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A B S T R A C T

The Watch Tower movement was a millennial social movement which was popular in Nyasaland, Southern and Northern Rhodesia, the Belgian Congo, and in parts of the countries bordering these territories, between the two world wars. It derived its doctrine initially from the writings of Charles Russell, the founder of one of the largest sects of the twentieth century, the Jehovah's Witnesses. The African Watch Tower however was largely independent of the Jehovah's Witnesses, although this body attempted to establish its control in central Africa, and its ideology and organisation changed and developed in accordance with local conditions. While some similarities in the conditions of rapid urbanisation which surrounded the origins of the Jehovah's Witnesses in America, and the Watch Tower in Africa, may be discerned, its political and historical role was a very different one. Spread by labour migrants moving between employment centres and from the village to the urban compound, the Watch Tower contributed to the new forms of association which enabled workers to protest against their conditions of employment, and assisted in spreading a pan-Africanist consciousness which was a significant current in the development of anti-colonial nationalism. It was not only an urban movement, but also selectively influenced the countryside, where external factors and the nature of local social organisation were favourable. It spread rapidly, in a wide variety of forms, and with little formality regarding who was or was not a member, but retained a central core of ideas and

an organisational structure, which allows the movement to be treated as a unity.

Millennial movements have frequently been treated from a social pathological point of view, and, as regards the non-Western world, as inspired by a hopeless envy of European material achievements. This is not the approach taken here, as it is considered that this view underestimates the positive aspects of the movement. This study is social historical in form, and seeks to examine what the overall significance of the Watch Tower in south central Africa society was. In particular those factors which affected the diffusion of the movement are studied: the development of mining belts, the recruitment of a migrant proletariat, colonial attitudes towards African aspirations, the impact of missionaries, and the effect of administrative policy on African associations. The tribal societies of the region also differed substantially both in terms of the manner in which colonial rule had been established, their internal political organisation, and their response to the social changes which took place during the colonial period. These are analysed and compared in an attempt to delineate what combination of circumstances was favourable for the reception of the Watch Tower, and why it took the form that it did. The study ooncentrates on the developing cleavages in African social life between groups differentiated in terms of status, literacy, wealth, and ethnicity, and argues that for many of its adherents the Watch Tower was a revolutionary movement.

The Watch Tower first developed in Nyasaland, and the history and personages important in it are studied in detail.

A former member of the United Free Church of Scotland mission, Elliott Kamwana, was instructed in Russell's millennial theories by Joseph Booth, a fundamentalist of changing religious affiliations and strong political views who believed in the idea of 'Africa for the Africans'. Kamwana attracted a large following, and an Africanist version of Russell's and Booth's ideas was spread by the Kamwana Society Church, the first institutional form of the Watch Tower. The connexions between this and the revolt led by John Chilembwe in 1915 are considered as part of an assessment of the contribution of the Watch Tower to early nationalist ideas. The absence of industrialisation in Nyasaland led many Watch Tower followers to migrate to neighbouring territories, where the movement was adapted to new ends. Particularly in Southern Rhodesia it came to perform the functions of a Tonga tribal association, but as it attracted labourers from many different backgrounds so it developed some of the attributes of a workers' movement. The availability of alternative forms of association, the influence of African organisations in South Africa, and the degree of administrative control in the Rhodesian mine compounds prevented the Watch Tower from being more than of minor importance in this setting, however. Nevertheless it was briefly adopted by a section of the northern Shona in the late 1920's where it acquired some of the features of a movement of millennial revolt. The degree to which this was indeed a millennial rebellion, and the specific crisis faced by the Shona, are examined as a prelude to the study of the reception of the Watch Tower by rural groups in North-Eastern Rhodesia, Barotseland, and the Belgian Congo.

The central section of the thesis is devoted to a study of the Watch Tower in Northern Rhodesia. The diffusion of the movement from Southern Rhodesia across the Zambezi by returning labour migrants coincided with the disturbances of the campaign in German East Africa in 1918, and the crisis faced at this time by the Iwa, Namwanga and Mambwe people (on the Tanganyika border) which resulted in the adoption of Watch Tower ideas is examined. It was not only their relationship with the mission societies, but also their subordinate position in relation to their powerful neighbours, the Bemba, it is argued, which helps to explain this instance of millennialism. The economic consequences of forced labour, impressment, and the epidemics which came in the wake of war were the general background to the first phase of the Watch Tower.

During the 1920's the movement spread through much of North-Eastern Rhodesia, and was popular amongst the Lenje, Kunda, Nsenga and migrant peoples from Mozambique. The nature of the local political organisation of these societies is examined, and the success of chiefs in maintaining their authority and securing the benefits available under colonial rule assessed, and it is suggested that the continuing political capacity of chiefs is a crucial factor affecting the reception given to the Watch Tower. The strong state system and cattle economy of the Ngoni, for example, help to explain why despite a considerable exposure to the movement there should have been little response by them, except in those areas where land alienation had brought about extreme poverty. Amongst the Lala the Watch Tower developed further than it had amongst the neighbouring peoples,

where it had usually offered an Africanist alternative to mission Christianity which had overtones of resistance to white rule. Under the instructions of a Lala chief, Shaiwila, a Watch Tower prophet (who came to be called mwana lesa, 'the son of God') transformed the movement into a witchcraft eradication cult. The popularity of this new version of the Watch Tower spread rapidly through the central districts to the Lamba and into the Belgian Congo, and resulted in the drowning of several hundred people suspected of being witches. These events illustrate the interrelation of customary theories of social causation and millennial beliefs, and the type of social pressures experienced in rural central Africa in this period. The mwana lesa movement is characterised not as one of millennial resistance but as an anti-witchcraft church. The discovery of the killings led to the attempted suppression of the Watch Tower, and the consequences of this are assessed.

The development of the Northern Rhodesian copperbelt in the late 1920's accelerated the pace of social change and helped to create new demands in African society. Two case studies based on archival research and fieldwork are made of the rural hinterland affected by the development of the copperbelt, from the point of view of the adoption of Watch Tower ideas and organisation as a response to the relationship between village and compound which came to be established. Jeremiah Gondwe was a prophet leader, a contemporary of the mwana lesa, who also carried out certain witchcraft eradication functions amongst his following. He had developed his ideas however in the setting of the mine compound, and his interpretation of the

Watch Tower was a politically radical and Africanist one. Gondwe's career from childhood is traced, and the manner in which he established a Watch Tower village near Luanshya examined. This settlement today remains the outstanding example of independent Watch Tower activity in central Africa, and it is briefly discussed. The Luapula valley was a major area of recruitment for the Northern Rhodesian and Katangan mines and was also an area where the Watch Tower was widely popular. The relationships between the development of a labour force in the Luapula and the extension of Watch Tower ideas are examined. The Watch Tower villages which were established in the valley resulted, it is argued, from the partial process of proletarianisation which affected this area, as well as from the strongly traditional nature of Lunda society.

During the 1930's the Watch Tower spread into the western parts of Northern Rhodesia, at the same time as another witchcraft eradication movement, mcapi, was also widely popular. Watch Tower and mcapi are compared and distinguished. It was largely as a witchcraft eradication movement that the Watch Tower was adopted amongst the northern Lunda, Kaonde, and Ila, and the particular circumstances of these occurrences are examined. It is not only the economic consequences of colonialism and the impact of labour policies which need to be taken into account, but also such factors as indigenous messianic beliefs and the role of chiefs, in order to explain why in this area the Watch Tower took the form that it did. In Barotseland however the Watch Tower was clearly political in nature. It was adopted by immigrants from Angola who had been subjected to the rule of

the Lozi as a movement of millennial resistance against them; and this is taken to illustrate the point that millennial beliefs may occur where sharp political and social cleavages exist, which are not necessarily those of the confrontation between black and white.

The Watch Tower was also widely popular in the urban centres of Northern Rhodesia, and particularly on the copper-belt itself. During the 1930's new organisational attempts were made by leaders of the movement who wished to establish a countrywide African church. The Jehovah's Witnesses had also reorganised, and were intent on securing recognition from the colonial governments of central Africa in order to establish control over the unorthodox African movement, which was widely taken to be a part of their global movement. The considerations which ultimately led the Northern Rhodesian administration to recognise the Jehovah's Witnesses and allow them into the country are discussed. The African leaders did not see themselves acting as subordinate agents of a global sect, however, despite the use which was made of the publications and Bibles of the sect, and the correspondence and support which existed. The unsuccessful attempts of certain European Jehovah's Witnesses to purge the African Watch Tower are examined. The strikes on the copperbelt in 1935 interrupted these developments, as the Watch Tower was held responsible for the disturbances. These allegations, and the degree to which the Watch Tower had contributed towards the development of a proletarian consciousness amongst African miners, and ultimately towards the development of African nationalism, are assessed.

A further major area of diffusion of the Watch Tower was the Belgian Congo, but the development of the movement there is not discussed in any depth, and rather from a comparative point of view. The activities of Gondwe and mwana lesa popularised the Watch Tower in the rural areas of Katanga, while Luapula migrants spread the belief to the urban centres. It was carried thence particularly by Luba adherents to the eastern districts of the Congo, and by administrative deportations of notable leaders to the central districts. It gave rise to a short-lived millennial protest at the tin mine at Manono in 1941, and a few years later to a fully-fledged millennial revolt lasting some months amongst the Kumu in Orientale province. The circumstances surrounding these events are examined and compared with other Watch Tower protests in south and central Africa.

Finally, an overall historical assessment of the significance of the Watch Tower is made. Its spread reflects the new forms of stratification which emerged during the colonial period, and the restraints on African mobility imposed by the attitudes of settlers, who sought to maintain the position of Africans as rural tribesmen without any legitimate status in a common society. The area of its diffusion coincides broadly with the region of settler industrialisation where administrative control and penetration outside the urban areas was not particularly thorough. The history and extension of missionary undertakings also affected the areas of its reception. Central Africa was a region where on the eve of colonialism there were only a few powerful states, surrounded by a large number of fragmented groups, and the internal organisation and relationships between these local

societies also needs to be taken into account when examining why the Watch Tower took the form that it did. Generally, the Watch Tower reflects the development of a large scale society and the adaption to a new industrial technology. It was popular because it catered for aspirations towards literacy, and appeared to offer a means of removing the causes of oppression and deprivation felt by Africans. And in transforming popular attitudes at the grassroots level, the movement contributed significantly towards the later emergence of mass nationalism.

THE WATCH TOWER MOVEMENT IN SOUTH CENTRAL AFRICA

1908-1945

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PREFACE

In undertaking the research and writing of this thesis, I have benefited from the advice and support of very many people and institutions, and have also had the opportunity of making personal friendships which I have valued greatly. It is both a pleasure and a duty to acknowledge this support. My first year of study was supported by a United Nations Training Programme Fellowship, and I am especially grateful to Sir Robert Birley, whose patient goodwill and encouragement first enabled me to undertake this degree, and to Dr David Goldey, whose assistance removed many of the difficulties encountered in this year. A Beit Travel Grant from Oxford University and a Research Award from the University of Zambia Higher Degrees Committee made travel and research in central Africa possible. I should also like to thank Canon John Collins and Sir Robert Birley for finding funds for me to complete my terms of residence, and friends and colleagues at St Antony's College for making my periods of study there so rewarding. I have encountered hospitality from numerous people during the course of my research, but I should like in particular to thank Ruth and Anthony Eastwood in Salisbury; Margaret and Willie Kalk in Blantyre; and Jack and Ray Simons in Lusaka. My many friends in London and Oxford who have been unstinting in their willingness to be imposed on will forgive me for not mentioning them individually: I do thank them most sincerely for all their help.

I have benefited greatly from correspondence and discussion with many people in diverse fields, and should like to express my

gratitude in particular to Clyde Mitchell, Terence Ranger, George Shepperson, Jaap van Velsen, and Bryan Wilson. Guy Malengreau and André Lecointre made valuable suggestions on the Belgian Congo; Basil Davidson, Lewis Gann, and René Lemarchand helped me through their sympathetic correspondence to formulate my research hypotheses; and colleagues in the Department of History at the University of Zambia have expressed an unfailing interest in my work. I wish to thank Robin Fielder, Harry Langworthy, Marshall Murphree, George Shepperson, Charles van Onselen and Jean-Luc Vellut for making research material available to me, and for bibliographical suggestions, and I should also like to thank my many informants in Zambia for sharing their understanding of the Watch Tower movement with me. Above all I wish to acknowledge a deep intellectual and personal debt to the supervisor of this thesis, Thomas Hodgkin, whose writing and thinking on the evolution of African political movements provided me with the initial perspectives for this study, and whose constant support and encouragement made its completion possible.

My thanks are due also to the staff of the Bodleian Library, Rhodes House, the Institute of Commonwealth Studies, and Nuffield and St Antony's College libraries in Oxford; to the British Museum and Royal Commonwealth Society in London; the Bibliothèque Royale Africaine in Brussels; the University of Zambia library, Lusaka, and to Chancellor College library, Blantyre. I also wish to thank the archivists of the Public Records Office, the Rhodesian National Archives, the Zambian National Archives, the London Missionary Society Archives, the Methodist Missionary

Society Archives, the Société des Missions Evangelique (Paris Evangelical Mission) Archives, the Société des Missionaires d'Afrique (White Fathers) Archives, and the curator of the Livingstone Museum. I am also grateful to officials of the Watch Tower Bible and Tract Society who have assisted me in correspondence and by making their reading rooms available: the Watch Tower Bible and Tract Society, Brooklyn, New York; M. Ernest Heuse of the Watch Tower Bible and Tract Society, Kinshasa and Brussels; Mr N.L. Smith of the Watch Tower Bible and Tract Society, Salisbury; Mr Smart Phiri of the Watch Tower Bible and Tract Society, Kitwe, Zambia; and Mr J. Rees of the Watch Tower Bible and Tract Society, Mill Hill, London.

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ABBREVIATIONS

A.M.E.C.	African Methodist Episcopal Church
A.N.C.	Assistant Native Commissioner
Arch.	Archives
Asst.	Assistant
B.S.A. Co.	British South Africa Company
B.S.A.P.	British South Africa Police
Camb.	Cambridge
Chief Sec.	Chief Secretary, B.S.A. Co.
C.I.D.	Criminal Investigation Department
Cmd.	Command Paper
Cmnd. Genl.	Commandant General
C.N.C.	Chief Native Commissioner
C.N.K.	Comité Nationale du Kivu
C.O.	Colonial Office
Col.	Colonial Paper, Colonies
C.S.K.	Comité Speciale du Katanga
C.U.P.	Cambridge University Press
D.C.	District Commissioner
Dept.	Department
D. Phil.	Doctor of Philosophy thesis
D.R.C.	Dutch Reformed Church
E.C.C.Z.	Ethiopian Catholic Church in Zion
encl(s).	enclosure(s), enclosed in
Exec. Co.	Executive Council
G.Z.E.C.	Gazaland Zimbabwe Ethiopian Church
H.C.	High Commissioner

I.A.I.	International African Institute
I.B.S.A.	International Bible Students Association
I.C.U.	Industrial and Commercial Workers Union
Leg. Co.	Legislative Council
L.M.S.	London Mission Society
L. Mus.	Livingstone Museum
Mgr.	Monsignor
MS.	Manuscript
MSS. Brit. Emp.	Manuscripts, British Empire series, R.H.
M.U.P.	Manchester University Press
N.C.	Native Commissioner
N.C.E. Co.	North Charterland Exploration Company
N.R.G.	Northern Rhodesian Government
O.U.P.	Oxford University Press
P.C.	Provincial Commissioner
P.E.M.	Paris Evangelical Mission
Ph.D.	Doctor of Philosophy thesis
P.R.O.	Public Record Office
R. Arch.	National Archives of Rhodesia
Res. Comm.	Resident Commissioner
R.H.	Rhodes House
R.H. MSS. Afr.	Rhodes House African Manuscripts
R.N.L.B.	Rhodesian Native Labour Bureau
S.A.	South Africa
S.D.B.	Seventh Day Baptists
Sec. Nat. Affairs	Secretary for Native Affairs
Sec. State Col.	Secretary of State for Colonies
Sec. Treasury	Secretary to the Treasury

S.N.A.	Secretary for Native Affairs
Supt. Nat. Affairs	Superintendent of Native Affairs
U.C.R.N.	University College of Rhodesia and Nyasaland
U.F.C.	United Free Church of Scotland
U.M.C.A.	Universities' Mission to Central Africa
U.M.H.K.	Union Minière du Haut Katanga
Univ.	University
W.M.M.S.	Wesleyan Methodist Missionary Society
W.T.B.T.S.	Watch Tower Bible and Tract Society
Z. Arch.	National Archives of Zambia

GLOSSARY

I. In this thesis place names are given according to their contemporary usage during the period under discussion. A number of these names have changed, so a list of their new equivalents at the time of writing is given.

Abercorn	Mbala
Albertville	Kalemie
Balovale	Zambezi
Barotseland	Western Province, Zambia
Basutuland	Lesotho
Bechuanaland	Botswana
Belgian Congo	Zaire
Bismarckburg	Kasanga
British Central Africa	Malawi
Broken Hill	Kabwe
Cholo	Tjolo
Elizabethville	Lubumbashi
Fife	Isoka
Fort Jameson	Chipata
Fort Johnston	Mangoche
Fort Rosebery	Mansa
French Congo	Congo Republic
German East Africa	Tanzania
Jadotville	Likasi
Katanga	Shaba
Mankoya	Kaoma

North-Eastern Rhodesia	Zambia, east of the line of rail
North-Western Rhodesia	Zambia, west of the line of rail
Northern Rhodesia	Zambia
Nyasaland	Malawi
Port Francqui	Ilebo
Stanleyville	Kisangani
Tanganyika	Tanzania

II. Bantu prefixes have generally been omitted in this thesis in accordance with the standard spelling adopted in publications of the I.A.I., except in quotations. A list of African words referred to in the text is given.

