August 1891, 454.

station was linked to all of these levels through the circulation of the magazine as well as by the Bishop's visit. In the magazine, one can find reference to the "jama ya Kimasihiya" (the Christian family), the "jamaa wa Mbweni" (the family of Mbweni), "jamaa yetu . . . 'Chama cha Paolo Mtume'" (our family . . . "the Guild of St. Paul"), and the "jamaa huko Unguja" (the family there on Unguja).⁵¹ The notion of family at every level—nuclear, station, mission, and Christian—infused *Msimulizi*.

Kundi is another word that appeared frequently in the magazine. *Kundi* means "a number of things (usually living things) together, crowd, troop, group, flock, herd, swarm, &c."⁵² Contributors used the term in multiple senses, from "kundi la mbuzi" (a herd of goats), to the "kundi la Kimasihiya" (the troop/group of Christianity).⁵³ The latter was the most common usage, often employed in reference to baptism or confirmation: "They were confirmed and the hearers and students promised to show them every day their desire to enter into the flock of Christians."⁵⁴ Another issue reported that an adherent from one of the mission farms, who had drifted away from the church, "amelirejea kundi lake la Umasihiya" (has returned to her flock of Christianity).⁵⁵ Students were urged "kuwa kundi moja" (to be one flock).⁵⁶ The repetition of this word reinforced the idea that the UMCA community was a collective, connected group. It also clearly referenced the biblical idea of Christians as a flock of sheep led by Jesus, their shepherd. Using *kundi* or *jamaa* to refer to the station, the mission, or to their fellow Christians, the correspondents blended these layers together, creating a strong sense for their readers of affiliation across time and space. The mission "family," of course, also welcomed newcomers into the fold. Rather than seeing this evangelical expansion as a series of disconnected efforts based out of the individual mission stations, the familial language of the magazine made it a collective project—thus current and future family became part and parcel to the Upelekwa.

⁵¹ BDL, *Msimulizi* no. 34, August 1894, 755; *Msimulizi* no. 5, June 1889, 68; *Msimulizi* no. 43, October 1895, 906; *Msimulizi* no. 32, August 1894, 747.

⁵² Madan, *Swahili-English Dictionary* (1903).

⁵³ BDL, *Msimulizi* no. 48, August 1896, 1022; and *Msimulizi* no. 29, June 1893, 669.

⁵⁴ "Wakatiwa mikono, na kuwaaga watu wasikiao na waanafunzi kwa kuwaonya wawe siku zote na shauko ya kutaka nao kuingia katika kundi la Wamasihiya," BDL, *Msimulizi* no. 18, August 1891, 454. A baptism example can be found in *Msimulizi* no. 29, August 1896, 1022.

⁵⁵ BDL, *Msimulizi* no. 9, February 1890, 153.

⁵⁶ BDL, *Msimulizi* no. 7, October 1889, 111.

TRACKING TRAVEL THROUGH THE UPELEKWA

As any close-knit family would, the contributors to *Msimulizi* kept tabs on their fellow adherents. A contributor from an outstation, for instance, would report when a person or group left; the receiving station would often report their arrival; and finally, the original station would happily report when someone returned. Even in instances not tracked so thoroughly, readers were kept abreast of many of the movements and life developments of their fellow adherents. Various issues included one-off reports that, for instance, a group had set off for Congo, or that someone had become a teacher's assistant or printer, or that a member had returned to Zanzibar after serving on a British man-of-war.⁵⁷ Such reports about individual members of the community cultivated a sense of shared and mutual obligation, contributing to an awareness that each of these individuals (including the reader!) belonged within the collective Upelekwa.

At times correspondents relied on travelers to bring them news, as when one visitor brought to a mainland outstation "the news of our family there on Unguja. We were comforted."⁵⁸ Of course big events, like the ordination of an African priest in 1893, often passed first through telegraph and then the magazine.⁵⁹ In such instances, too, news could prompt the granting of a holiday—a day off from school and work because of an event that happened at another station.⁶⁰ Keeping track through *Msimulizi* was often the best that old friends and classmates could hope for, and face-to-face reunions were a joyful surprise. "When I saw my friends," recounted one writer of a journey from Zanzibar to Magila, "I was made very very happy."⁶¹ Certain occurrences defined existence at the UMCA stations—the baptisms and confirmations, schooldays and holidays, births and deaths and travels. The sharing of experience—whether immediately or vicariously through the magazine—strengthened the Upelekwa.