Ana a mulungu	The People's Church
baami	diviner, prophet
Bamulonda	The Watchman Healing Mission
bangwana	Arabised Africans
banapoleoni	The followers of Jacob Napoleon Mumbwa
bashinshimi	seer, prophet
boma	administrative centre
bulozhi	witch
Butwa	a secret society
bwanga	protective charms, medicine
capitao	foreman
cinyao	a dance society
chisamaliya	the woman of Samaria
chankwakwa	the place of the unclean

chonaule	incest
chusulu	the Sabbath, Saturday
(u)fwiti	harmful potions
ilomba	snake, vermin
indaba	consultation
induna	headman
keleki	church
khotla	council of elders, court
Kitawala	Watch Tower
mbeni	a dance society
mcapi	a witchcraft eradication movement
menaganja	circumciser
mpunju	an initiation society
mfecane	diaspora
mukombozi	son, representative
musamo	protective charms, medicine
musonzhi	diviner
mwabvi	poison ordeal
mwana lesa	son of God
mwari	a deity
nganga	diviner, doctor
nyabingi	a secret society
sanduka	rise up, rebel
satani	devils
shibalo	labour recruitment
shonongo	a dance
tenga-tenga	porters
Vapostori	the African Apostolic movement

A NOTE ON THE SOURCES

Students of the African Watch Tower movement face two particular problems with the primary source material. The first is the general problem of historical research that a movement which propounds a specific doctrine tends to be discussed by contemporary observers in largely doctrinaire terms. The scriptural refutations, counter propaganda, and ideological rivalry which are revealed in these sources are interesting in themselves, but unfortunately these are of little value in illustrating the social circumstances surrounding the participants. More particularly is this so since the ephemeral literature in which mention of the Watch Tower is made covers a wide geographical area and chronological span. For a movement which changed rapidly with time and place, there is often confusion over the group referred to. The writings of a missionary on the copperbelt in 1943, for example, may be of specific relevance only to a small group of urban adherents, yet are offered as a general statement about the Watch Tower in North-Eastern Rhodesia and Nyasaland.[1]

This consideration leads to the second problem, which is that colonial officials tended to see the Watch Tower as a consciously directed conspiratorial whole - whether of Communists, black Americans or early African nationalists - aiming to subvert their rule. With the proscription of the movement, and the

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[1] Cf. W.P. Dippenaar, Ziphunitso Za Acitawara, (The Teachings of the Watch Tower), (D.R.C. Mission Press, Mkhoma, Nyasaland, 1943). I am grateful to George Shepperson for making this document available, and to Louis Nthenda for a translation.

general ignorance of African social life common amongst administrators, reliance was placed on police informers. Unsurprisingly these petty mercenaries tended to dramatise their information, distorting the political aspects to fit in with the preconceived notions of rebellion held in settler society. Colonial administrations exchanged this information amongst themselves; diverse pieces of information were attached to the story where they would most plausibly fit; and a composite picture emerges in the police files whose accuracy even for those phases or periods of the movement with which particular officials may have been directly concerned is doubtful. Particularly where it is these changes in political consciousness which are being studied, extreme caution must be exercised.[1]

There are further problems of access to information which may be noted. The Watch Tower Bible and Tract Society has not felt it possible to open their correspondence files to researchers, which doubtless contain much relevant information. The suspicion directed at the Jehovah's Witnesses by contemporary African governments adds to the difficulties. I was not permitted access to the national archives of Malawi, which contain numerous files on the Watch Tower, and a research trip to the Luapula valley was interrupted by order of the Zambian police on security grounds. Relevant files in the Rhodesian national archives are now closed to researchers; and the current political situation in Angola and Mozambique makes enquiry into recent social history there a

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[1] This is discussed at length in S. Cross, 'Kitawala, Conspiracies, and the Sûreté: An Historiological Enquiry', in Likundoli: Enquêtes d'Histoire Zaïroise (Lubumbashi), forthcoming.

virtual impossibility. Also, the unavailability of Belgian colonial records has meant that the Watch Tower in the Congo has not received the detailed treatment it deserves. The discovery by Jean-Luc Vellut of a 500-page report of the Belgian Sûreté on the movement in the provincial archives at Kalemie, and the programme of research currently being undertaken at the Université Nationale de Zaïre, Lubumbashi, under his direction, should however rectify this.[1] It has not proved possible here to incorporate this additional material: Chapter IX is based on published administrative reports and secondary documents, which provide an outline of the development of the movement, which - while not particularly detailed - is nevertheless broadly in accordance with this new material.[2]

The inherent bias of much of the archival material and the gaps in the sources consequently need to be borne in mind. I have attempted to treat the police sources in particular with caution, and generally have sought for information from as wide a variety of sources as possible. It is very probable that a fair amount of Watch Tower activity has gone unreported: the full and definitive survey of this movement remains the task of African scholars reconstructing and interpreting their own national social histories.

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[1] Rapport de Synthèse sur le mouvement Kitawala (Sûreté Coloniale Belge, 1954?), Kalemie Provincial Archives, Zaire. I am indebted to Professor Vellut for making a copy of this document available to me.

[2] Cf. below, pp. 400-430.

CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

1. The Watch Tower Movement

2. The Study of African Millennialism

1. The Watch Tower Movement

The emergence of sects and social movements in opposition to the established church and the current political order is a phenomenon which has invited the constant attention of historians and sociologists. And the belief in the imminent destruction of the world which has marked so many of these is an ideological current which has become central in Western thought, at least since the Reformation.[1] Much of the interpretation has been marked however by religious and political conservatism, which has led to a perception of such sects and movements as heretical and subversive. It is only relatively recently that sociologists of religion, working in the tradition of Max Weber,[2] have made more neutral appraisals in studies largely concerned to understand the secularisation of society.[3] One of the largest sects of the twentieth century, the Jehovah's Witnesses, clearly exemplifies this. The few objective and critical studies of the Jehovah's Witnesses[4] stand in stark isolation above the bulk

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[1] Cf. N. Cohn, The Pursuit of the Millennium (1957).

[2] M. Weber, The Sociology of Religion (translated by E. Fischoff, 1966, first published in 1922).

[3] Cf. e.g. R. Niebuhr, The Social Sources of Denominationalism (1929); W.D. Morris, The Christian Origins of Social Revolt (1949); B.R. Wilson, Sects and Society (1961); Wilson (ed.), Patterns of Sectarianism (1967); W. Stark, The Sociology of Religion, ii, Sectarian Religion (1967).

[4] Of particular value are A.T. Rogerson, 'A Sociological Analysis of the Origin and Development of the Jehovah's Witnesses and their Schismatic Groups', (D.Phil., Oxford, 1972), cited and consulted by kind permission of the author; G.D. McKinney, The Theology of the Jehovah's Witnesses (Michigan, 1962); H.H. Stroup, The Jehovah's Witnesses (Columbia, 1945); D.R. Mainwaring, Render Unto Caesar: The Flag Salute Controversy (Chicago, 1962). For the modern period, cf. W.J. Whalen, Armageddon Around the Corner (New York, 1962), and W.C. Stevenson, Year of Doom, 1975 (1967).

of condemnatory or supportive literature.[1]

In particular, those sects and social movements in colonial Africa which have derived at least in part from the Jehovah's Witnesses have been treated by contemporary observers - and indeed a number of subsequent commentaries - largely as socially pathological or subversive manifestations. The overlapping interests of the colonial authorities, the missionaries, and the settlers which have been frequently remarked upon in central Africa[2] partly, of course, explain this hostility. But even sympathetic observers of African life tended to see adherents as emotionally hysterical and mentally unstable.[3] The triumph of anti-colonial African nationalism and the achievement of independent statehood have provided a favourable climate for the re-interpretation of these movements as progressively revolutionary, it is true, but the language of deviance still attaches to their discussion.[4] This study aims to examine the political significance and social circumstances of the African movement influenced by the doctrines of the Jehovah's Witnesses,

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[1] The tracts of the Jehovah's Witnesses have their counterpart in a number of hostile pamphlets, often reprinted and barely distinguishable in contents, such as F. Ballard, Why Not Russellism? (Christian 'Why Not?' Series No. 11, 1919); F. Mellows, Russellism: The Latest Blasphemy (Substitutes for Christianity No. 4, 1921); A.C. Dixon, Russellism Under the Searchlight (1926); W.C. Procter, Russellism (1925); J.A. Maynard, Russellism (1926); A.J. Pollock, Jehovah's Witnesses (1942). More substantial works of theological attack are N.G. McCluskey, Who Are Jehovah's Witnesses? (New York, 1956); G. Hébert, Les Témoins de Jehovah (Montreal, 1960). Works of propaganda or recantation by Witnesses are M. Cole, Jehovah's Witnesses: The New World Society (New York, 1955); A.H. MacMillan, Faith on the March (New Jersey, 1957); and W.J. Schnell, Thirty Years a Watchtower Slave (1957).

[2] Cf. e.g. M..Banton, 'Urbanisation and the Colour Line in Africa', in L.H. Gann and P. Duigan (eds.), Colonialism in Africa 1870-1960, iii, (ed. V. Turner), Profiles of Change: African Society and Colonial Rule (C.U.P., 1971).

[3] Cf. below, p. 220.

[4] E.g., H.S. Meebelo, Reaction to Colonialism (Manchester, 1971), pp. 176-178, 283.

known as the Watch Tower movement, and will attempt to avoid the pitfalls of theological and political prejudice. The dominant perspective taken falls within the field of the political sociology of social movements.

This study is also presented as a contribution to the social history of south central Africa. Herein, perhaps, lies its particular bias. Much of the historical writing on the mid-colonial period (between the wars) of this area has been constitutional, missiological, and centred on the extension of the pioneer frontier. Such concerns reflect not only the attitudes of the day, but also the problems of source material for the writing of African history. The Watch Tower, which, it will be argued, was perhaps the most influential and widespread social movement in central Africa, has benefited from having been extensively written about by its major opponents, the colonial police and missionaries, and is also well remembered by participants. Its study provides insights into the grassroots of African life in the village and the compound which, it is maintained, are important for an understanding of the reaction against racialism and the beginnings of a new consciousness in the crucial decades of the 1920's and 1930's. This work then is also concerned with redressing the balance in the study of central African society and history. In particular it is concerned with the transformation of popular attitudes which accompanied industrialisation and the growth of the idea of independence prior to the emergence of explicitly nationalist political parties.

The period of the study, 1908 to 1945, has been chosen on the grounds both of convenience and historical relevance. Watch Tower ideas were first implanted in central Africa in 1908 and spread rapidly if unevenly across a vast reach of country, from Southern Rhodesia to the French Congo.[1] During World War II the movement was banned (on the grounds of its pacifism) in every African territory in the area; after the war Jehovah's Witnesses from Europe and America increasingly took control; and the social changes of the war years led in many instances to a qualitative change in the movement. The year 1945 is also convenient as a terminal date from the point of view of the restrictions on access to archival material relating to the more recent period. Thus the study will deal with three main periods: the prelude and aftermath of World War I, the 1920's, and the 1930's.

There is an initial problem of nomenclature. The Watch Tower Bible and Tract Society (W.T.B.T.S.) which was founded by Charles Taze Russell (1842-1916) in Alleghany, Pennsylvania, in 1884, incorporated a number of other groups, spawned branches under different names such as the International Bible Students' Association and the People's Pulpit Association, and gave rise to a number of splinter movements. It is and has been known under a variety of names, of which the most common are Russellites, Dawnites, the Watch Tower, the Society, and - since 1931 - the Jehovah's Witnesses.[2] In central Africa it was usually known as

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[1] Place names are referred to according to contemporary usage. Cf. glossary, p. x.

[2] Rogerson, 'A Sociological Analysis', passim.

Watch Tower or Kitawala (bachitawala, kitaweri, chitabala, etc., all corruptions of 'tower'[1]), but was also referred to in Nyanja - the south central African lingua franca - as Mpatuka (separate), Choonadi (the truth), Sosaiti (Society), or generally under the name of a particular leader, such as the banapoleoni (the followers of Jacob Napoleon Mumbwa), or the Kenanites or Kamwanaists (the followers of Elliott Kenan Kamwana). This variety reflects not only the wide geographical and associational spread of the movement, but also the confusion which existed as to who was or was not officially a member. In Africa, where its ideas spread beyond the confines of the movement itself and influenced a number of other independent African religious movements, the term 'Watch Tower' was also used by commentators of the day to signify generally African aspirations for independence which were clothed in religious language.[2] This variety also marks an ambiguity - sometimes deliberately maintained - regarding the precise degree of affiliation of groups and individuals to the W.T.B.T.S. It falls outside the scope of this study to examine the organisational history of the parent body, but since the degree of independence of the movement in central Africa which stemmed from it is a point of discussion, this complexity of names needs to be borne in mind. I shall use the terms W.T.B.T.S., Jehovah's Witnesses, and the Society to refer to the official movement, whether its headquarters in Brooklyn, New York, or its branch offices in London and South Africa. The term Watch Tower will be used generally in connexion with the

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[1] It is possible that the word 'Kitawala' has affinities with a similar Swahili word meaning 'cleansed'.

[2] Cf. below, p. 84.

characteristic ideas of the W.T.B.T.S., and specifically to refer to African participants in the areas under study, whether or not they were recognized members of the W.T.B.T.S. or independents. I shall indicate in the text where these groups were more usually known under another name, and their standing vis-à-vis the W.T.B.T.S. This usage does not conform of course to the usage of the day, but I believe it assists in making the fine distinctions necessary for an understanding of the African Watch Tower movement which eluded most missionaries and administrators at the time and eludes some scholars today.[1]

The ideology of the African Watch Tower movement derived originally from the writings of C.T. Russell, who attempted in his Studies in the Scriptures[2] to reveal God's plan of the ages, or the course of human history from the fall of man to the 'end of all things'. Russell believed that God, whose name was Jehovah, wrote the Bible as a fundamental text from which knowledge of the divine plan might be gleaned through study and exegesis. Through his study of Bible chronology, which occupied much of Studies in the Scriptures, Russell was led to believe that the thousand-year reign on earth of Christ began in the year 1874,[3] and that the next forty year period until 1914 was

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[1] E.g., J.R. Hooker, 'Witnesses and Watchtower in the Rhodesias and Nyasaland', Journal of African History, VI, 1965, states that 'the fact remains that two distinct sets of people were concerned at all times, in all places....', and R.I. Rotberg, The Rise of Nationalism in Central Africa (Harvard, 1966), states (p. 139) that 'In Central Africa, individual preachers at times even claimed to be affiliated to the American organization. But they invariably acted independently...'. It will be contended that these generalizations are misleading.

[2] C.T. Russell, Studies in the Scriptures (Alleghany and Brooklyn), i, The Divine Plan of the Ages (1886); ii, The Time is At Hand (1889); iii, Thy Kingdom Come (1891); iv, The Battle of Armageddon (1897); v, The Atonement Between God and Man (1899); vi, The New Creation (1904). A seventh volume, The Finished Mystery (1918) was published posthumously.

[3] Russell, Studies in the Scriptures, ii, 180-186, and passim.

to be a period of troubles - 'Gentile times' - leading to the establishment of the Kingdom of God.[1] This would entail the destruction of earthly kingdoms, the glorification of the saints, and the establishment of theocratic rule on earth. The Battle of Armageddon in which Jehovah and his hosts defeated the powers of Satan before establishing the theocracy would be marked by political turbulence in the world.[2] These views, elaborated in the pamphlets and periodicals published by the W.T.B.T.S. and publicised by Russell's tours around the world, regular international conventions, and through wide press coverage,[3] formed the core of Watch Tower millennial belief. Constantly revised over time - the current expectation of Jehovah's Witnesses is for the year 1975[4] - Russell's writings nevertheless remain the fundamental source of Watch Tower millennialism.

Russell of course was writing in a great tradition of apocalyptic literature. Late nineteenth century America in particular saw a mingling of the currents of Christian radicalism with those of social idealism, and these emerge clearly in Russell's ideas. The crisis of American urbanisation in the 1880's gave rise to a large literature of social criticism using cataclysmic imagery,[5] while movements such as Christian Socialism powerfully

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[1] Ibid., and i, 90 et seq.

[2] Russell, Studies in the Scriptures, iv, passim.

[3] A. Rogerson, Millions Now Living Will Never Die (1969), p. 24.

[4] Cf. W.C. Stevenson, Year of Doom, 1975 (1967).

[5] Cf. F.C. Jaher, Doubters and Dissenters: Cataclysmic Thought in America, 1885-1918 (Glencoe, 1964).

influenced popular attitudes.[1] Henry George, for example, advocated economic reform in order that 'the City of God on earth, with its walls of jasper, and Gates of pearl' might arise.[2] Pittsburgh, the national industrial metropolis which had attracted a large population from the Pennsylvanian hinterland, was a typical focus of such ideas.[3] The prolific sects of the urbanising eastern states were a response to the destruction of a rural way of life through the creation of new communities, and they were marked by the attempt to understand and mitigate the causes of economic dispossession.[4] Socialist ideas provided for many who based their beliefs on the Bible an answer to the challenge of capitalism.

Russell partly based his utopianism on a theory of an increasing egalitarianism in the distribution of material goods, which reflects this current of ideas.[5] He saw socialism however not so much as part of his own personal philosophy, but more as sign of the times. The 'coming Socialist Revolution' was an essential forerunner of the end of 'Gentile times' in 1914,[6] and Armageddon, conceived as a battle between the poor and disinherited and the wealthy and powerful, also suggests the

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[1] J. Dorfman, The Economic Mind in American Civilisation, iii, (1865-1918) (New York, 1949), pp. 155-159.

[2] H. George, Progress and Poverty (New York, 1879; this edn. 1929), p. 552.

[3] Cf. B. McKelvey, The Urbanisation of America 1860-1915 (New Jersey, 1963), pp. 49--50.

[4] Cf. generally A.I. Abell, The Urban Impact on American Protestantism 1865-1900 (Harvard, 1943); also W.R. Cross, The Burned-Over District: The Social and Intellectual History of Enthusiastic Religion in Western New York (Ithaca, 1950).

[5] Stroup, The Jehovah's Witnesses, p. 158.

[6] Russell, Studies in the Scriptures, ii, 262.

socialist vision. Dr John Edgar, a founding member of the W.T.B.T.S. in Scotland, in an address on 'Socialism and the Bible', attacked 'the men with vested interests, the aristocrats, land-owners, property-owners, and Capitalists, and also the Church' in a style typical of Russellite thinking.[1] Not the least important borrowing from the early socialists was the use of sarcasm and invective, which, together with the tradition of open-air preaching from the Bible belt of eastern America, gave W.T.B.T.S. writing a powerful rhetorical style.

Russell's writings also emphasized such notions as the cyclical motion of history, the inter-relation of events - whether at the global or parochial level - with the promise of redemption and salvation, and the technological innovations of western society. There was a fascination with radio, aeroplanes, and recorded sound which went beyond a mere interest in new techniques for propagating the message; industrialism was approached from the point of view that its artefacts were signs of the working out of God's plan. The religion thus contained a strong historical consciousness, which was modernist in the sense that it was particularly concerned with what was new and what was imminent.[2] It was oriented towards changing societies; it predicted the downfall of one order and the establishment of another. The believers in the millennium - as with fundamentalist Christianity generally - were regarded as the elect, who, although today they might be the persecuted and oppressed, would tomorrow

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[1] W.T.B.T.S. Convention Report, Manchester, 1907 (W.T.B.T.S., New York, 1907).

[2] Cf. I.V. Brown, 'Watchers for the Second Coming: The Millenarian Tradition in America', Mississippi Valley Historical Review, XXXIX, 1952.

inherit the political kingdom upon the establishment of the theocracy. Such beliefs not only legitimated the establishment of separate communities and the adoption of group norms of behaviour, but they also helped to create a strong sense of the common interests of the believers in opposition to and confrontation with the world. The pre-millennial nature of Russell's thinking - the coming of Christ at the beginning of the millennium - also promoted an activist type of expectation, in distinction from the post-millennial ideas of the adventist tradition.[1]

Such ideas helped to provide the basis for an attack on temporal authority in the form of the state and its institutions, which - together with the established churches - were depicted as creations of the devil.[2] This rejection of worldly governments as being ungodly agents of persecution continued as one of the most distinctive themes of the doctrines of the W.T.B.T.S. A particular target was the British Empire, considered to be one of the beasts of the Book of Revelations.[3] An important aspect of the political quality of Russell's ideas was in fact its anti-colonialism. Colonies were not only the creation of the worldly capitalist states, but also the area of operation of the missions of established churches. Italy's first venture into Abyssinia and the French conquest of Madagascar, for example, were scathingly attacked by Russell, who also commented that 'the Christian

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[1] Cf. B.R. Wilson, 'Millennialism in Comparative Perspective', Comparative Studies in Society and History, VI, 1963, p. 97.

[2] Russell, Studies in the Scriptures, vi, passim; cf. also J.F. Rutherford, Vindication (New York, 1931-2).

[3] Cf. Freedom for the Peoples (New York, 1927), pp. 54-55.

missionary.... duty to the heathen of Africa [is] to teach them s ome thing of modern civilisation, as represented in the liquor-traffic and land-grabbing'.[1] The 'red rubber' scandal, the 'murderous Dutch' in Indonesia, and the exploitative cruelty of the white colonial were favourite topics of discussion in the Watch Tower magazine.[2]

The development of a missionary concern by the W.T.B.T.S. emerged not so much with Russell, however, as with his successor, Joseph Franklin 'Judge' Rutherford (1869-1942), who became president of the W.T.B.T.S. in 1917. While Russell's business acumen, knowledge of sales technique, and the emphasis he placed on proselytisation as a means of worshipping God certainly helped the movement to spread as rapidly as it did, he explicitly rejected the idea of mission, believing that 'the salvation of the world was upon the world's shoulders, not ours'.[3] Before the reforms instituted by Rutherford, it was a number of dedicated individuals, rather than the organisation, who spread the message to the traditional lands of mission. The first transmission of Watch Tower ideas to Africa appears to have been undertaken by 'a missionary free', one Brother Samuel W. Seaton, who as a migrant to Liberia took '2 doz. copies Millennial Dawn cloth-bound, 4 doz. copies Millennial Dawn paper-bound ... and some specimens Zion's Watch Tower' to Monrovia from Pennsylvania in 1887,[4] where he had a short-lived success as a preacher.[5] The

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[1] Zion's Watch Tower and Herald of Christ's Presence (Alleghany), XVII, May 1896.

[2] Ibid., XXVII, Feb. 1906.

[3] Ibid., XXVIII, Feb. 1907.

[4] Ibid., IX, Jan. 1888.

[5] Ibid., X, Jan. 1889.

major influence, however, was that of Joseph Booth, missionary extraordinary, who through his tales of experience dispelled the idea of Africa as a land of unremitting savagery,[1] and converted Russell to an interest in the salvation of black people not only in Africa, but also in Jamaica, Puerto Rico, and America - somewhat ineptly claimed by a newly enthusiastic Russell as 'the nearer fields white for harvest'.[2] Booth was a man of radical, fundamentalist vision who had travelled restlessly from one country to another, joining many small churches and embarking on a variety of grand evangelical schemes, and had committed himself to the cause of the African people.[3] In Scotland Booth had met followers of Russell who brought the Studies in the Scriptures to his attention; Booth travelled to Alleghany in 1906 where he met Russell; and subsequently he became the W.T.B.T.S.'s first official representative in South Africa.[4]

Rutherford took over at a time when the W.T.B.T.S. was disintegrating in the face of disputes over Russell's successor, new sectarian tendencies, and prosecution in the courts for preaching pacifism.[5] Rutherford renewed the millennial hopes with his widely publicised claim that 'millions now living will never die', and undertook a radical re-organisation of the Society. Branches were united in a hierarchical bureaucracy

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[1] Zion's Watch Tower, XXVII, March 1906.

[2] Ibid., XXVIII, Feb. 1907.

[3] For details of Booth's career, cf. his outstanding biography by G. Shepperson and T. Price, Independent African (Edinburgh, 1958).

[4] Zion's Watch Tower, XXVIII, Feb. 1907, XXX, July 1909; cf. also below, pp. 94-96.

[5] Rogerson, Millions Now Living Will Never Die, pp. 32-39.

centrally controlled from the headquarters in Brooklyn, New York; the publication of tracts was placed on a sound business footing; and a new expansionist drive overseas was undertaken.[1] Rutherford was an even more prolific writer than Russell, producing some twenty religious tracts, published in mass editions. These and the Society's magazines were used as the basic means of spreading the W.T.B.T.S. message, with members required to submit statistics of the numbers of books sold and the hours spent preaching to their branch offices. Rutherford also took an uncompromising stance in the face of persecution, which is reflected in the W.T.B.T.S. literature of the 1920's and 1930's. Governments which attempted to force Witnesses to salute the flag and sing the national anthem, clergy who sought to ban Rutherford's radio broadcasts, and the wealthy and privileged who treated adherents of the movement with contempt were scathingly attacked in print, with promises of the imminent destruction of temporal power and of the elevation of the believers supported with new analyses of biblical chronology.[2] Russell's ideas were thus built on, changed and developed as the W.T.B.T.S. sought to maintain the appeal of its millennial expectations during the world crises of the depression, the events leading to World War II, and the war itself, but the doctrine retained its emphasis on an imminent global revolution in which civic authority would be overthrown and replaced by the government of the believers.

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[1] Cf. Schnell, Thirty Years a Watchtower Slave, pp. 55-59, for details of the expansion of the W.T.B.T.S. in Europe.

[2] Cf. Mainwaring, Render Unto Caesar: The Flag Salute Controversy; Rutherford, Deliverance (W.T.B.T.S., New York, 1926), and Enemies (W.T.B.T.S., New York, 1937).

Russellism thus contained many features of great ideological potential for the situation of Africans under colonial rule. There was first of all the comparability of the broad circumstances of urbanisation, which provided the background for the emergence of these millennial ideas. While the Afrikaner and Coloured Jehovah's Witnesses of the South African cities were doubtless closer to the Pittsburgh experience than were central Africans, nevertheless the transformation of African life following the development of the mining belts bears some similarity to the uprooting of rural communities in the American north-east. More specifically, the creed of social redemption, the socialist language and imagery, and the attack on church and state were particularly relevant to the conditions of oppression of Africans under colonial rule. While millennial ideas in America tended to lead in the direction of social withdrawal, in Africa the failure of secular leadership in the confrontation with colonialism, and perhaps also the pre-existence of millennial thinking, allowed a prophetic leadership to emerge which could challenge the new order. The millennial vision could be geared not only to the contemplation of the overthrow of governments, but could also lead to violent action against state authority, and the development of a new anti-colonial consciousness. In particular, Watch Tower ideas offered an explanation of the material achievements of the west, and a means of interpreting the changing world.

These considerations help to explain why, out of the multitudinous ideological connexions between Africa and America, Watch Tower ideas were centrally important. The process of

diffusion, the selectivity of the borrowings from Russell, the transformation and addition of ideas, and the impact of the Watch Tower on African thinking are thus main themes of this study. However, there are a number of difficulties with the approach which seeks simply to trace the pattern of diffusion of a movement. In the first place, the concentration on ideological borrowings tends to obscure the problems of syncretism: not all available doctrines were absorbed by African social movements with equal readiness, nor can it be assumed that the pre-existence of millennial thinking outside the Judaeo-Christian-Islamic tradition was insignificant. This is of particular importance in investigating why millennialism appeared in a specific place at a specific time. Local belief systems and political structures were crucial components, it will be argued, in the manner and extent of the adoption of ideas derived from Watch Tower literature.

Secondly, the examination of the physical routes of ideological dispersion is incomplete without a consideration of the complex relationship between the accidental events and personalities of history and basic social processes. Tracing the paths of key leaders, and identifying possible associations and sources of influence, can be an effective way of examining a religious movement, as Shepperson and Price have demonstrated.[1] But where the canvas is wider, and the variety of form prolific, such an approach poses insurmountable difficulties (not least in the limitation of space). A further danger arising from too

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[1] Shepperson and Price, Independent African.

exclusive a concentration on diffusion is that independency tends to be explained by the inadequacies of other parts of this process. There is, for example, a tendency to ascribe independent religious movements in Africa to inadequate missionary services, and the gap between Christian principles and the actual behaviour of European colonists.[1] One variant of this is the charge that independency was the sole creation of Protestant rather than of Roman Catholic mission work.[2] These approaches may be criticised as being partial, in that racial discrimination is not seen as a fundamental part of the total colonial situation, and static, in that African social movements are regarded as simply reactive in form and negative in content. This study will also attempt, then, to examine the significance of the Watch Tower movement in the context of the changes taking place in African society - their character and direction - during the mid-colonial period.

The work of Shepperson and Price has nevertheless had a formative influence on this thesis, as their detailed historical research and painstaking reconstruction of the events surrounding the Chilembwe revolt in Nyasaland in 1915 - including considerable attention to the Watch Tower movement[3] - first suggested the idea

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[1] E.g., M-L. Martin, The Biblical Concept of Messianism and Messianism in Southern Africa (Morija, Lesotho, 1964); Africa in Transition (All African Churches Conference, Geneva, 1962), p. 87; J.W.C. Dougall, 'African Separatist Churches', International Review of Missions, CLXXIX, 1956. Cf. also V. Lanternari, Religions of the Oppressed (1963), and D.B. Barret, Schism and Renewal in Africa (Nairobi, 1968), where this factor is emphasized.

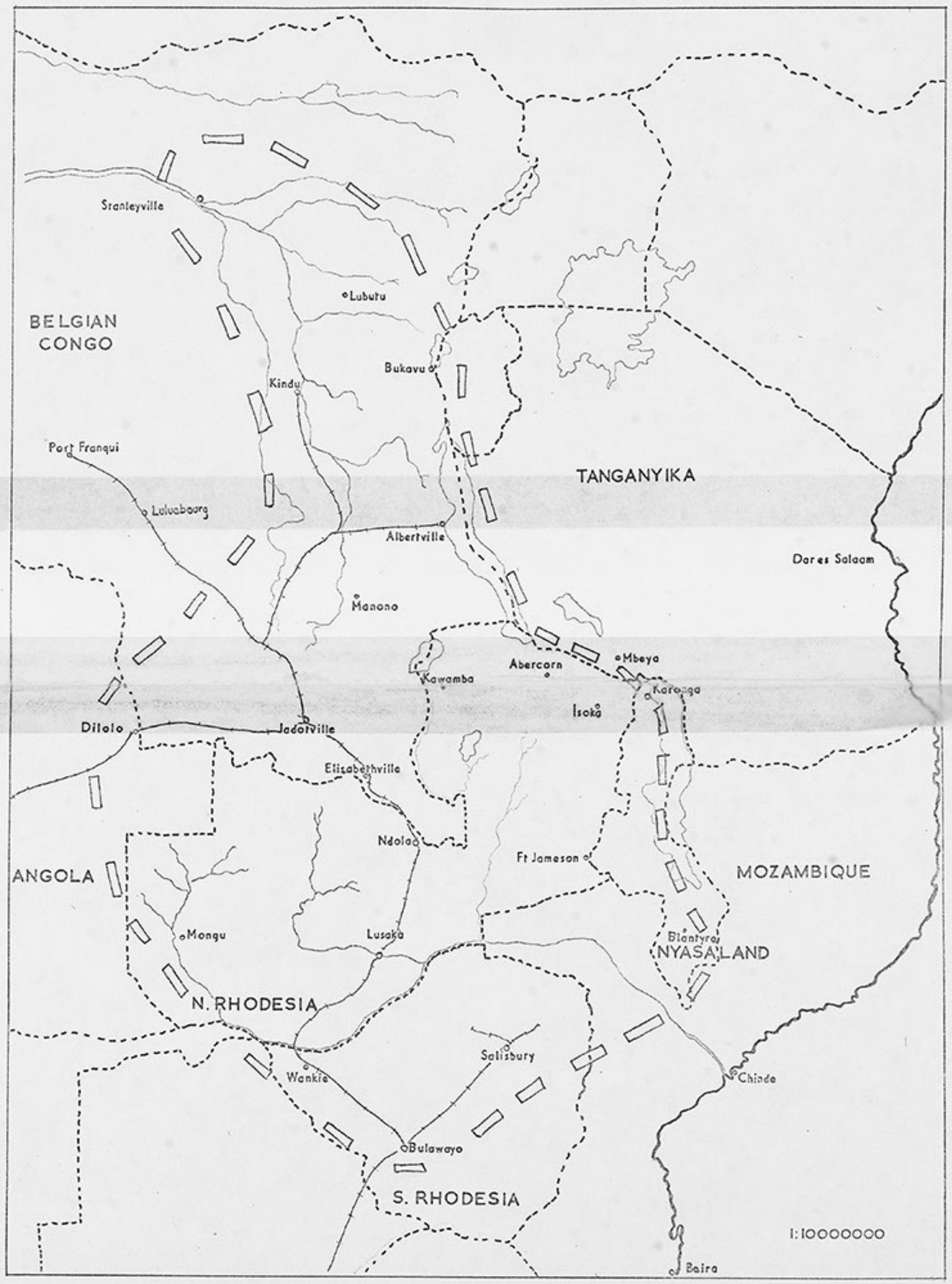
[2] Cf. Anon., (R.P. Brou?), 'Le Prophétisme dans les Eglises Protestantes Indigènes d'Afrique', Congo, I, 1931, for the locus classicus of this argument.

[3] Shepperson and Price, Independent African, pp. 150-160, 230-232, 411-412 amd passim.

of undertaking a full account of the Watch Tower in colonial central Africa. The desire to trace the pattern of development of the movement, and establish its broad boundaries of influence (cf. Map I), combined with the attempt to analyse the major social changes which affected it and to which it contributed, have thus determined the broad shape of the study. These concerns should be set against the background of the general study of millennial movements in Africa.

2. The Study of African Millennialism

The Watch Tower movement in Africa has not been a neglected social phenomenon. Indeed students of central African society can expect constant reference to it in both the primary and secondary literature. This is the case perhaps not only by virtue of its geographical proliferation but also because it has appeared to be of significance for a wide range of disciplines. Four main approaches to the Watch Tower may be discerned in the secondary literature, overlapping and complementary, it is true, but nevertheless distinct: theological analyses, sociological approaches which are primarily theoretical and classificatory in nature, sociological (and anthropological) case studies, and historical and political studies. A further broad distinction may be drawn between those approaches which seek to use the example of the Watch Tower to make general statements about the nature of religious belief, and those which seek to establish the facts of the matter. Of course neither can stand comfortably



MAP I. SOUTH CENTRAL AFRICA: THE WATCH TOWER MOVEMENT

on their own: much of the theoretical literature on the Watch Tower is open to the criticism that it is based on a single, stereotyped view derived from inadequate and distorted sources, while the historical studies - with some notable exceptions - have perhaps not paid sufficient attention to the details of belief and the problems of explanation of millennialism.

The most frequent approach has been the theological, which has two full length studies to its credit, the works of Gérard and Greschat.[1] Gérard's perspective is in the tradition of Placide Tempels, seeking to delineate an autochthonous Bantu philosophy in order to examine how this has merged with the theodicy of the Watch Tower. Based on Biebuyck's work for much of its information[2] - apart from other sources of dubious reliability[3] - Gérard presents an idealised view of Watch Tower belief in a single and perhaps untypical variation.[4] Greschat's is a more substantial work, falling into two halves. The most useful, perhaps, is the first section, which attempts to present a rounded historical picture of the rise and fall of the movement. Without access to archival material other than the Public Records Office files on Nyasaland, Greschat has nevertheless unearthed a

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[1] J.E. Gérard, Les Fondements Syncrétiques du Kitawala (Brussels, 1969); H.-J. Greschat, Kitawala. Ursprung, Ausbreitung und Religion der Watch-Tower-Bewegung in Zentral-Afrika (Marburger Theologische Studien, 4, N.G. Elwert Verlag, Marburg, 1967).

[2] D. Biebuyck, 'La Société Kumu face au Kitawala', Zaïre, XI, 1957.

[3] E.g. the vilificatory work of the Roman Catholic missionary V. de Moor, Leur Combat (Gabriel Beauchesnes et Fils, Paris, 1937). Reference is also made to E. Cunha Silva, Movimentos Associativos na Africa Negra (Lisbon, 1956), in which a chapter is devoted to the Watch Tower, which I have been unable to locate. This is a possible source for the investigation of the Watch Tower in Portuguese Africa.

[4] On this phase of the Watch Tower, cf. below, pp. 414-429.

fair amount of the relevant secondary literature - much of it admittedly ephemeral - and attempted to give a historical perspective. Greschat sees the movement as falling into three phases - 'the conventicle of the elect' 1909-1919 , the 'neo-pagan mass movement' 1920-1936, and the 'politico-religious secret sect' since 1937 - primarily on the basis of the religious character of the movement. In the second half of his study Greschat concentrates on the religious imagery, the nature of prophecy, the community of believers, and the salvationist theology of the movement. Greschat's perspective is thus similar to that of Sundkler and Schlosser in placing the figure of the prophet at the centre of the stage, rather than to the comparable work of Andersson, which, while also focussing on prophetism, sees this mainly in terms of a popular movement.[1] These studies share as part of their understanding of the Watch Tower what Turner has called the 'irreducible element of the sacred'; and in arguing for the importance of this factor in the study of African religious movements, Turner suggests that 'each discipline is confronted by negative instances which exceed its capacity for explanation, [which] ... suggests that identification in terms of that discipline is inadequate'.[2] While recognizing the validity of this comment, and the contributions of the theological approach, this study makes no explicit analysis of the Watch Tower as an African religion. The

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[1] B.G.M. Sundkler, Bantu Prophets in South Africa (1948); K. Schlosser, Propheten in Afrika (Braunschweig, 1949); E. Andersson, Messianic Popular Movements in the Lower Congo (Uppsala, 1958). Schlosser confuses the Watch Tower with the African Methodist Episcopal Church (p. 237), an erroneous view which has persisted through a number of subsequent commentaries.

[2] H.W. Turner, 'A Methodology for Modern African Religious Movements', Comparative Studies in Society and History, VIII, 1965-6, p. 281; also, 'The Significance of African Prophet Movements', Hibbert Journal, LXI, 1963.

perspective taken here has been to subsume the problem of the explanation of faith under the concept of ideology. Social protest, in other words, is regarded in this study primarily from a political point of view, rather than as throwing light on the nature of fundamental religious belief systems.[1] Apart from this difference in approach, it may also be noted that these theological studies have the drawback - at least for this study - of being reductionist, in the sense that a single version of the Watch Tower is sought for, rather than an understanding of the social historical complexity of the movement.

The taxonomic approach has also clearly been a dominant one in the study of religious movements. The proliferation of sects, together with the readily observable features that they distinguish and maintain themselves in accordance with a specific doctrine, has made classification an obvious point of entry.[2] The Watch Tower has been referred to in a number of such approaches,[3] which may however be generally criticised

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[1] Further on this point cf. C. Geertz, 'Ideology as a Cultural System', in D.E. Apter (ed.), Ideology and Discontent (Glencoe, 1964); also H. Desroche, Socialismes et Sociologie Réligieuse, (Paris, 1968), esp. pp. 35-86.

[2] Cf. e.g. M.W. Smith, A.F.C. Wallace, and F.W. Voget, 'Towards a Classification of Cult Movements', Man, LIX, 1959.

[3] E.g., J.W. Fernandez, 'African Religious Movements: Types and Dynamics', Journal of Modern African Studies, II, 1964; J. Fabian, 'Führer und Führung in den prophetisch-messianischen Bewegungen der (ehemaligen) Kolonialvölker', Revue Internationale d'Ethnologie et de Linguistique, (Anthropos), LVIII, 1963; E. Benz, 'Messianische Kirchen, Sekten und Bewegungen Im Heutigen Afrika', supplement to Zeitschrift für Religions-Geistgeschichte (Leiden), X, 1965, (chiefly bibliographical). For more critical approaches, cf. L.P. Mair, 'Independent Religious Movements in Three Continents', Comparative Studies in Society and History, I, 1958-9; and P.G. Forster, 'An Evaluation of Approaches to the Study of Some Modern Religious Movements in Africa', (M.A. thesis, Manchester University, 1967), which largely concerns the Watch Tower.

from the point of view that the necessary generalisations and stereotypes do not state adequately which phase or sub-variant of the movement is being referred to. The characterisation of the Watch Tower in Africa as a social movement rather than as a sect would appear to be a more relevant approach. The application of this term in the African context where there is an absence of a mass industrial society poses definitional problems[1] - in common with many other European concepts applied to African society - but has the benefit for the social historical approach adopted here of focussing attention on the routes of diffusion, the different responses to social change which it reveals, and the zonal impact of the Watch Tower. The fragmentation and differentiation of African society which were the pervasive consequences of colonialism were accompanied by underlying unifying processes, which were marked by new forms of association. These were fluid, constantly changing in form and content, and while sharing in a common pool of ideas, nevertheless capable of highly particularistic application. The classificatory approach may be of assistance in suggesting the circumstances in which the social movement evolves into a sect, but for the study of the Watch Tower it seems generally to be of little relevance.[2]

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[1] Cf. R. Heberle, 'Types and Functions of Social Movements', International Encyclopaedia of the Social Sciences (New York, 1968), pp. 438-444; also Social Movements: An Introduction to Political Sociology (New York, 1951), p. 439.