The exchanges also took less light-hearted forms. In the April 1896

⁵⁷ BDL, *Msimulizi* no. 18, August 1891; *Msimulizi* no. 18, August 1891; *Msimulizi* no. 32, December 1894. See also: *Msimulizi* no. 15, February 1891, 392, and 398; *Msimulizi* no. 16, April 1891, 411 and 417; *Msimulizi* no. 17, June 1891, 423; *Msimulizi* no. 18, August 1891, 459 and 460; *Msimulizi* no. 19, October 1891, 475 and 476; and *Msimulizi* no. 20, December 1891, 505 and 506.

⁵⁸ "Habari za jamaa huko Unguja. Tukafarajika," BDL, *Msimulizi* no. 34, April 1894, 747.

⁵⁹ BDL, *Msimulizi* no. 28, April 1893, 660.

⁶⁰ For one example of many, see BDL, *Msimulizi* no. 34, April 1894, 757.

⁶¹ "Na nilipowaona rafiki zangu, nikafurahiwa sana sana," BDL, *Msimulizi* no. 20, December 1891, 497.

issue, for instance, the correspondent from the mainland station of Mwitia shared the good news that “one of our sisters,” who had left the mission to follow “worldly ways,” had returned.⁶² In the following issue, however, the correspondent noted that this same person “had left again to follow worldly ways.”⁶³ He continued: “Therefore I am sorry because I said that she would be seen again there on Zanzibar, but it is not to be.”⁶⁴ Another heavy-hearted report came in the June 1892 issue, in which a correspondent from Likoma wrote to inform readers of a tragedy that occurred in part *because* of the exchange of news. In February of that year, the residents of the station received word that one of their students had died on Zanzibar. On receiving the news, the boy’s distraught parents confronted the local mission teacher. The confrontation came to a peaceful end, but soon afterward the boy’s father grew ill and died. “Thus there is much sadness for this woman,” wrote the correspondent, “thinking about the news of her husband and her child, but we do not know what will transpire, because we hear from time to time that this child [young woman] wants to kill herself but people restrain her.”⁶⁵ This is an extreme example of the power of information to change lives; in multiple ways the exchange of news—happy, sad, or quotidian—had real consequences for the lives of the UMCA’s adherents.

The concept of the Upelekwa encompassed England, too, as distinct from but also naturally connected to the African branches of the mission. And while racial constructions became increasingly entrenched in the late nineteenth century, as mentioned above, the magazine’s contributors did not use the concept to subordinate Africa and Africans. While England was the source of denominational authority, of white missionaries, and of certain material goods, some authors gave examples of the assistance that Africa could offer to England, referring naturally to their own responsibility for their fellow believers on that other far-away island. At an 1891 meeting of a women’s group on Zanzibar, for instance, the members decided that rather than giving their annual collection money to a mainland station as they had the year before, they would donate it to St. Alban’s parish in

⁶² “Ametufikia hapa ndugu yetu moja wa huko Mbweni alitoroka tangu zamani kufuata ulimwengu, lakini ulimwengu umempiga kofi na ameuona ulivyo,” BDL, *Msimulizi* no. 46, April 1896, 965.

⁶³ “Ametoka kuufuata ulimwengu tena,” BDL, *Msimulizi* no. 47, June 1896, 989.

⁶⁴ “Kwa hivyo nasikitika sana kwa kuwa nalisema kama atakuwa mtu wa kuonekana tena huko Unguja, lakini sivyo,” BDL, *Msimulizi* no. 47, 989.

⁶⁵ “Bassi huzuni nyingi sana aliyo nayo mwanamke huyu, kufikiri habari za mumewe na kufikiri habari za mtoto wake, lakini hatujui yatakavyokuwa, kwani tunasikia marra kwa marra huyu mwanawe anataka kujua lakini watu tu wanamzuia,” BDL, *Msimulizi* no. 23, June 1892, 564.