[2] However cf. B.R. Wilson, 'A Typology of Sects in a Dynamic and Comparative Perspective', in R. Robertson (ed.), Sociology of Religion (1969), for an interesting discussion of this point, and an analytical approach of great usefulness.

The writing of the 'natural history' of a social movement, as Banks has described it,[1] is however open to the danger that the growth of the movement is seen to be the most important thing about it, and that external factors of change of great significance are either inadequately treated or assumed to be part of an internal process of growth. These are pertinent considerations for the way in which this thesis has been written. The impact of the depression years, urbanisation, and the extension of the money economy, for example, are variously used to explain significant changes in the Watch Tower, yet these are treated with extreme brevity. The general lack of social historical writing on central Africa adds to the difficulties. The approach taken has been to concentrate selectively on various aspects which seem to be of particular significance for the response of different groups to the Watch Tower. Thus the impact of Christian missionaries on the Nyasaland Tonga is considered in detail, but only briefly mentioned in other case studies; similarly, the role of chiefs, migration, indigenous prophetic traditions, the history of resistance to invaders, witchcraft beliefs, adaption to economic innovation, and many other variables which are adduced, are perhaps insufficiently treated in themselves to bear the weight of explanation placed upon them. The need to set the Watch Tower in its historical context[2] and treat the movement as a whole may justify these

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[1] J.A. Banks, The Sociology of Social Movements (1972), pp. 11-13.

[2] The major study to date on nationalism in south central Africa, R.I. Rotberg, The Rise of Nationalism in Central Africa (Harvard, 1966), states (p. 140) that 'in ... Northern Rhodesia, Africans of every tribal and socio-economic background gratefully accepted Watch Tower teachings'. For a contrary view, cf. Chapters IV-VIII below.

shortcomings. The conception of the Watch Tower as a social movement also enables overarching themes such as proletarianisation and the impact of literacy to be placed in the foreground, matters which have received little treatment either in the writings of central African history or in the study of African religious movements generally.

The distinction drawn between sociological and anthropological studies reflects more on the traditional subject matters of these disciplines, of course, than it does on inherent differences of approach. But it is remarkable that anthropologists have paid relatively little attention to this millennial movement, particularly compared with the amount of writing by anthropologists on similar movements in North America and Melanesia.[1] There are scattered references to the Watch Tower in a few of the major ethnological studies of Northern Rhodesia,[2] and a full length study of the modern period of Jehovah's Witnesses in Zambia, which examines the relevance of the 'Protestant ethic' hypothesis.[3] The lack of readily available historical detail, the disfavour in which the movement was held by the colonial authorities, and the fact that it was largely under the control of the Jehovah's Witnesses during the classic period of anthropology in the Rhodesias in the 1940's, and 1950's,

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[1] Cf. M.I. Pereira de Queiroz, Réforme et Révolution dans les Sociétés Traditionelles: Histoire et Ethnologie des Mouvements Messianiques (Paris, 1968), for an introductory survey of this vast literature.

[2] E.g., W. Watson, Tribal Cohesion in a Money Economy (Manchester, 1958), pp. 56-59, 84-85, 197-202; I. Cunnison, The Luapula Peoples of Northern Rhodesia (Manchester, 1959), pp. 204-206, and 'A Watchtower Assembly in Central Africa', International Review of Missions, XL, 1951, and 'Jehovah's Witnesses at work in Central Africa', The Times British Colonies Review, October, 1958.

[3] N. Long, Social Change and the Individual (Manchester, 1968).

may perhaps go some way towards explaining the absence of any systematic treatment of it. Biebuyck's consideration of the reception of the Watch Tower by the Kumu in Kivu Province, Belgian Congo, is perhaps the outstanding study. Here the historical, administrative and economic pressures promoting the fragmentation of a society which is nevertheless held together by a clan system, sacral rituals, and a priestly class are studied as a prelude to an examination of the total adoption by the Kumu of Watch Tower doctrines and organisation in the crisis of the war years.[1] Biebuyck employs the concept of acculturation to explain the attractiveness of millennialism: the specific attributes of millennial ideas, he argues, are that they enable sudden and profound cultural changes to be made by a people confronted by rapid changes and an alien technology. Kaufmann, too, in his study of the Watch Tower in the Belgian Congo, applies this concept, although in a less sophisticated manner than Biebuyck and with little historical depth.[2] While case studies have been few, and the immediately relevant literature generally disappointing, this thesis has nevertheless benefited greatly from the work of anthropologists, and in particular from the discussion of central African society by anthropologists and sociologists such as Douglas, Gluckman, Mitchell, Marwick, van Velsen and others. Their writings have provided a rich source of information and ideas on witchcraft fears, the political situation of chiefs and headmen, kinship organisation, and the response of the labour migrant to a

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[1] D. Biebuyck, 'La Société Kumu face au Kitawala', Zaïre, XI, 1957; cf. also below, pp. 419-420.

[2] R. Kaufmann, Millénarisme et Acculturation (Brussels, 1964).

changing social environment, which have been drawn on for an understanding of the Watch Tower movement.

To the extent that this study draws on anthropological and social theory for an understanding of millennialism, however, the perspective is closer to that of Köbben, Worsley and Lanternari,[1] who stress the point that millennialism arises from social and political cleavages under certain specific conditions, than it is to the notion of acculturation. This latter approach tends to view millennial movements as motivated by hopeless envy and despairing frustration, arising out of cultural strain or shock, which enable the socially disinherited through a process of accommodation to acculturate to the new world. The implicit assumption is of an equilibrium model of social change.[2] Where rebellion does occur, this is frequently interpreted as 'nativism' - a despairing attempt to recreate a golden age from the tribal past,[3] which may yet promote counter-acculturation. Against these is the view which sees millennialism

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[1] A.J.F. Köbben, 'Prophetic Movements as an Expression of Social Protest', Internationales Archiv für Ethnographie (Leiden), XLIX, 1960; P. Worsley, The Trumpet Shall Sound (1957); V. Lanternari, Religions of the Oppressed (1963).

[2] Cf. B. Barber, 'Acculturation and Messianic Movements', American Sociological Review, VI, 1941; M.J. Herskovits, Acculturation. the Study of Culture Contact (New York, 1938). Cf. G. Hunter, Modernizing Peasant Societies (O.U.P., 1969), p. 53, for a view of Mau Mau, the Lumpa church, etc., as a 'retreat to the ancient ways', and the revival of acculturation theory in terms of modernization theory. Also relevant is M. Assimeng, 'Religious and Secular Messianism in Africa', Research Review (Institute of African Studies, Ghana), VI, 1969.

[3] Cf. R. Linton, 'Nativistic Movements', American Anthropologist, XLV, 1943; Worsley, op. cit., pp. 280-284.

as the ideology of the oppressed seeking revolutionary change, whose bizarre and inchoate character may be partly explained in terms of the resort to mobilisatory myths and the absence of secular leadership. This approach, frequently taken by students of revolutionary history[1] and specifically applied in a number of case studies to the interpretation of millennialism in colonial situations,[2] would appear to be particularly relevant to the study of the Watch Tower in Africa.

This indeed has largely been the approach of Balandier, who in his study of messianic movements concentrated on the ideological contributions to political protest, the enlarged scale of association, and in particular on the colonial situation as the essential matrix for such movements.[3] Merlier's views also are of particular interest, as he relates the economic crisis of colonialism (a factor emphasised by Balandier) to the emergence of a nascent proletariat, who find in the millennial social movement an organisation and ideology peculiarly suited to their needs.[4] The dispersal of the Watch Tower across

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[1] In particular cf. E.J. Hobsbawm, Primitive Rebels (Manchester, 1959); J. Chesneaux, Les Sociétés Secrètes en Chine (Paris, 1965); and E. da Cunha, Rebellion in the Backlands (Chicago, 1944).

[2] E.g., F.R. Hill, 'Millenarian Machines in South Vietnam', Comparative Studies in Society and History, XIII, 1971; E.P. Boardman, 'Millenary Aspects so the Taiping Rebellion'(1851-64)', in S.L. Thrupp (ed.), Millennial Dreams in Action (New York, 1970); R. Bastide, 'Messianisme et Développement Economique et Sociale', Cahiers Internationaux de Sociologie, XXXI, 1961.

[3] G. Balandier, 'Messianismes et Nationalismes en Afrique Noire', Cahiers Internationaux de Sociologie, XIV, 1953; Sociologie Actuelle de l'Afrique Noire (Paris, 1955); 'Brèves Remarques sur les Messianismes de l'Afrique Congolaise', Archives de Sociologie des Religions, V, 1958; 'Les Mouvements Messianiques en Afrique', Etudes Sociologiques, VI, 1963-4.

[4] M. Merlier, Le Congo de la Colonisation Belge à l'Indépendence (Paris, 1962), pp. 231-249.

the zone of settler industrialisation and its obvious associations with the labour migrant clearly recommend such a perspective. Mühlmann's approach to the interrelation of millennialism and nationalism in Africa needs to be distinguished from this line of analysis, however.[1] Essentially a work of political psychology, Mühlmann's analysis of the phenomenon of nationalism among non-European peoples seeks in the revolutionary principle of millennialism - a notion or vision, however vaguely defined, that the established order should be overthrown - a 'psychic infrastructure' for later nationalism. This is a diagnostic view, which sees in the emergence of cults, sects and social movements a similar process to that which occurs in the development of more explicitly nationalist movements. Millennial movements are seen as prefiguring anti-colonial nationalism, rather than as contributing to its form and content. A variant of this approach may also perhaps be seen in the attempts of political historians to periodize African anti-colonialism into stages, where messianic and millennial movements are given a transitional role somewhere between the primary and secondary, or post-primary stages.[2] The shortcomings of this approach from the social historical point of view, obscuring as it does substantive influences and the varying responses to social change, are clear.

Of the historical and political studies, Hodgkin's National-ism in Colonial Africa[3] was the first to place religious movements

[1] W.E. Mühlmann, Chiliasmus und Nativismus (Berlin, 1961); also published in French under the title Messianismes Révolutionnaires du Tiers Monde (Paris, 1968).

[2] Cf. C. Young, Politics in the Congo (Princeton, 1965), pp. 230-231, 252-253.

[3] 1956, pp. 93-114. Cf. also Hodgkin, 'Mahdism, Messianism, and Marxism in the African Setting', (Oxford, roneo, 1969).

in an explicitly political context, and the influence of this study on subsequent writing is clear. The view taken - and elaborated for central Africa by Rotberg and Tangri, for example[1] and also by Ranger and other modern African historians[2] - is that the millennial movement provides a new revolutionary consciousnesss through its vision of the overthrow of civic authority, revived self-respect, and pan-Africanist content; it offers a new organisation not based on kinship, ethnic loyalties or customary political leadership; and it promotes a mass expectation of independence which, as Lonsdale has also argued,[3] is crucial in the constitutional bargaining of the nationalist elite. These are essentially the features of the Watch Tower to which this study addresses itself.

This study, then, lies in the intellectual tradition of these political, historical and sociological approaches to the study of millennialism in Africa, rather than in the theological and anthropological tradition, although the distinction that has been drawn here is admittedly an arbitrary one. It is recognised that many issues touched on have been dwelt on extensively

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[1] R.I. Rotberg, 'The Rise of Nationalism: the Case of East and Central Africa', World Politics, XV, 1962, esp. p. 87, and The Rise of Nationalism in Central Africa, pp. 135-155; R. Tangri, 'African Reaction and Resistance to the Early Colonial Situation in Malawi', Central African Historical Association No. 25; and 'The Rise of Nationalism in Colonial Africa: The Case of Colonial Malawi', Comparative Studies in Society and History, X, 1967-8.

[2] T.O. Ranger, Revolt in Southern Rhodesia 1896-7 (1967), and The African Voice in Southern Rhodesia (Nairobi, 1970); I. Henderson, 'The Origins of Nationalism in East and Central Africa: the Zambian Case', Journal of African History, XI, 1970, and 'Pre-nationalist Resistance to Colonial Rule in Zambia', African Social Research (Lusaka), IX, 1970.

[3] J.M. Lonsdale, 'Some Origins of Nationalism in East Africa', Journal of African History, IX, 1968.

in the literature of the latter, and I have attempted to benefit from these comparative insights. As Wilson has pointed out, acculturation as a description of the goals of millennial movements does not necessarily exclude their revolutionary nature;[1] nor does rebellious language necessarily imply a rejection of new or imported ideas, institutions and techniques. This duality of the response to colonialism may most readily be approached, I consider, by treating the Watch Tower as a dynamic social movement. The fragmentary nature of the knowledge of the history of this movement also provides a justification for such a treatment; and this thesis may, it is hoped, contribute in this way to our understanding of social theory as well as to the political and social history of central Africa.

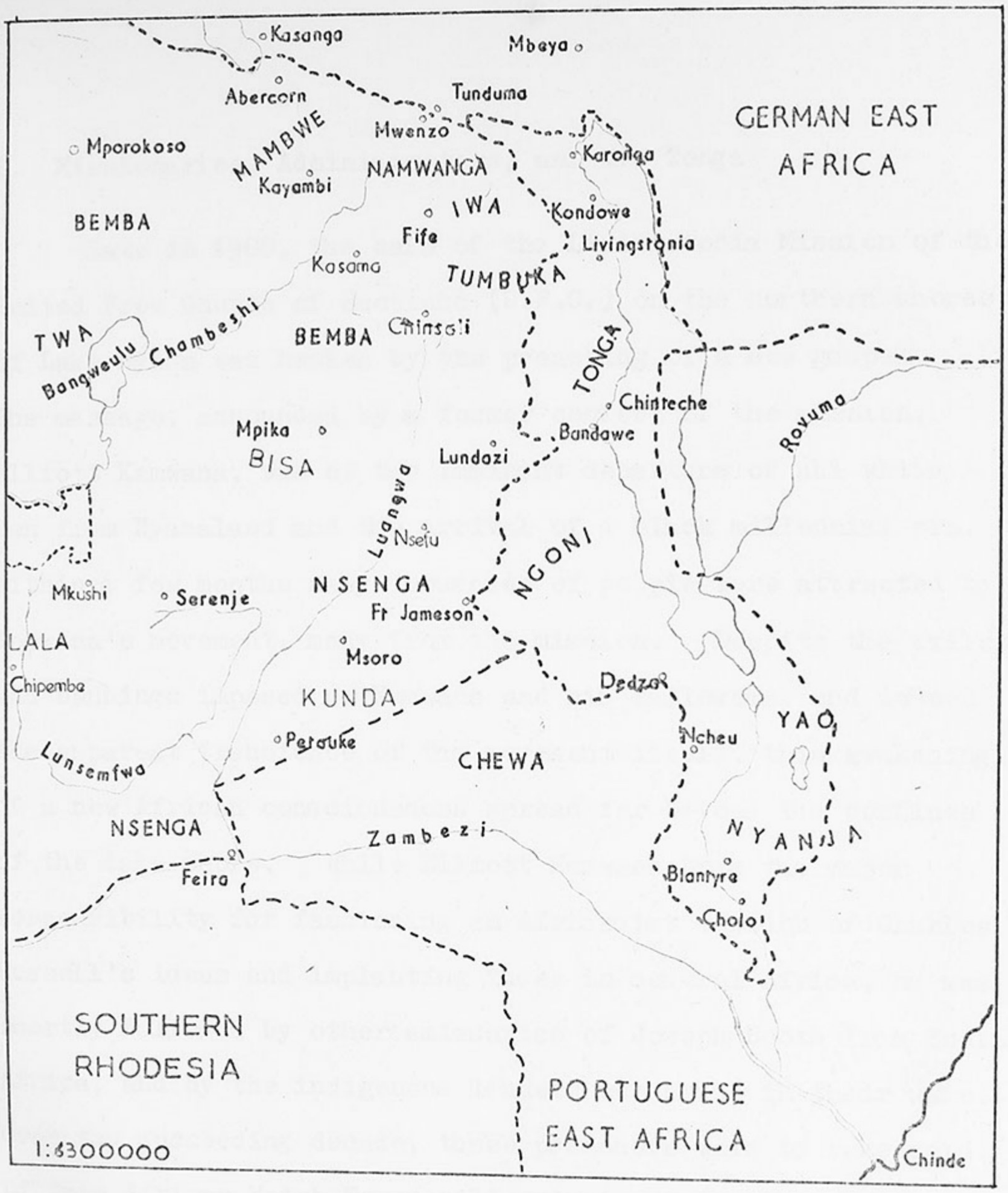
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[1] Wilson, 'Millennialism in Comparative Perspective', Comparative Studies in Society and History, VI, 1963.

CHAPTER II

THE WATCH TOWER MOVEMENT IN NYASALAND

1. Missionaries, Administrators and the Tonga
2. Elliott Kamwana and the Watch Tower Movement
3. The Kamwana Society Church, 1910-1945
4. The Watch Tower Bible and Tract Society
5. Conclusion



MAP II. BRITISH CENTRAL AFRICA & N-EASTERN RHODESIA

1. Missionaries, Administrators, and the Tonga

Late in 1908, the calm of the Livingstonia Mission of the United Free Church of Scotland (U.F.C.) on the northern shores of Lake Nyasa was broken by the preaching of a new gospel. The message, announced by a former convert of the mission, Elliott Kamwana, was of the imminent departure of all white men from Nyasaland and the arrival of a black millennial era. Within a few months many thousands of people were attracted to Kamwana's movement, many from the mission. Despite the exiles and bannings imposed on Kamwana and his followers, and indeed the apparent transience of the movement itself, this awakening of a new African consciousness spread far beyond the confines of the lake shore. While Elliott Kamwana bore the major responsibility for fashioning an Africanist version of Charles Russell's ideas and implanting these in central Africa, he was shortly followed by other emissaries of Joseph Booth from South Africa, and by the indigenous leaders who arose in their wake. Over the succeeding decade, these preachers were to take word of this African Watch Tower millennium - at first expected in October, 1914 - to most of Nyasaland's central and southern highlands, to the mining centres of the Rhodesias, the sugar estates in Mozambique, and ultimately as far as the rubber plantations in the Kivu province of the Belgian Congo.

The northern Tonga, the first recipients, remained the single most important group of purveyors of Watch Tower millennialism, however, and their social history in this period should consequently first be considered in some detail. 'The most

remarkable people of central Africa', was the opinion of the well-travelled Governor of Nyasaland, Sir Alfred Sharpe - a view which probably reflected the consensus of settler attitudes.[1] Much of the peculiar distinction of the Tonga may be attributed to the operation of the Livingstonia Mission, which had by the first decade of the twentieth century imposed radical changes on Tonga society through its thorough-going programme of evangelisation, education, industrial work and medical care. This is only one side of the question, however; historically and politically the Tonga were perhaps uniquely predisposed to give a favourable reception to the Christian missionaries, and it should not be overlooked that their response to innovation of this type was by no means total or unselective.

The history of the Tonga, while shadowy in outline, seems to have consisted in a slow merger between settled, lacustrine groups (possibly the original Tumbuka and Nyanja) and incoming ivory-trading peoples from the east. This process of assimilation resulted in a society with a distinctive language and culture which nevertheless displayed little cohesiveness in the sense of possessing central political institutions, hierarchical social structures, or a strong sense of tribal identity.[2] In the nineteenth century the major

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[1] C.O. 525/29, Despatch No. 299 of 30 Oct. 1909 (all C.O. files referred to in this chapter are in the Public Records Office). S.S. Murray in A Handbook of Nyasaland (1910), at p. 8, considers the Tonga 'an intelligent but truculent race and difficult of management', an opinion which he modified in the 1922 edition of the same work to the statement that 'the local native of the present generation is conceited and truculent, undisciplined and fond of intrigue...' (p. 144).

[2] Rev. T. Cullen Young, Notes on the History of the Tumbuka-Kamanga Peoples in the Northern Province of Nyasaland (The Religious Tract Society, London, 1932).

pressures which impinged on Tonga society in the form of Arab slave-traders and an invading offshoot of the Zulu mfecane - coming at a time when missionaries were also beginning to enter the area - led to an intensification of the feeling of regional identity and an acceleration of the pace of change and assimilation. The southward raiding Ngoni under Mbelwa forced the petty Tonga chieftaincies to amalgamate; scattered villages united behind stockades to resist the invaders; and even though Ngoni dominance appears to have been on the decline in the last quarter of the century, with the Tonga revolt in 1870 drawing something of a tribal boundary, several villages still appeared to be particularly powerful when the missionaries entered the area. It was in these villages that the first mission stations were established.[1]

The role of the Livingstonia Missionaries in freeing the Tonga from Ngoni dominance has been doubted, but certainly the coincidence of their arrival at a time when the Tonga were seeking powerful allies in their struggle against Mbelwa helped to promote their acceptance.[2] The Tonga indeed were far more responsive to modernisation than the Ngoni, an immigrant group dependent on military prowess whose cattle-raising economy and political culture were not readily adaptable. With a simple fish and cassava economy which required a low

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[1] J. van Velsen, 'Notes on the History of the Lakeside Tonga of Nyasaland', African Studies, XVIII, 1959.

[2] J. van Velsen, 'The Missionary Factor among the Lakeside Tonga of Nyasaland', Rhodes-Livingstone Journal, XXVI, 1959, p. 5.

input of labour, and a relative absence of any strong institutionalisation of their religious and political order, the Tonga were both eager and ready for innovation.

The U.F.C.'s Livingstonia Mission was one of the most successful ventures of the kind in Africa. The missionaries saw their task as being more than that of merely spreading the gospel; once established among the Tonga they embarked on a programme of general and industrial education, the provision of medical services and the inculcation of literacy as well as evangelisation. In 1881 there were 2 schools with 147 pupils; by 1900 this had increased to 123 schools with 16,000 in attendance. Skills such as carpentry, brick-making, printing, tailoring, telegraphy, house-building and home crafts were taught, and by 1884 Dr Robert Laws had produced the first Nyanja New Testament.[1]

The policy of imparting secular skills together with Bible lore through the extended and proliferating system of out-schools, and the willingness of the Tonga to learn, led to excellent relations between the missionaries and the Tonga. It should be noted, however, that the remarkable success enjoyed by the U.F.C. in comparison with other missions in central Africa stemmed in part from the fact that they had neither paved the way for military conquest nor arrived in its wake. While they established something of their own small empire, and certainly believed that 'Britain owes the peaceful acquisition of all the Nyasaland territory to our Livingstonia

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[1] James W. Jack, Daybreak in Livingstonia (Edinburgh and London, 1901), p. 317.

missionaries and Christian traders', the U.F.C. in Tongaland was free of much of the suspicion which attached to missionary ventures more directly associated with colonial pacification.[1] Indeed, Livingstonia was jealous of its special position and strongly resented what it regarded as interference by Sir Harry Johnston's administration after the British Central African Protectorate had been established in 1891.[2]

An important aspect of the relationship between the Tonga and the missionaries was the basically sectional nature of the Tonga political system, which was pluralistic in the sense that semi-autonomous village communities were united by clan relationships without the operation of any centre of power or authority. As van Velsen has shown, the key to the Tonga polity lay in the criss-crossing kinship relationships between villages, which were manipulated by individuals. At the core of the village was the headman, whose authority was based not only on his ascribed position within a dominant family, but also on his achieved status. The egalitarianism of Tonga society permitted political mobility such that ambitious individuals might aspire to office, and villagers derived an important part of their status from the reflected glory of local leadership. Jealousies, disputes and rivalries between the small communities were consequently common, with the village as the major unit of social and political action.[3]

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[1] Ibid., p. 246.

[2] Cf. e.g., H.H. Johnston, British Central Africa (1897), pp. 191-192.

[3] J. van Velsen, The Politics of Kinship (M.U.P., 1964), passim.

The missionaries appear not to have understood the nature of the political system very clearly, referring indiscriminately to 'the whole Tonga tribe', and 'the Tonga tribes', and noting that they were 'ruled over by a number of petty chiefs'.[1] This confusion perhaps partly reflects historical changes in the nature of residential organisation which was taking place at the time. Once Lugard's North End war had removed the threat of the Arab slave-traders, and relations between the Ngoni and Tonga were normalised, the villages mostly split up into bands of contiguous dwellings and scattered settlements, leaving only a few stockaded communities. These political and residential features of the Tonga were most important for the success of missionary penetration, since individuals were able to use the skills and education conferred by mission training to rise to positions of prestige and authority within the traditional structure. It was not only individuals but also groups which perceived the benefits of mission in this way. After mission work had been started at Marenga's village, Dr Laws commented on the inter-village rivalry which helped to establish the mission, remarking that 'another chief, Fuka by name, anxious not to be behind his neighbour, also consented to the building of a good wooden school'.[2] Those villages thus singled out by the U.F.C. for the placement of out-stations and schools consequently derived an advantage relative to neighbouring villages not so favoured of

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[1] Jack, Daybreak in Livingstonia, pp. 56, 160.

[2] Robert Laws, Reminiscences of Livingstonia (1934), pp. 86-87.

considerable importance at the local political level. This differentiation through innovation, it will be argued, was a most significant feature in the appeal of the Watch Tower movement.

Compared with the impact of Livingstonia, the early role of the colonial administration was a remarkably slight one. In most of south-central Africa it was usually the case that little headway was made by missionaries until the establishment of colonial administration had provided points of entry into native societies. The first administrator in northern Nyasaland, C.A. Cardew, arrived in Tongaland (then called the West Nyasa district) with 20 askaris in 1897 - 19 years after the building of the Bandawe mission station - and after two years' work had succeeded in instituting the collection of tax. However, as van Velsen points out, it is probable that the traditional role of chiefs in the handling of disputes was barely affected by the extension of colonial administration, that the relationship between Cardew and indigenous authority remained a flexible and informal one, and that above all the administration did not see its main purpose as that of a labour-recruiting agency.[1] The establishment of a system of colonial local government only got under way with the promulgation of the District Administration (Native) Ordinance in 1912, and the political order of Tonga society seems to have continued relatively unaffected by administrative initiatives until well into the second decade of the new century. Voluntary labour migration preceded the

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[1] J. van Velsen, 'The Establishment of the Administration in Tongaland', in Historians in Tropical Africa (Proceedings of the Leverhulme Inter-Collegiate History Conference, U.C.R.N., Salisbury, 1962).

arrival of the administration by a decade; and in general the prior radical innovations of the Livingstonia missionaries ensured that the token administrative force was seen as merely yet another foreign intrusion, without much to offer.

The successful exaction of tax - the chief function of the administration, and a major cause of grievance against it - reflects a feature of the Tonga which spread their renown across central and southern Africa. This was their heavy involvement in the migration of African labour to the areas of settler enterprise between the Cape and the Congo. The poverty of Tongaland, the marketability of vocational skills and literacy, and the prestige and status attached to adventures abroad within the open and mobile Tonga society led to a widespread dispersal of labour-seekers from the lake shore. As early as the 1880's, Tonga recruited by Dr Laws were working as tenga-tenga (porters) for the African Lakes Corporation, while others fought in the King's African Rifles with Lugard in the North End war. In the 1890's between one and two thousand Tonga were working on the European estates in the Shire highlands as domestic servants and gang foremen, while yet others were in the employment of the colonial administration as police irregulars, interpreters, messengers and steamer hands.[1]

The chief outlets for Tonga migrants were however external. Three main labour routes led out of Nyasaland to the mining belts and farms of neighbouring settler Africa. The most well-trodden was the overland route via Fort Jameson and

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[1] F.E. Sanderson, 'The Development of Labour Migration from Nyasaland', Journal of African History, II, 1961.

Feira to Salisbury, where it was reported in 1907 that over 5,000 Nyasalanders, mostly from the lake district, were in employment.[1] The route to South Africa lay either via Bulawayo from Salisbury, or by steamer to Durban and Cape Town from Chinde at the mouth of the Zambezi (which although surrounded by Portuguese territory was under British control). The repatriation of Chinese labour from the mines of the Rand had given rise in this period to an increased demand for migrant labour, and much of it was supplied by the Tonga. In 1906-7, for example, an estimated 14,000 migrants left Nyasaland for the Rand, where, even though the death rate was 71 per thousand, the wages were comparatively high.[2] The inland route lay through Fort Jameson to Broken Hill, the first major mining venture in Northern Rhodesia, and to the small gold-prospecting ventures in the eastern districts of Northern Rhodesia. A further extension of this northerly route was to the mines of the Katanga, whose recruiters looked to Angola, Tanganyika and Nyasaland as well as to Northern Rhodesia for migrant labour. Approximately ten per cent of the foreign labour force in the Katanga in the early colonial period came from Nyasaland.[3]

The development of a migratory system for wage employment in the period 1880-1910 amongst the Tonga was perhaps the most

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[1] Correspondence relating to the Recruitment of Labour in the Nyasaland Protectorate for the Transvaal and Southern Rhodesian Mines, March 1908, (S.A. Cmd. 3993), p. 81.

[2] Ibid., pp. 92, 94; also, D.J.N. Denoon, 'The Transvaal Labour Crisis 1901-1906', Journal of African History, VIII, 1967.

[3] Z. Arch., SEC/NAT/72, Report on Rhodesian Natives in the Katanga, 1927.

profound consequence of their experience with the Livingstonia Mission. Apart from the new horizons which were opened to individuals, and the changing family relationships induced by long periods of absence, one simple and very important concomitant of labour migration was the cash economy. The demand for cash on the lake shore arose not out of the growth of a market system, of course, but from the demands imposed by the missionaries and the colonial administration. From the earliest days Dr Laws had emphasised the importance of money and the virtues of thrift and strict accounting, and had indeed brought in bags of copper coins expressly for the purpose of this instruction.[1] Increasingly, relations between the Tonga and the European presence came to be marked by the exchange of money. In the same year, 1899, that Cardew began the collection of hut tax, the missionaries introduced school fees, which, although only threepence a term at first, were later increased. Recalcitrant mission trainees could also expect a fine by way of disciplinary action, and church contributions and payments for scripture books also entailed compulsory cash handovers.[2]

It is arguable that the extension to the Tonga of a 'social order which uses money as a basic measure of man', to quote Burridge in his discussion of millennial movements in New Guinea, provided the basis for later movements of protest which were more than simple rebelliors against the

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[1] J. van Velsen, 'The Missionary Factor', p. 13.

[2] Cf. K.J. McCracken, 'The Livingstonia Mission and the Evolution of Malawi 1875-1939', (Camb. Univ. Ph.D. thesis, 1967), pp. 307-308.

hut tax.[1] It was certainly the case that the increasing effectiveness of tax collection in other parts of the Protectorate, following the extension of the system to include Mombera's Ngoni in 1904, led to a number of expressions of protest, which did not however trouble Tongaland unduly. In this connexion it is interesting to note the short-lived reaction in the Ncheu area to the imposition of tax, which developed into a movement of passive resistance led not only by chiefs in the Fort Johnston area, but also by 'the educated and civilised Yao'. Chanjiri, a Kunda prophetess,

> promised excellent rains and ample harvests to all who came to do her homage: she also announced that she would send darkness over those portions of the country where the white man lived and that no native need pay any more hut taxes, as the white man would disappear through her magic.[2]

This incident provides interesting evidence that a religious leadership emerged under the impact of colonialism which appealed to chiefs, commoners and the literate alike in terms of supernatural forces which would restore society to a state in which there would be an untroubled enjoyment of plenty. The entertainment of such hopes, leading as they did to a protest against taxation, suggests that the avenue leading from the initial response to the invaders to the development of new types of anti-colonial awareness lay at least for some via indigenous, quasi-millennial beliefs. The Tonga, however, even assuming that word of Chanjiri's message reached their

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[1] K. Burridge, New Heaven New Earth (1969), p. 42, also pp. 41, 43-44.

[2] C.O. 525/18, Despatch No. 208 of 14 April 1907, Sharpe to Sec. State Col.

ears, did not respond to such leadership. It is true that the burden of tax was probably lighter for them than for most, heavily engaged in the migrant system and more able to leave subsistence agriculture to the womenfolk as they were. But most importantly, perhaps, for the Tonga the issue of tax was a symbolic grievance reflecting the constraints imposed by their limited access to money. While on the one hand their engagement with the cash economy meant that new luxuries and consumer goods could be purchased, on the other there was a growing realisation of the restrictions surrounding money. In particular, the missionaries, having opened the path to the acquisition of new skills and prestige, were appearing to find means of extracting a benefit from their role by relating their functions to a demand for cash payments. The equation of thrift with virtue thus acted as a substantial constraint on Tonga mobility in the mission arena.

Discontent with the Livingstonia Mission amongst the Tonga was indeed a measure of the depth of penetration of this undertaking in their society. A key feature of the relationship was that while the Tonga had generally responded wholeheartedly to new stimuli and opportunities, the missionaries were prepared to carry through their original ideas of transplanting the gospel by progressively Africanising the ministry, and phasing themselves out, only very gradually. As Christianity became more popular and universally desired, so the catechumen class became larger, and the period of waiting before

ordination longer.[1] In part this resulted from the policies of the second generation of missionaries at Livingstonia, particularly those of Dr Elmslie, who well typified that hardening of racial consciousness amongst late nineteenth century missionaries noted for West Africa by Ajayi.[2] In part it was also a reflection of the elitist notions which were central to the Livingstonia conception of mission. 'Many are called, but few are chosen' seems to have been the watchword of the U.F.C. missionaries, who saw themselves as stern mentors of the moral character of their African wards. With the increase in number of those seeking admission, so personal supervision was reduced and the exercise of discipline came to be more arbitrary. 'It is a startling thing for a newcomer', observed a visitor to the mission at the time, 'to find the old stern discipline of the Scottish Kirk Session at work in Nyasaland'.[3] Punishments were meted out not only for dereliction of mission duties, but were also directed against Tonga customs such as beer-drinking, dancing, polygamy and extramarital sexual relations.[4] By interposing progressively steeper barriers against advancement within the mission at the same time as their impact spread more deeply into Tonga society, the U.F.C. brought into being a new group

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[1] I have benefited greatly here from consulting the carefully researched ideas of Dr K.J. McCracken (cp. cit.) on the background of the Tonga Watch Tower movement, especially at pp. 307-339, but have attempted to present my own analysis of these events.

[2] J.F.A. Ajayi, Christian Missions in Nigeria 1841-1891 (1965), pp. 260, 264.

[3] N. MacLean, Africa in Transformation (1913), p. 109.

[4] Z. Arch., A 3/10/7, U.F.C. Regulations for Apprentices, 1911.

of mission trainees who, while accepting many of the basic ideas of Presbyterianism, nevertheless rebelled against the high-handedness of the missionaries and the attitudes of contempt expressed towards their own society.

The direction taken by Tonga protest movements was possibly also influenced by the evangelical strain of certain of the missionaries in the period 1890-1910. The preachers of mission Christianity were often dedicated men whose own intensity of vision and concern for the redemptive aspects of their religion must surely have been communicated to African mission teachers, providing an important basis for the understanding of the fundamentalist, apocalyptic language adopted by Charles Russell in his writings. James Jack, for instance, was perhaps not untypical in his view of missionary undertaking in Nyasaland:

> Thick darkness, almost impenetrable, still overshadows the land. There are millions upon millions who have not even heard of a God or a Saviour. But with so many signs of success, there is no room for despair. Through the dark mist we can see a cloudless future, resplendent with blue skies and golden light. We can see Christianity, infrangible as sunshine, and far more glorious in its effects, illuminating the land. We can see the tangled river-courses and the high table-lands irradiated with the Sun of Righteousness, and even the far-off hills bathed in "floods of living fire". We can see tribes born in a day, spears and clubs cast away for the Bible, and the Saviour of men enthroned in Nyasaland.[1]

For a variety of reasons, then, the missionaries of the U.F.C. had by the first decade of the twentieth century achieved a remarkable success in establishing themselves amongst the Tonga, although at the price of increasing the

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[1] Jack, Daybreak in Livingstonia, pp. 313-314.

tensions and frustrations within African society, and bringing into being new areas of conflict. New forms of differentiation between those favoured by the mission and those excluded, an introduction to the migrant system and the settler labour markets, and the opening up of new avenues of social mobility were all concomitants of mission. While a potential leadership of mission trainees was formed which could rival the authority of chiefs and headmen, and the foundations for social action on a broader scale were laid, participation in the emerging order was restricted both by missionary attitudes and by the wider development of colonial rule in Nyasaland.

Indeed it might be argued that the sub-colonialism of the Livingstonia Mission stations echoed the wider colonialism of settler Africa, to which the Tonga had such an early introduction. Not surprisingly, the reaction against Livingstonia and the colonial order took place under the leadership not of a traditional prophetess such as Chanjiri, but of an ex-pupil of the mission, Elliott Kamwana, who developed his ideas on the basis of those of two radical critics of the state and the established church, Joseph Booth and Charles Russell.

2. Elliott Kamwana and the Watch Tower Movement

The development of the Watch Tower movement in Nyasaland cannot be adequately examined without detailed mention of its first African progenitor, Elliott Kenani Kamwana Masokwa Chirwa.

Not only was the rendering of the doctrines of the W.T.B.T.S. attributed to him and his immediate entourage the foundation of many later ideological variations of the African Watch Tower movement, but also his own career - short-lived as was his span as a preacher - provides some insight into the origins of the movement, the role of the prophet, and the reaction of the colonial administration to the challenge he presented. Kamwana's career may perhaps best be seen as falling into six periods: his early childhood and education; his early travels in the south; the return to Nyasaland; the period of the Chilembwe rising and its aftermath; exile in the Seychelles; and finally his return to Nyasaland.[1]

1880-1901. Kamwana was born probably in the late 1870's or early 1880's at Mpopomeni in the Mzimba district, where his parents had been taken during the Ngoni wars. Shortly after his birth he was taken back to his district of origin, Chinteche, to Chifira village.[2] Chifira seems to have been a remarkable settlement, as it was not only the home of Kamwana but also of the Muwamba family who included Clements Kadalie, the South African trade unionist, Isaac Muwamba, a

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[1] Sources for a study of the life of Elliott Kamwana are diverse and often contradictory. The present account attempts to reconcile as much of the written evidence as it has been possible to consult, although it should be noted that further material exists in the National Archives of Malawi, Zomba, as well as oral evidence, which have not been available to the author. The chief primary sources used are the Public Records Office files and missionary reports, both of which suffer from being second-hand and often prejudiced. Other biographical details are provided by B.M.N. Phiri, 'Independent African Churches in Nkhata Bay District' (University College of Malawi, roneo, April 1970); J.D. Manda, 'Independency in the Nkhata Bay Area from about 1930 to Current Times' (University of Malawi, roneo, May 1970); and B. Pachai, 'The Malawi Diaspora and Elements of Clements Kadalie', Central African Historical Association Local Series No 24 (Salisbury, 1968), whose further research will undoubtedly throw more light on Kamwana's career.