Holborn, England, in order to pay for breakfast for the parish's poor children.⁶⁶ Three of the women had actually visited St. Alban's, and "they saw with their own eyes the poverty of the place."⁶⁷

The magazine reported on a similar effort in December 1891: after a gathering of teachers and clergymen, two members of the African clergy requested that readers send a small offering to Zanzibar, which would then be sent on to England in order to erect a memorial for Mary Townshend, a former teacher and nurse on Zanzibar who had died and was buried on the island.⁶⁸ One of the writers urged contributors: "Please my brother teachers, work hard at this and do it with a heart of love, each person big or small must give, because 'It is better to give than to receive.'"⁶⁹ These moments of transcontinental exchange demonstrate how the Upelekwa—as a mission field and as an idea of community—very naturally and consciously included England, but was centered in eastern Africa. It was, using Barber's words, the "simultaneous rootedness and billowing expansiveness" of the concept of the Upelekwa that made it robust enough to survive the demographic, geographic, political, and evangelical transitions experienced by the mission community in the 1880s and 1890s.⁷⁰

CONCLUSION

The multi-nodal network of the UMCA was in part a consequence of the mission's early history: because the mission headquartered itself on Zanzibar, its initial pool of potential converts were former slaves from all over the region. Therefore, the early missionaries could not focus on any one particular location or group of people, but rather had to orient themselves toward a scattering of widespread points of evangelization. These early circumstances laid the foundation for the Upelekwa worldview, a regional and, at times, trans-continently inclusive community that was embraced and expanded by African adherents over the course of the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. It was a worldview that was both defined and constantly reinforced by the arrival of *Msimulizi*, with its conversation and news of the Upelekwa.

⁶⁶ BDL, *Msimulizi* no. 18, August 1891, 456–57.

⁶⁷ "Wakapata kuona kwa macho yao, umaskini wa huko," BDL, *Msimulizi* no. 18, 457.

⁶⁸ BDL, *Msimulizi* no. 20, December 1891, 506–7.

⁶⁹ "Tafathali ndugu waalimu jambo hili mlitie bidii na likafanyike kwa moyo wa upendo killa mtu kwa kikubwa ao kidogo alichu nacho akatoe, kwani 'Heri kutoa kuliko kupokea,'" BDL, *Msimulizi* no. 20, 507.

⁷⁰ Barber, *Anthropology of Texts*, 155.

By examining the physical circulation of the magazine, and the way its contributors wrote about its travels and their own, we can see the outline of the Upelekwa, at once defined and expansive, local and international, secular and spiritual. The adherents needed the Upelekwa to take this multifaceted form in order to do their evangelical work, and so they created it as such. Meanwhile, the content of the magazine—its conversational style and invocation of familial concepts—reflected its audience, just as it attempted to constitute them as a literate, Christian, closely knit family. The magazine put the idea of the Upelekwa into action, bringing it to readers at the mission's scattered stations, and turning the concept into a reality for the adherents of the UMCA.

Questions, of course, remain. In this piece, I have focused on one particular moment in the history of the idea of Upelekwa. The 1880s and the publication of *Msimulizi* were, I argue, a turning point for the community constituted through the term; but what happened to it as the nineteenth century rolled into the twentieth, and the mission community faced the violence of the First World War, followed by the imposition of a more concerted form of colonial rule as a British mandate? Did the colony, and then the nation-state, subsume the Upelekwa? These are questions for another day, another study, but I want to suggest that the Upelekwa was an alternative framework of community building, outside of the teleological history of anti-colonial nationalism and post-colonial nation building in Tanzania. This is what makes tracking the idea of the Upelekwa a worthwhile task: not necessarily because it appears more frequently than, say *kundi* or *jamaa*, but rather explicitly because it was *not* adopted by the post-colonial state—it was a path not taken.

Another set of questions pertains to those not included within the Upelekwa worldview. Though the concept was expansive, as we have seen, the Upelekwa did have limits: UMCA adherents worried about the *washenzi* (barbarians or heathens) who still surrounded their stations; they were concerned about their Muslim neighbors and those who might be attracted to that religion; and they were all too aware of the denominational, national, and racial differences that seemed so important to their European counterparts. These groups were left out of the conceptualization of the Upelekwa, as were those fellow adherents who had “fallen away.” Including the stories of those left out of the Upelekwa is a much more difficult task than tracing the boundaries, fluid as they were, of the idea. The community of adherents was neither monolithic nor without friction; indeed, it was the very diversity of the community that necessitated the Upelekwa, in all of its expansiveness, its definition, its concreteness, and its malleability.

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