[2] Phiri, 'Independent African Churches', p. 1.

prominent civil servant in the colonial administration, and his brother Ernest Alexander, who also played a part in the welfare associations and early nationalist movements.[1] It seems probable that one of the main reasons why the Watch Tower was allowed a foothold in Chifira was because Chifira was in close competition with nearby Marenga's village, where the Bandawe mission station was located. As Isaac Muwamba later apologetically explained to the Northern Rhodesian administration, his father had welcomed the Watch Tower for its promise of material advancement:

> The headquarters of Watch Tower is situated in Chinteche district in my father's village - Chifira is its name - and when Watch Tower commenced her operations in there deceived my father to a very great extent in that they declared that my father would receive wealth of all sorts if he allowed their church to exist - being a very old man, and myself, Ernest Alexander Muwamba and Clements Kadalie Muwamba being too young at the time - my father failed to see his way clear to stop Watch Tower's operation in his village.[2]

It is probable that Kamwana attended village schools before entering the Bandawe mission school, and that he took the European name Elliott upon doing so. Kamwana (= young one) was apparently a nickname added to his clan name and personal names upon his arrival in Chifira as an infant.[3] At Bandawe mission school Kamwana made some impression, to judge by his recommendation for further training at the Overtoun Institute at Khondowe, which specialised in vocational

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[1] Pachai, 'The Malawi Diaspora', pp. 2-3.

[2] Z. Arch., ZA 1/10/1, Isaac Muwamba to D.C., Chilanga, 22 June 1924.

[3] Phiri, 'Independent African Churches', p. 1.

and academic training. Later assessments of his character were however, perhaps not surprisingly, less than glowing: 'The lad possesses some natural ability, but his moral character was rated very low by his Tonga fellow workmen'.[1] After transferring to Khondowe, Kamwana left in 1901 before completing the course, having obtained the level of Standard III, according to some reports on the grounds of his refusal to pay the fee, but more probably because of a deeper frustration with the cathechistic method of instruction.[2]

1902-1907. After a brief stay with relatives at Chifira, Kamwana headed south. Blantyre and its environs were the first port of call for travellers from the north, where the paths of migrants and the incoming labour recruiters, missionaries and traders crossed. It was in Blantyre or at Cholo, where the Seventh Day Baptists (S.D.B.) of Plainfield, New Jersey, had established a mission station, that Kamwana first encountered Joseph Booth. The circumstances of this meeting, and how far Kamwana was drawn under Booth's influence at this stage, are unclear.[3] What is apparent, however, is that Kamwana's intellectual restlessness and his impatience with the tedium of the Livingstonia routine had rendered him precisely the sort of man Booth was seeking to further his vision of an Africa for the Africans and a revived Christianity in Nyasaland, with men of Kamwana and Chilembwe's calibre at the helm.

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[1] The Thirty-fourth Annual Report of the Livingstonia Mission of the United Free Church of Scotland for the Year 1909 (Glasgow, 1910), p. 34.

[2] Pachai, 'The Malawi Diaspora', p. 5.

[3] Cf. Shepperson and Price, Independent African, p. 154.

Around 1902 Booth was expelled from the Protectorate, and after severals flirtations with minor sects - notably the Churches of Christ, which through its establishment in Cape Town may have suggested to Booth his using that city as a base[1] - he voyaged to America, joined Charles Russell's W.T.B.T.S. and returned to Cape Town early in 1907 to represent the W.T.B.T.S. there.[2] Probably soon after Booth's deportation, Kamwana embarked on the second stage of his career by travelling south, like so many of his fellow Tonga, to turn his skills to good account in settler employment. At this stage his formal education had been at the hands of the U.F.C., and his first independent steps under the aegis of Booth and the S.D.B., with possible other influences from the various fundamentalist sects to which Booth had belonged as well. It is also possible that during his next occupation as a medical assistant at a Johannesburg hospital Kamwana came under yet another ideological influence, that of the many independent South African churches, in which the principle of the complete autonomy of African preachers from the founding mission was at least two decades old.[3] Whatever Kamwana's

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[1] Ibid., pp. 148-150.

[2] Cf. below, pp. 93-96.

[3] P.A. Linington, A Summary of the Reports of Certain Pre-Union Commissions on Native Affairs: Church Separatist Movement (Pretoria, 1924), provides a useful resumée of African independency in South Africa. R.I. Rotberg, citing Zomba Archives GOA/2/4/14, states that 'in South Africa [Kamwana] became acquainted with the various forms of Ethiopianism', in 'Resistance and Rebellion in British Nyasaland and German East Africa, 1888-1915: A Tentative Comparison', in Louis and Gifford (eds.), Britain and Germany in Africa (Yale, 1967), p. 678.

actions during the shadowy period 1903-1908 he did not lose touch either with his fellows from Chifira, Bandawe and Khondowe, or with his previous mentor, Joseph Booth. Indeed, as a fellow Tonga hospital assistant, Gilbert Chihayi, reported it, 'about May 1908, Mr Booth called Elliott Kamwana down to Cape Town and without any delay he went down there'.[1]

It was in Booth's little cottage at Clifton-on-Sea, Cape Town, that Kamwana was introduced to Russell's Studies in the Scriptures. There is some confusion whether Booth's rapid switches of allegiance from the S.D.B. to the Adventists to the W.T.B.T.S. did not also impart to Kamwana a dubious sense of allegiance to any one particular denomination or sect, but whether or not his prior membership of the S.D.B. was the ostensible reason for his declaration of independence from the W.T.B.T.S., as was later alleged, Kamwana's career to this point suggests that he was both already inclined towards independency, and sympathetic towards the interpretation of millennial ideas in anti-colonial, Africanist terms.

1908-1915. After some months' study with Booth, Kamwana left for Nyasaland in July or August, 1908, and initially journeyed to Booth's old mission station, Shiloh, at Chikunda near Blantyre. Staying only briefly in the

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[1] It is possible that Kamwana travelled to Cape Town at an earlier date. The Livingstonia Mission News, II, 4, 1909, p. 57, gives Kamwana 6 months in Cape Town in 1907, and Pachai's somewhat confusing account dates his arrival there in 1903 ('The Malawi Diaspora', p. 5). There is no reason to doubt Chihayi's account, however, recorded from personal knowledge within a few years of the event, in N.O. Moore and W.D. Wilcox, 'The Report of the Visit to South and Central Africa', in The Sabbath Recorder (Plainfield, New Jersey), LXXIII, 1912, p. 725.

place where Booth apparently expected Kamwana to take up preaching, he continued his journey in October to his home area on the lake shore.[1] It was at Bandawe that conditions were such that within a few months Kamwana's new message had set off a wave of mass conversion to his version of Watch Tower religious belief, which reduced the Livingstonia missionaries to a state of despair that their carefully built mission endeavour would be irreparably harmed. By the end of 1908, Kamwana had toured from Chifira to the surrounding small villages of Dema, Dwambazi, Nkhota-Khota, Mdyaka, Usisya and Hangalawe, settling with a large retinue at Mdyaka.[2]

Kamwana's preaching in the Bandawe district in 1908-1909 was the basic charter of the African Watch Tower movement which over the course of the next two decades was to spread throughout central Africa. It was not only a personal re-interpretation of Russell's writings, but also one which developed in response to the peculiar demands of Tonga society at the time. In many respects, Kamwana stuck fairly closely to the Russellite doctrine: Jesus, the natural son of Mary and Joseph, was spiritually resurrected only in 1874, and in October, 1914, the golden age in which the contemporary order of human society would be reversed, would arrive. The dead were buried on earth, and therefore would not go to heaven, but would be resurrected at the second coming on earth. Anyone who believed in the new faith might enjoy immediate

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[1] The Sabbath Recorder, 1912, p. 719.

[2] Phiri, 'Independent African Churches', p. 3.

baptism.[1]

However, Kamwana also preached that the hut tax would be abolished, and that the departure of whites was imminent. These overtly political aspects were heavily emphasised by the missionaries in their accounts of the Watch Tower success, and it is possible that these were secondary elements of the ideology in that they responded closely to Tonga grievances, rather than stemming directly out of Russell's doctrines.[2] Of course, localising the message through reference to the missionaries and the colonial authorities was directly within the spirit of the Russellite exegesis of contemporary events; but the next step in the doctrine of refusing to recognise white government in anticipation of the millennium by withholding tax payments was probably not suggested by Kamwana initially, but rather resulted from local re-interpretation.

Where Kamwana departed furthest from Russell was in his depiction of the chosen elite who would enjoy the theocracy to be established in the golden age. It was here that his message adopted a more directly political tone, perhaps helped by Booth's ideas of an Africa for the Africans. Kamwana reportedly looked forward to a day when 'we shall build our own ships, make our own powder, and make or import our own guns'.[3] There was an explicit notion that the inheritors of

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[1] The Sabbath Recorder, 1912, p. 719.

[2] Austin M. Caverhill, 'Ethiopianism', in Life and Work: The Church of Scotland Magazine and Mission Record, XXXIII, Dec. 1911, and XXXIV, Jan. 1912.

[3] Cf. R.D. McMinn, 'The First Wave of Ethiopianism in Central Africa', Livingstonia News, II, 4 Aug. 1909. This notable quotation was first brought to light by Shepperson and Price, Independent African, at p. 156, n.87.

the earth would be African, and that those cast into outer darkness would be European. The sharp distinction between the saved and the damned inherent in fundamentalist belief consequently provided the basis for a pan-Africanist strain in independent Watch Tower preaching which went far beyond the mere notion of redemption even for those excluded from the mission churches.

The appeal of this vision of African independency was enhanced by Kamwana's own attributes of being a well-travelled man, conversant with the white world, who spoke easily of dining with members of parliament and of converting white men.[1] Indeed, there may be some basis of truth in this: Booth was constantly in search of public figures to further his continental schemes, and may well have introduced Kamwana - his outstanding student in Cape Town - into white political society. Certainly such men as W.P. Schreiner (then prime minister of the Cape) had openly demonstrated their sympathy with black aspirations through help granted to the African Methodist Episcopal Church.[2] Talking of his outdoor meetings in Cape Town, Booth wrote to John Chilembwe in 1911 that 'it is good training for natives, tho' very few here are able to stand and teach or face white men.... Elliott Kamwana was the first to do this in Cape Town'.[3]

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[1] R.D. McMinn, 'The First Wave of Ethiopianism', p. 58.

[2] B.G.M. Sundkler, Bantu Prophets in South Africa (2nd edn., 1961), p. 66.

[3] C.O. 525/61, Joseph Booth to John Chilembwe, 12 Dec. 1911, encl. in Secret Report of Governor George Smith, 29 May 1915.

Despite the claim of the Livingstonia missionaries that no member in good standing was subverted by the appeals of Kamwana, the 10,000 or so Tonga who flocked to join the new movement were a sufficiently alarming phenomenon for the missionaries to appeal to the colonial authorities for assistance.[1] In March, 1909, Kamwana was arrested and deported to Zomba, where the Governor, Alfred Sharpe, offered him the choice of 'restricted residence' at Fort Anderson in the Mlanje district, or deportation to South Africa.[2] Kamwana chose to return to Cape Town; but this arbitrary act of banishment did not go unnoticed. While Kamwana had been closely interrogated over his connexion with the W.T.B.T.S. in Alleghany, the colonial authorities hardly realised that this sect had acquired considerable support in England and Scotland, where a vocal lobby on colonial affairs - particularly relating to central Africa - existed. As the official representative of the W.T.B.T.S. in Nyasaland by virtue of Booth's delegation of this office to him, Kamwana was assured of the concern of the many members of the official Watch Tower movement, despite his own interpretation of the doctrine. The M.P. for Govan, indeed, received numerous complaining letters that Kamwana had been taken from Zomba to Chinde under armed guard, and put on a German steamer 'as a deck passenger, exposed to the weather, and never allowed to take shelter of any kind',[3] while Keir Hardie and other members

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[1] R.D. McMinn, 'The First Wave of Ethiopianism', p. 72; cf. also Report of the Livingstonia Mission ... for 1909, passim.

[2] C.O. 525/28, Despatch No. 28 of 15 May 1909.

[3] C.O. 525/31, India Office confidential, W.O. Warden to R. Duncan, 30 Aug. 1909.

of parliament laid questions criticising the judicial process whereby Kamwana had been expelled and condemning the absence of religious freedom. 'Dear Jacko', noted one M.P. to a colonial under-secretary, 'you have been imprisoning an African chief whose name I cannot remember - and it is troubling my constituents'.[1]

Despite this solicitude, Kamwana found himself in 1910 once more in Cape Town, probably having spent some time in Durban en route and possibly having once again encountered Joseph Booth. He did not stay very long, however, for in 1910 he appeared in Rhodesia, apparently making his way overland back to Nyasaland. 'It appears to be quite certain', noted the clerk-in-charge at Que-Que, Southern Rhodesia, '...that Kenani toured this country in 1910 on his way from America and en route to Nyasaland',[2] and this report is partly confirmed by the Native Commissioner at Sinoia, who minuted that his messenger, Banda, '...was educated together with Kenan Kamwana ... went to Cape Colony, and returned in 1910. Kamwana travelled as far as Eldorado with Banda, who was then joining this office, on his way north. Banda hears of him every now and then....'[3]

Sharpe, however, would not allow Kamwana to return to Nyasaland, even though the Watch Tower had been banned following Kamwana's arrest and indeed appeared to be dying

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[1] C.O. 525/31, Confidential despatches, Sharpe to Sec. State Col., 1 Sept. 1909, 25 Aug. 1909.

[2] R. Arch., N 3/5/8, Clerk-in-charge, Que-Que, to N.C., Gwelo, 16 May 1917. Kamwana did not, of course, visit America; this is possibly a confusion with Booth.

[3] R. Arch., NSA 2/8/1, N.C., Sinoia, to Supt. Nat. Affairs, Salisbury, 16 April 1917.

away, despite spasmodic activity. Perhaps the lobby in England was not totally ineffectual, however, in that Sharpe was persuaded to allow Kamwana to settle at Chinde until such time as the date for the millennium had passed, when it was considered it would be safe to allow him to return. It was there between June 9th and 14th, 1912, that Moore and Wilcox, who were investigating Booth's doings on behalf of the S.D.B., encountered him:

> At the time of our visit Kamwana was living with his brother [Yohane] in a native village just outside the British Commission. He is a pastor of the Watch Tower church there, and is detained by the British authorities until the close of the year 1914.[1]

From such a vantage point as Chinde, Kamwana was doubtless able to keep in contact by courier and by correspondence with his many followers in the West Nyasa district, and also with other independent leaders such as John Chilembwe. Although he met Moore and Wilcox, he was, however, prevented from meeting Walter B. Cockerill, Joseph Booth's replacement, who was heading for Kamwana's home district.[2]

Kamwana's constant fiery oratory at Chinde caused him to remain a thorn in the flesh of the colonial administration, and, when he was allowed to return to the Protectorate in September, 1914, he was promptly detained at Mlanje, south-east of Blantyre on the border with Mozambique.[3] Despite this

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[1] The Sabbath Recorder, 1912, p. 701.

[2] Shepperson and Price, Independent African, pp. 210, 212.

[3] C.O. 525/68, Confidential despatch of 26th Aug. 1916.

political detention, and the interception of his mail which revealed that 'there was no question [but] that Elliott Kamwana had knowledge of John Chilembwe's intentions, but evidence was forthcoming of his refusal to participate in the Rising',[1] such was the fear generated by Chilembwe's abortive revolt, and the general suspicion which attached to the Watch Tower movement, that new action was taken against Kamwana and his closest associates - his brother Yohane and pastor William Mwenda - which was to ensure Kamwana's absence from the territory for the next two decades. Yohane Chirwa had been detained at Neno following his conviction for the part he played in the upper Shire rising, and pastor William Mulagha Mwenda had been detained at Port Herald when he was found 'carrying on a secret correspondence of a seditious character'.[2] All three were exiled to the islands of the Mozambique channel, without benefit of trial, where deposed West African kings, Mahdist generals, and the leaders of fully-fledged rebellions against British imperial rule in Africa were imprisoned.[3]

1916-1919. On December 6th, 1916, Kamwana, Yohane and William Mwenda left Chinde under escort for Mauritius, where the Governor had offered to use his as yet unrescinded war-time powers to intern the trio at Flat Island.[4] By 1919, however, the Governor grew uneasy at the harshness of this

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[1] Ibid. It is unfortunately not stated what this evidence was.

[2] Ibid.

[3] J.T. Bradley, The History of the Seychelles (Port Victoria, 1940), ii, 308-309.

[4] C.O. 167/817, Telegram of 9 April 1916; C.O. 525/69, Confidential despatch of 15 Jan. 1917.

exile on a remote and barely inhabited island, particularly since the Nyasaland administration appeared content to allow them to remain there indefinitely.[1] Also, the detention was probably no longer legal, as the war had finished, and apart from a dubious secret Order-in-Council of 1896 no enabling legislation existed to maintain the further detention without trial of Kamwana and his fellows. The mind of the Governor of Mauritius was set at rest, however, with the passage of the Nyasaland Protectorate Political Prisoners Detention Ordinance (No. 22 of 1919). This measure was specifically designed to bar the right of habeas corpus with regard to Elliott Kamwana, Yohane Chirwa, and William Mwenda, who at this stage were moved together with their wives to a new place of detention at Anse Royale on the island of South Mahe in the Seychelles group.[2]

1919-1937. Here Kamwana was destined to spend the next 18 years of his life. Despite the relapse of the Nyasa Watch Tower movement into passivity, and indeed its official recognition in the Protectorate in 1922, and the release of his fellow captives in 1929, it was not until 1937 and the granting of a general amnesty at the time of the coronation of George VI that his captors relented. Kamwana's position during this period may be compared perhaps, with that of Simon Kimbangu during the latter's period of detention at Elizabeth-

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[1] C.O. 356/25, Correspondence Register entry of 3 July 1919.

[2] C.O. 530/36, Despatch No. 91 of 12 Nov. 1919, and Despatch No. 163 of 20 Dec. 1919.

ville.[1] His image was sedulously fostered by his many former associates and pupils, who regarded him - rather than Charles Russell or Joseph Booth - as the original Watch Tower prophet. Indeed his fame as a prophet had spread across central Africa, as his prediction of the millennium and the ensuing troubles on earth had come to be associated with the 1914-1918 war which gravely affected parts of central Africa as a result of the German East Africa campaign, and the epidemic of Spanish influenza which followed it.[2] Unlike Kimbangu, however, Kamwana was able through the receipt of the literature of the W.T.B.T.S. and through correspondence with friends to maintain a direct influence over the movement founded in his name. Not only was he able to advise his correspondents on the ideological direction of the movement,[3] but also during this period of imprisonment he reframed his own ideas, and upon his eventual release rejected the offer of a full-time post with the Jehovah's Witnesses (as the W.T.B.T.S. was by that stage calling itself), and founded yet another independent Russellite Church, the Watchman Healing Mission, more commonly called the bamulonda (= watchers) church.[4]

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[1] Cf. M. Sinda, 'Le Messianisme Congolais et ses Incidences Politiques depuis son Apparition jusqu'à l'Epoque de l'Indépendence, 1921-1951', (Univ. de Paris, Ph.D. thesis, 1961), p. 39.

[2] Cf. below, pp. 188-203.

[3] Cf. below, p. 359.

[4] Cf. J.V. Taylor and D. Lehmann, Christians of the Copperbelt: The Growth of the Church in Northern Rhodesia (London, 1961), pp. 166, 238-246.

3. The Kamwana Society Church, 1910-1945

For the first few years after the inception of Watch Tower teaching in 1909, it appeared as if the movement would flourish. The small groupings in the Bandawe district sought local leaders to take on Kamwana's mantle, and the millennial message spread to the central and southern highlands. But organisation and cohesiveness were lacking among these small groups, which did not again transcend the village basis. And such was the confusion of allegiance and the dissipation of strong leadership into a welter of small sects - later to be clamped down on by the administration - that only fragments of the Kamwana Society Church (as it came to be called by Kamwana's followers) survived the leader's arrest and deportation. What is significant about this first period of Watch Tower belief in Nyasaland, however, is the penetration of its ideas into the wide range of religious independent, early nationalist movements which marked the transition of colonial British Central Africa into the modern era.

The immediate aftermath of Kamwana's arrest was a period of excitement and rumour in which millennial expectation ran high. Dr Laws of the Livingstonia Mission was reported to be recruiting an army to slay adherents of the sect, while others spoke of seven Europeans who would shortly arrive to prepare followers for the new age.[1] The state of rumour possibly reflects the confusion which existed among Kamwana's following, who had been given a radical new direction in their beliefs and their social organisation, but had been denied

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[1] Annual Report of the Livingstonia Mission ... for 1910, p. 32.

any institutional underpinning of the movement. Indeed, little is known of the organisation of the Watch Tower at this stage. The village seems to have been the unit of the community, following the sectional nature of Tonga society, and the chief settlements appear to have been at Bandawe, Chifira, Chintechе, Mdyaka, Dwambazi, Dwangwa, Sangu and Osisya.[1] Missionary reports state that the mass membership consisted of 'mainly children and flighty youths' and are replete with accusations of obscenities, polygamy and drunkenness, but this evidence is perhaps unreliable. Large churches were built, and hymn-singing and baptism were noted as the main activities.[2]

The secondary leadership appears to have been insufficiently charismatic or innovatory, however, to sustain mass membership of the movement; partly this may be seen through their failure to raise the scale of organisation above the level of the village, and partly it resulted from the new attitudes of chiefs and headmen which were emerging at this stage. Continuing mass adherence to the movement - as distinct from occasional upsurges of millennial rumours[3] - would have effectively required the establishment of new supra-village communities in which new social structures could emerge. Tonga society, however, seems to have been resistant to the perpetuation of such communities. The Tonga

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[1] Sabbath Recorder, 1912, p. 720.

[2] Annual Report of the Livingstonia Mission ... for 1909, p. 36.

[3] As reported, for instance, in Annual Report of the Livingstonia Mission ... for 1913.

communities, it may be argued, were readily assimilatory, adaptive, interlinked, and sufficiently open to change for the millennial social movement to be merely a transitory phenomenon. Also, there were many associational alternatives and different avenues of advancement open to ambitious Tonga, as was demonstrated by the careers of some of Kamwana's contemporaries at Chifira village. The support of chiefs and headmen particularly was not forthcoming for the Watch Tower, as these were turning to more secular ways of promoting their interests in the face of the undermining of their powers by the colonial administration, through the new pressure groups of the welfare associations.[1] Consequently for the further development of the Watch Tower we should look at the careers of its local leaders, rather than at the brief period of mass participation.

Who were the Kamwanaist leaders? Generally speaking, they were Kamwana's fellow villagers and neighbours from the West Nyasa district who had like him voyaged far afield as migrant labourers. Some had come into contact with South African Ethiopian churches, while others shared an acquaintance with Booth, the W.T.B.T.S., and other of Booth's missionary endeavours om behalf of the Providence Industrial Mission, the Seventh Day Baptists, the Churches of Christ, and the Seventh Day Adventists. Such was the impact of Kamwana that he excited a sense of personal loyalty amongst nearly all these, and to a greater or lesser extent his version of Booth's and Russell's teachings influenced their own doctrines. These

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[1] Cf. J. van Velsen, 'The Establishment of the Administration in Tongaland', p. 7; also 'Some Early Pressure Groups in Malawi' in E. Stokes and R. Brown (eds.), The Zambesian Past (1966), p. 408.

emerging intellectuals, dissident mission trainees, and anti-colonial nationalists played a vital part in spreading Kamwanaism not only in Nyasaland, but also across central Africa.

Initially, there was in 1910-1912 a move back to the U.F.C. by some Kamwanaists in the Bandawe area, but the spirit of independence which was abroad led most to seek institutional homes outside the Livingstonia Mission. The majority of Kamwanaists nevertheless realised the very real benefits of a European presence. One Kamwanaist, Amon Malinda, frankly told Moore and Wilcox of the Seventh Day Baptist Church that

> Some among us desire independency, but we don't know what independency means. We believe that a true white brother in Jesus Christ would not lead us into bondage. So we desire a missionary.[1]

Most of the elders interviewed by Moore and Wilcox, indeed, were previous Livingstonia pupils allegedly dismissed for idleness, neglect of duty, polygamy, theft of school fees, and 'aggravated cases of fornication'; the desire for a more liberal regime was apparent.[2] But the European presence nevertheless offered many benefits - primarily perhaps as a shield against the administration. There were positive benefits as well. Teachers in a recognised (European controlled) mission could expect to pay half taxes; chiefs were more likely to be amenable to the building of churches belonging to white missions; and Europeans of course provided some funds, books and teaching equipment.[3] With the banning

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[1] Sabbath Recorder, 1912, p. 711.

[2] Ibid., pp. 706-707.

[3] C.O. 525/12, Confidential despatch of 19 Mar. 1906.

of the Watch Tower following Kamwana's arrest, and the jailing of some of Booth's trainees, considerations such as these led many leaders of the Kamwana Society Church to turn away from Booth and Russell towards the Seventh Day Adventists and Baptists, and to the Churches of Christ. The suddenness of Brink's death and Johnston's unhelpful visit - and not least the fact that these men unlike other leaders were not Americans - also helped to promote their interests above those of the W.T.B.T.S.[1]

Indeed, the confusion over the relationship between Watch Tower and the other fundamentalist sects active in the area was increased by later disputes over Kamwana's precise position. Before joining Russell's W.T.B.T.S., Booth had approached the Churches of Christ but had been rejected by them on the grounds of his political radicalism.[2] Subsequently he joined the S.D.B. of Plainfield, New Jersey, although he continued to supply Russell's writings to his Nyasa following. One of Kamwana's fellow detainees in the Seychelles, William Mwenda, later alleged that Kamwana was at the time of his Watch Tower preaching in Tongaland secretly a representative of the S.D.B.; and that after Kamwana had broken with Booth he changed the name of his Tonga movement to the 'Watch Tower Churches of Christ'.[3] While this may well have been a later gloss designed to throw the appeal of Kamwana's name behind the S.D.B., to which Mwenda himself belonged, it nevertheless

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[1] Cf. below, pp. 96-98.

[2] Shepperson and Price, Independent African, p. 149.

[3] J.R. Hooker, 'Witnesses and Watchtower in the Rhodesias and Nyasaland', Jpurnal of African History, VI, 1965, p. 92.

reflects some of the recriminations and disputes which characterised the break-up of the Kamwana Society Church.

We may perhaps see the leaders of the Kamwanaist movement as falling into a number of groups. At one end of the spectrum, there were first those who passed briefly under the influence of Kamwana while moving away from the established missions in the direction of secular politics. Notable among these was Charles Domingo, a Mozambiquan African who was one of Livingstonia's most outstanding pupils, and who was later to be hailed as a founding figure of Mozambiquan revolutionary nationalism.[1] Also there were those who participated in Chilembwe's revolt, whilst being, apparently, members of the Watch Tower; and to the extent that John Chilembwe himself was aware of Kamwana's preaching, and Kamwana's modification of Boothism, that founding figure of Nyasaland African nationalism may also be associated with this group. Secondly, there were the later trainees of Booth who arrived in Tongaland hard on Elliott Kamwana's heels:[2] they were considered Watch Tower preachers, but they later changed their allegiance to the European-led sects. Thirdly, and at the other end of the spectrum, there was the hard core of local followers who remained loyal to Kamwana and fostered the independent Watch Tower movement in Nyasaland, variously called mpatuka (= separate), choonadi (= the truth),[3] or simply Watch Tower, and who maintained an ambiguous and

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[1] Cf. Shepperson, Myth and Reality in Malawi (Evanston, 1966), p. 16, n.22.

[2] Cf. below, p. 95.

[3] R. Arch., S 138/226, Bowring to Stanley, 16 April 1924.

fluctuating relationship with the W.T.B.T.S. Finally, there were those leaders of independent religious movements who, although they were not connected organisationally with Kamwana's followers, nevertheless underwent Kamwana's influence in a number of ways.

Perhaps one of the most remarkable figures involved in the early Kamwana Society Church was Charles Domingo. Domingo was a man of outstanding intellect and independence of mind who, although not directly involved in the Chilembwe rising, was refused re-entry into Nyasaland in 1916 on the grounds of his constant criticism of the colonial establishment and because of his suspected complicity in the rebellion. Some details of his career emerge from an official report prepared at the time:

> He is a man of about 40 years of age and a native of Quilimane, where years ago his father was a servant of the African Lakes Corporation's Agent. In 1881 Charles Domingo came to Nyasaland and was educated at the Livingstonia Mission, later on at the Lovedale Institute, Cape Colony. In 1908 he joined the Negro American Baptist Church and became associated with Chilembwe. Since then he has been connected with the Watch Tower Society and latterly with the Seventh Day Baptists as leader of that sect in Mombera's district, and is a frequent contributor to the Seventh Day Baptist journal. He has been intimately associated with Booth and Cockerill (deported). I had decided to take steps for his detention under Ordinance No 1 of 1909 when he applied for permission to leave the Protectorate and return to Quilimane, which, in the circumstances, I considered it expedient to accede to, and he left Nyasaland on the 9th instant. The proceedings for issue of an order for his political detention will be completed, and steps will be taken to prevent his re-entry into the country.[1]

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[1] C.O. 525/68, Secret despatch of the Governor of Nyasaland, 28 Aug. 1916. Further on Domingo, cf. Shepperson and Price, Independent African, pp. 159-165; also R. Tangri, 'African Reaction and Resistance to the Early Colonial Situation in Malawi 1891-1915', The Central African Historical Association Local Series No 25, (Salisbury, 1969), pp. 11-12.

It is unclear how Domingo came into contact with Booth, but as Shepperson and Price have pointed out, he was a major link in the prosecution of Booth's dream of promoting an African church in central Africa, and a key figure among the Nyasa Africans who sought to express new ambitions through membership of the smaller Ethiopian churches, and who were beginning to express nationalist feelings.[1] Domingo, the chief representative of the S.D.B. in Mombera's district and a personal friend of Kamwana's, had both through Booth and his acquaintance with Kamwana come to be associated with the Watch Tower movement. Domingo played an important role in 1910-1912, however, by leading the struggle against the hard-core Kamwanaists in the interests of sabbatarianism. Some details of the struggle emerge from letters written by Domingo to Booth in 1911, which reveal that the general Booth-Kamwana following regarded themselves as Watch Tower, and that Domingo was able to sway the consensus towards participation in the S.D.B., by arguing that Kamwana had been trained by Booth initially as a member of the S.D.B. and that Kamwana himself initially preached sabbatarianism, but found that its appeal did not match that of Russell's doctrines. Despite Domingo's work in convincing many leaders to swing to the S.D.B., Watch Tower belief continued at Chifira, Dwambazi and Dwangwa and indeed Domingo invited the wrath of the hard-core for 'destroying Elliott's work'.[2] Domingo

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[1] Shepperson and Price, Independent African, pp. 160, 215; S.D.B. Arch., Charles Domingo to Joseph Booth, 10 April 1911. I am indebted to Dr. Harry Langworthy for access to this material.

[2] Ibid., African Sabbath Recorder, I, 16 Dec. 1911.

was perhaps the one man who could have united the Kamwana Society Church and carried on in Kamwana's footsteps; despite his involvement in Kamwana's teaching, Domingo however preferred to pursue his career as an individualist, increasingly concerned with direct attacks on the colonial order, rather than as a leader of a mass movement.[1] It is probable that those Kamwanaists who participated in the Chilembwe rising showed something of a similar ideological development.[2]

Secondly, we may consider the group of later trainees of Joseph Booth. Shortly after Kamwana's arrival in Tongaland, Alexander Makwinja, Hanson Tandu, Gilbert Chihayi and Jonathan Aphiri arrived from the south, likewise instructed in a synthesis of S.D.B. and Watch Tower doctrines. Makwinja had passed Standard II at the Blantyre mission, received further schooling from Booth in Pretoria, and became the legal proprietor of Booth's old mission station at Chikunda, where he began to instruct his small following in The Divine Plan of the Ages.[3] Makwinja was one of the select group who knew both Kamwana and Booth intimately from South African days; like Domingo he too became an official of the S.D.B., and was the chief assistant to their European representative, Walter B. Cockerill, and subsequently entered Chilembwe's conspiracy.[4]

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[1] Further, cf. K.P. Lohrentz, 'Joseph Booth, Charles Domingo, and the Seventh Day Baptists in Northern Nyasaland, 1910-12', Journal of African History, XII, 1971.

[2] Cf. below, pp. 81-82.

[3] C.O. 525/62, Confidential despatch of 4 June 1915.

[4] Shepperson and Price, Independent African, pp. 337-339.

Gilbert Chihayi likewise knew Booth and Kamwana well, and gravitated towards the S.D.B., acting as Moore and Wilcox's chief informant and interpreter on the tour of Nyasaland. Others who are mentioned by Booth as emissaries to Nyasaland at this time are Peter Nyambo, Stephen Luwayo, and Amon Malinda Matuiko, who all seem to have joined the S.D.B.[1] Hanson Tandu travelled on the steamer to Nkhata Bay in 1909, where he was recognised as a deserter from the King's African Rifles and jailed. In Zomba jail, Tandu commenced a tradition which was to become an important means of spreading Watch Tower ideas by baptising and instructing his fellow prisoners, especially the ex-mission pupils. One such was A. Scott Bismarck, sentenced to 6 lashes and two years' imprisonment for the theft of a twelve-shilling postal order, who was the son of the highly respected first convert of the Blantyre Mission, Joseph Bismarck.[2] While Bismarck too later joined the S.D.B., Tandu and a number of other Kamwanaists subsequently joined the Churches of Christ mission, colouring yet another small church with Watch Tower ideas.[3] Thus the majority of Kamwana's fellows, trained by Booth, appear to have moved away from explicit loyalty to him, which was certainly an important factor in the collapse of the movement.

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[1] C.O. 525/61, Secret despatch of 29 May 1915, Joseph Booth to John Chilembwe, 10 Dec. 1911.

[2] C.O. 525/29, Despatch No 299 of 30 Oct. 1909.

[3] Shepperson and Price, Independent African, p. 490, n.77.

Thirdly, there were those who saw the Watch Tower as an independent Africanist movement, were personally loyal to Kamwana, and whose anti-Europeanism matched his own, expressed both during his first independent preaching and reiterated by him on his later release from exile. Chief among these were Timon Chirwa and Jordan Msumba. About the former little is known, except that he was a supporter of Msumba in opposing Domingo's attempt to convert the Kamwanaist leaders to sabbatarianism. Msumba, however, appears to have been perhaps the first Nyasa African to have had some instruction in Watch Tower teachings independently of Booth and Kamwana. After reaching Standard IV at Bandawe, Msumba left in 1900 owing to lack of money and sought a job in South Africa, where in all probability he had some acquaintance with independent churches. By 1906 he was back at Chinteche, where he joined another early independent Tonga religious movement, the Chipangano (Messenger of the Covenant) church under the leadership of Isaac Kaunda, probably the first such in Nyasaland.[1] By August, 1909, however, we hear of 'Jordan Ansumba with Elliott and Joseph Booth at Pretoria', where Booth's furniture was sold to buy food for the trio.[2] This was Msumba's first acquaintance with Watch Tower ideas; by 1911 he was back in the Bandawe area leading the struggle against Domingo to keep the Watch Tower free of European control and the chusulu (Saturday sabbath), declaring that

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[1] Manda, 'Independency in the Nkhata Bay Area', p. 4.

[2] S.D.B. Arch., J. Booth to Edwin Shaw, 8 May 1911.

'Booth is afraid, he is making you merchandise; also Elliott is not with him now, these pastors are only deceiving you'.[1] Msumba gave the name 'Watch Tower Church of Christ' to his own Kamwanaist section to distinguish it.

Msumba appears to have been one of the very few Tonga to respond positively to Johnston's visit. In 1915 he travelled south again and helped Johnston organise the W.T.B.T.S. among the Zulu at Ndwedwe, but soon reverted to an independent stance.[2] In 1920 Msumba established a version of his old Chipangano church at Karonga, styled the National church, based on the promises made to Abraham and Moses, which appears to have been an interesting forerunner of Paddy Nyasulu's explicitly nationalist African National Church.[3] This was short-lived, however, as Msumba soon left Karonga to work in Tanganyika. He returned to Chinteche in 1925, where the original founder of the Chipangano church, Isaac Kaunda, refused to cede the leadership.[4] Msumba consequently founded a new small group, the Last Church of God and His Christ, which attracted much of Kaunda's following to it, and which flourished until his death in 1941. This sect reflects interestingly on some of the prime motives for the break away of the early Watch Tower movement, on which it was based. The doctrine of Msumba's Last Church was founded on the parable of the ten foolish virgins, and upheld polygamy;

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[1] The Sabbath Recorder, 1912, p. 725.

[2] W.W. Johnston, 'A Message from Africa', in Watch Tower Bible and Tract Society Convention Reports: Fifteenth Souvenir Report, (Brooklyn, New York), 1915. On Johnston, cf. below, p. 97.

[3] A full history of this church is in Z. Arch., SEC/NAT/289, Report on the African National Church, 1944.

[4] R.H. MSS. Afr., H.C. Hoole, 'Historical Survey of Native Controlled Missions Operating in Nyasaland' (typescript, December, 1940), 'Last Church of God and His Christ'.

all were welcome, there was no secrecy, and no probationary period; it was the last church in that it offered to incorporate all those who were suspended from other churches for any infraction whatsoever. In this it took one aspect of the Watch Tower appeal to the extreme, by offering hope of salvation to the most humble believer, regardless of ritual. Indeed, its chief success was 'among the very simple and poor polygamists of the Henga and Nkonde clans ... with a membership of 7,000 in 1940.'[1] The parallels with Kamwana's own Watchman Healing Mission, founded in 1939, are striking; Msumba's career too, perhaps, offers a pale version of what might have been had Kamwana not been jailed.

Finally, we may see Kamwana's influence on such other sect leaders and early nationalists as Y.Z. Mwase, Charles Chinula, Wilfred Good, and on the plethora of later sects which emerged in Nyasaland. Yesaya Zerenji Mwase, a long time correspondent to Marcus Garvey's Universal Negro Improvement Association, founded the Blackman's Church of God which is in Tongaland in 1933, and shortly thereafter the Mpingo wa Afipa wa Africa (= Church of the Black People of Africa), which aimed at a separate education for Africans.[2] Mwase was on good terms with Kamwana, despite the hope of the U.F.C. that they might use his considerable influence as a pastor to counteract Kamwana's, and shared the latter's zeal for an autonomous African movement.[3] Similarly Mwase's

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[1] Ibid.

[2] Hoole, ms. cit., 'Mpingo wa Afipa wa Africa'.

[3] Phiri, 'Independent African Churches', p. 4; Manda, Independency in the Nkhata Bay Area.'

associate, Charles Chinula, later to become the vice-president of the Nyasaland African Congress, was in all probability personally acquainted with and not unaffected by Kamwana's teaching. Of Wilfred Good, one of the most radical of African churchmen after the demise of John Chilembwe, it was reported that

> When Good was arrested in 1938 certain prohibited publications of the Watchtower Society were found in his possession. There is little doubt that his attitude towards government and recognised authority were influenced by this literature.[1]

The prevalence of the cheap Bibles and colourfully illustrated tracts published by the W.T.B.T.S. must of course be taken into account, in assessing the influence of Kamwanaism, particularly in the late 1920's and 1930's. Certainly for many independent preachers who had no acquaintance with Elliott Kamwana, the small booklets threatening the imminent destruction of established governments and the triumph of true believers were most familiar. The tradition of interpretation of this millennial literature from an explicitly anti-colonial and Africanist viewpoint, however, was the direct heritage of Kamwana. Jordan Njirayafa, for example, who was sentenced to 17 years imprisonment for treason following his part in the Chilembwe rising, founded the African Church on his release in 1932. Although he had no sympathy for the Watch Tower or the Jehovah's Witnesses, Njirayafa's views were reportedly 'apt to be swayed by Watch Tower literature'.[2]

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[1] Hoole, Ana A Mulungu.

[2] Hoole, 'The African Church'.

The immediate aftermath of Kamwana's teaching, then, consisted on the one hand in the rapid crumbling away of his mass following, and on the other in the dissemination of his ideas throughout the Protectorate by cadres similar to himself in background. By August 1914, it was reported that there were

> 51 churches in the West Nyasa district, and native pastors have spread the Society's teachings in the North Nyasa, Upper Shire, West Shire, Blantyre, Mlanje and Lower Shire districts, and have attempted to do so in the South Nyasa districts.[1]

Sample monthly attendance figures of 1,884 at Limbe (Blantyre) and 4,475 in the Ncheu district, suggest that this countrywide following was not inconsiderable, although it is possible that the widespread use of W.T.B.T.S. literature led to the conflation of the membership of other small religious movements with these figures.[2] This early period of Kamwanaism is perhaps remembered more as a prelude to the Chilembwe rising, however, than as a dramatic demonstration of the contradictions and frustrations built into a major missionary undertaking. The coincidence of the outbreak of World War I and the Chilembwe rising with Kamwana's millennial prophecy (he allegedly changed the date of the inception of the millennium from October 1914 to between April and October 1915), led many to remember Kamwana as a successful prophet rather than as a leader of men. While his memory was kept alive by a hard-core following of Tonga Watch Tower believers, more generally Kamwana came to be spoken of in the same breath as John Chilembwe, and it is the relationship

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[1] C.O. 525/176, Encls. of 13 May 1938.

[2] R. Arch., 5138/226, 'The Watch Tower Society', n.d., (1927?).

between the Watch Tower movement and the Chilembwe conspiracy which we should now consider.

The relationship between the Watch Tower movement and the Chilembwe rising of 1915 was a subtle and complex one, done little justice at the time by accusations of crude complicity, and by the later belief among missionaries, settlers and administrators in central Africa - indeed, among many African churchmen - that Chilembwe and the Watch Tower were synonymous.[1] Even though the Commission of Enquiry into the revolt exonerated the Watch Tower, while considering that the effect of its literature had been inflammatory,[2] later commentators seized on the Watch Tower movement as an explanation for the rising, much in the way that this movement was made to bear the responsibility for labour unrest on the Northern Rhodesian copperbelt in the 1930's.[3] Nor did subsequent colonial administrators hesitate to use the spectre of Chilembwe when arguing for the suppression of Watch Tower in their territories. That there was some nexus is highly probable; the evidence is however unclear and fragmentary. Shepperson and Price, in their close and detailed consideration of the rising, argue that while Watch Tower literature may have contributed to the climate of rebellion, and while some of his following were influenced by it, Chilembwe himself was not

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[1] Cf. e.g. H. Moyse-Bartlett, The King's African Rifles. A Study in the Military History of East and Central Africa, 1890-1945 (London, 1956), pp. 230-2, 324-6, 417.

[2] C.O. 525/71, Report of the Governmental Commission of Enquiry into the Recent Native Rising, with notes on the Report of the Commission by the Rev. Dr. Hetherwick, February, 1916.

[3] Cf. below, pp. 383-385.

affected by the movement, and that indeed Kamwana and Watch Tower beliefs were incidental to the rising.[1] The present analysis considers that the contribution of Kamwanaism to the pool of ideas which helped to form the emerging consciousness of African protestors against colonial rule was a direct and significant one. Watch Tower ideas were central in the ideology of a generation of Nyasalanders; the militancy and activism of Chilembwe and his co-conspirators partook directly of this new awareness. Also, to the extent that Chilembwe's rising was conceived as a symbolic gesture of defiance, this may have some parallel in a constant feature of African millennial movements, namely the emphasis on demonstrating commitment to the cause as a precondition of the altering of material conditions.

The Chilembwe rising was a seminal event in the social and political history of central Africa. Plantation labourers under the direction of independent church leaders rose against white rule, beheaded the lineal descendant of David Livingstone, and even though the rising was unsuccessful in all its stated aims, and its leader shot down, this nevertheless marked the transition to modern political activity. The links which may perhaps be discerned between the Watch Tower movement and the Chilembwe rising are threefold - the common influence of Joseph Booth, the role of Kamwana and his teachings, and the part played by those activists and supporters in the rising whose ideology had been crucially affected by their membership in or association with the movement. The aftermath of repression

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[1] Shepperson and Price, Independent African, pp. 231-2, 324-6.

which it invited also seriously affected the later development of the Kamwanaist movement, and in itself it reflects the broad changing of consciousness to which the Watch Tower contributed.

Booth had singled out Chilembwe from the many Nyasalanders who underwent his influence as the peculiar inheritor and architect of his dreams.

> I feel as though the Good Spirit wants my mantle, and all the heritage from the past 25 years, journeyings, teachings and strange experiences and revealings, with all the yet to be manifested power of God to bless and uplift and provide all needful things for a mighty African host of preachers, bishops, pastors, evangelists and school teachers for the whole of the 78 chief languages now translated into English with others following year by year....No other person has the same right to this heritage, that you have, if you are able to receive it...no one but you has been so marked of God and called of God to uphold my hands and in Spirit take and seek zealously to fill the place of my sweet brave son....[1]

Those elements of his personal vision which Joseph Booth handed on to Elliott Kamwana were even more firmly part of Chilembwe's inheritance. Both Kamwana and Chilembwe had in common a pan-Africanist ideological strain, remarkably similar to Booth's, which stressed self-reliance, technological competence, anti-colonialism, and foreshadowed the notion of the continental unity of the black man against the invading whites. Although Chilembwe had severed organisational links with Booth before the latter's Russellite period, he was still in correspondence with him, and it is probable that Booth provided W.T.B.T.S. literature to Chilembwe and a number of his followers.

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[1] C.O. 525/61, Joseph Booth to John Chilembwe, 10 Dec. 1911.

Moreover, while Chilembwe himself may have been averse to Watch Tower doctrines as such, the relevance of certain passages of Russellite exegesis to conditions in the southern highlands, and the frequency with which such favourite Watch Tower texts as James v.4 were cited suggests (as Shepperson and Price have pointed out) a considerable degree of familiarity with Studies in the Scriptures.[1] Indeed, the whole tone of Watch Tower literature was favourable to an armed rebellion which was inspired by economic grievances and the rejection of expatriate domination. Organised government and established authority were depicted as usurpers, instruments of evil, and opposed to the will of God; while the socialist flavour of the castigation of the plutocracy in the Society's literature - with lurid descriptions of kings, bishops, capitalists and property owners - must have seemed peculiarly apposite to colonial Nyasaland.[2] The Watch Tower magazine, particularly, with its emphasis on current political events and the social chaos around the world at this time must doubtless have encouraged the belief among its African readership that they were acting on the broad stage of a global struggle against injustice and ungodliness. Together with this went the millennial notion that events were sweeping inexorably to some climax in which the righteous dispossessed would be reinstated, and the incumbents of power hurled out; and that

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[1] Shepperson and Price, Independent African, p. 231. 'Behold the hire of the labourers who have reaped down your fields, which is of you kept back by fraud, crieth, and the cries of them which have reaped are entered into the ears of the Lord of Sabaoth', James v. 4.

[2] E.g., C.T. Russell, Studies in the Scriptures, iv, The Battle of Armageddon (1897), pp. v-viii; cf. above, pp. 9-12.

the signs of the times all pointed towards the triumph of the disinherited through battle. Indeed the apocalyptic language of Watch Tower texts was liberally strewn with martial language, much culled from the Old Testament, such as 'fiery swords', 'conquering hosts', 'rivers of blood', and of course 'the Battle of Armageddon'.

Elliott Kamwana had predicted the millennium for October, 1914, following Charles Russell, while Chilembwe's rebellion had occurred in January, 1915 - although there is some evidence to suggest that it had been planned for as early as July, 1914.[1] According to some sources, Kamwana had changed the date of the millennium to between April and October, 1915, which may reflect some attempt to coincide with Chilembwe's rebellion; but the stage at which he did so is unclear, and this link is dubious.[2] However, Kamwana had been in correspondence with Chilembwe, and was undoubtedly aware of the latter's plans. 'There is no question [but] that Elliott Kamwana had knowledge of John Chilembwe's intentions', minuted the Governor of Nyasaland in 1916, 'but evidence was forthcoming of his refusal to participate in the rising'.[3] In September, 1914, on the eve of his prophesied millennium, Kamwana was transferred from Chinde to political detention in Mlanje so that a closer eye could be kept on him, and was placed under arrest immediately upon the outbreak of

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[1] Shepperson and Price, Independent African, p. 236; cf. also C.T. Russell, Studies in the Scriptures, ii, The Time is at Hand (1889), pp. 98-101.

[2] Cf. R. Arch., S138/226, 'The Watch Tower Society'.

[3] C.O. 525/68, Confidential despatch of 26 Aug. 1916.

the rising. The most direct contact however seems to have been through Elliott's brother and constant companion, Yohane Achirwa, and another associate, William Mwenda. Yohane was detained at Neno following his conviction for playing some part in the rising - a part unfortunately not made clear - and Mwenda was also convicted for 'carrying on secret correspondence of a seditious character and contrary to the rules and restrictions imposed on politically detained persons', which seems to have concerned the rising as well.[1] This connexion of close associates, and his own knowledge and silence, suggest that Kamwana was at least sympathetic towards the planned rebellion. Certainly the treatment meted out to him in Nyasaland might well have predisposed him in favour of it.

The most direct link, however, is that a number of Kamwanaists played an active role in the rising. Acquaintance with Kamwana and his teaching was for many a crucial part of their political education; even such a sophisticated man as Charles Domingo - who was suspected of some role in the rebellion but never implicated - experienced the influence of Watch Tower, at the time of the mass conversion in the West Nyasa district. Alexander Makwinja, too, who was influenced both by Booth and by Kamwana, joined Chilembwe's conspiracy, and was sentenced to nine years' imprisonment for treason. Filipo Chinyama, the S.D.B. pastor at Ncheu, and the leader of the

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[1] C.O. 525/68, Confidential despatch of 26 Aug. 1916; also cf. R.I. Rotberg, The Rise of Nationalism in Central Africa (Harvard, 1966), p. 69, n.34, where Mwenda's allegations of Kamwana's direct complicity are recounted.

supplementary Ngoni rising, reported to the S.D.B.'s European representative, Walter Cockerill, that 'three natives of the Watch Tower faction had been captured by the resident Magistrate'; these may well have been Wilson Daniel Kusita, Jordan Njirafaya, and David Shirt Chikakuka.[1] Kusita's Watch Tower allegiance may be assumed from a list of those on a wanted list at the time: 'Wilson Daniel Kusita. A Ngoni. Resided formerly at Chilembwe's, lately Watch Tower preacher in Upper Shire district'.[2] It was subsequently reported that Kusita had been executed and that 'the other Watch Tower adherents, Njirafaya and Chikakuka were convicted', although 'the members of the movement in the West Nyasa district remained absolutely quiet during the Rising'.[3] As we have seen earlier, Njirafaya did not consider himself to be a Watch Tower adherent;[4] however, the point is that the boundaries between the various movements and the interpenetration of Kamwanaist ideas with those of the other small, independent movements were such that in some quarters association with Kamwana's movement and participation in the rising do not seem to have been clearly distinguished.[5]

Thus from its role in precipitating local Tonga independency, the Watch Tower movement grew to contribute significantly

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[1] Shepperson and Price, Independent African, p. 338.

[2] Ibid., pp. 326, 469.

[3] R. Arch., S 138/226, 'The Watchtower Society'.

[4] Cf. above, p. 74.

[5] Cf. Jane and Ian Linden, 'John Chilembwe and the New Jerusalem', Journal of African History, XII, 1971, for further evidence on the connexion between the Watch Tower movement and the Chilembwe rising, based on material in the National Archives, Zomba.

to the emergence of a wider anti-colonial consciousness in the Protectorate. The Chilembwe rising was a watershed, however. If in the first pre-war decade Kamwana had significantly shaped the attitudes of a generation of modern-minded Nyasalanders, the language of religious independency and millennial enthusiasm played an increasingly smaller part in the political vocabularly of Nyasaland Africans after 1918. Indeed, the connexion of the Watch Tower movement with the Chilembwe rising drastically affected its future development in Nyasaland. Not only were the key leader and his immediate following exiled to the Seychelles islands, but a number of other important figures were jailed or executed, and, together with many of the other smaller missions operating in the Protectorate, the Kamwana Society Church was once again banned.[1] Potential recruits were doubtless deterred by the repression, and active participants apparently found it wisest to operate in extreme secrecy, with a consequent lack of opportunity for proselytisation, or to emigrate to neighbouring territories. Sir George Smith, then Governor of Nyasaland, noted in 1916 - two years after the rising - 'that although at present innoxious, I am still anxious to see [the Watch Tower movement] suppressed', and to this end sought further assistance from the Scottish missions.[2]

Also, much of the rage and alarm of European settlers following the rising was directed - in the absence of Joseph

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[1] C.O. 525/69, Confidential despatch, Smith to Sec. State Col., 27 Nov. 1916.

[2] Ibid.

Booth - against what remained of Kamwana's movement. It was during this period, in the climate of political anxiety created by the first World War, that the Watch Tower movement came to be associated in the settler mind with Ethiopianism, by which term was understood a mood of rebelliousness and active seeking after political independence by Africans that was thinly disguised under the search for religious autonomy.[1] Ethiopianism did of course mean in one sense of the word the phenomenon of religious separatism amongst Africans, and was discussed as such by missionaries and others, particularly with reference to the African Methodist Episcopal Church.[2] But from the end of the nineteenth century, as Léenhardt noted, the term implied that African social and religious movements aimed ultimately at attaining political ends,[3] and the term came to refer more to settler ideology and stereotypes than to African reality. Particularly in the 1920's and 1930's, the terms 'Ethiopianism' and 'Watch Tower' were used virtually interchangeably, particularly in fiction, implying that the Watch Tower movement was a political rebellion.[4] This usage was

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[1] Cf. G. Shepperson, 'Ethiopianism: Past and Present', in C.G.Baëta, (ed.), Christianity in Tropical Africa (1968).

[2] Cf. e.g. James Wells, The Life of James Stewart (4th edn., 1909), pp. 287-299.

[3] M. Léenhardt, 'Le Mouvement Ethiopien au Sud de l'Afrique, de 1896 à 1899', Cahors, 1902.

[4] Daniel Thwaite, The Seething African Pot. A Study of Black Nationalism 1882-1935 (1936), p. 35. G. Heaton Nicholls, Bayete! (1923), chaps. IV-V, does not actually mention the Watch Tower, but reflects some of the attitudes of the day. Cf. for a counterpart to Nicholls, Oskar Karstedt, Probleme Afrikänischer Eingeborenen-Politik (Verlag E.S. Mittler und Sohn, Berlin 1942), pp. 95-96, and Karstedt and Peter von Werder, 'Die Afrikänischer Arbeiterfrage', Afrika (Berlin), XVIII, 1941, pp. 149-151, where the Watch Tower movement is perceived as part of a Communist conspiracy.

indeed adopted by proponents of African nationalism and critics of colonialism varying from the South African Communist Party to Jomo Kenyatta.[1] The significance of the Watch Tower movement for the development of African nationalism is of course an important and complex question, which is discussed below.[2] What should be noted here, however, is that the interpretation of the Watch Tower movement which came to be a commonplace in settler society in central and southern Africa stemmed from the belief that the Watch Tower was a major current in the rising tide of Ethiopianism, and that this was exemplified by Chilembwe's revolt. This attitude had important consequences for the later development of the movement.

In the aftermath of the rising, it was also realised by Sir George Smith that an important reason why the Watch Tower was attractive to many of those who lived on the fringes of missionized areas was that it offered abundant cheap literature, and some sort of education. Expenditure on African education in Nyasaland at this time was 2d per head per annum, as compared with between 10 and 15 shillings per head in most other British colonies. While the Watch Tower movement and various other small missions, together with their preachers and teachers, were suppressed, there was nevertheless a realisation that some of the pressure which led to Ethiopianism and the Watch Tower came from the desire for education and literacy.[3]

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[1] Jomo Kenyatta, Facing Mount Kenya (1938), p. 269; Umsebenzi (Johannesburg), Oct. 1932.

[2] Cf. below, pp. 442-445.

[3] C.O. 525/71, Report on the Recent Native Rising, June 1916, and encls.

African teachers with a smattering of literacy and unlicensed preachers also came to be part of the stereotyped image of the Watch Tower follower as a rebel amongst settlers at this time.[1] Consequently the Watch Tower movement generally came to be regarded in south central Africa in the post-Chilembwe period as the natural home of subversive elements.

Until the 1920's, then, there seems to have been little open Watch Tower preaching in Nyasaland after 1915. The only area where some activity was noted was the Chinteche district, where the Livingstonia missionaries were keeping a sharp eye open for any possible recrudescence.[2] Gradually, however, W.T.B.T.S. tracts started to filter through from the south; the small groups began once more to coalesce around local leaders; and when in 1920 some dozen churches with around 4,000 members in West Nyasa and the southern highlands were noted, a further stage of the Watch Tower movement in Nyasaland was under way. Activity at first was clandestine:

> Owing to the fact that the Government looked with suspicion on the Watch Tower, the members held their meetings in secret and under cover of darkness. This resulted in wild rumours, mysterious gatherings and infamous practices on the part of its members.[3]

Fearing that these activities might 'unsettle native thought', the Governor instituted a reorganisation of the Nyasaland police force, which through the operation of informers and

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[1] Cp. M. Kittermaster, Katakala: A Portrait of an African District (1957), pp. 92-97; L. Debertry, Kitawala (Editions Essor du Congo, Elizabethville, 1953) provides an interesting fictional account of the Watch Tower movement as a rebellious conspiracy.

[2] Report of the Livingstonia Mission....for the Year 1918, passim.

[3] C.O. 525/101, Smith to Sec. State Col., 25 Mar. 1922.

police spies was however able to report that the Watch Tower's activities were 'purely religious'.[1] Consequently in 1922 Sir George Smith decided, 'not without hesitation' and probably under pressure from the Colonial Office, that the movement should be placed under surveillance, rather than banned and driven underground once again, and that previously jailed and detained members of the smaller independent churches should be released - with the exception of those on the Seychelles. Various other independent movements were appearing in Nyasaland at this time, and the administration also feared that 'Nyasaland is an area within the purview of the operation of the American movement known as The Universal Negro Improvement Association controlled by Marcus Garvey'.[2] New methods to supervise the second generation of independent-minded Nyasalanders and to nip movements similar to Kamwana's and Chilembwe's in the bud were required.

Accordingly, African controlled churches were afforded recognition - a term which implied tolerance rather than the provision of facilities of any kind - provided that they conformed with a set of stringent conditions. These were that quarterly returns of new and departing members should be submitted; that no members should have any dealings with the Churches of Christ or the followers of John Chilembwe; that no school be started without previous consent; that no meetings be held between sunset and sunrise; and that there should be no interference with the adherents of other missions.[3] While

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[1] C.O. 525/101, Smith to Sec. State Col., 5 June 1922.

[2] Ibid.

[3] Ibid.

this new spirit of tolerance in the interests of closer control may have pleased the Colonial Office, it gave rise to a sudden wave of alarm amongst Europeans and Indians in the agricultural districts of the southern highlands. 'Popular anxiety as to the intentions of the sect suddenly became so acute', Smith confided to his opposite number in Northern Rhodesia, 'that Police and Military Patrols were sent out, and the Watchtower leaders called in and warned'.[1] There appears to have been little ground for these fears of a second rising, however. The small Watch Tower groups were in largely remote parts of the country, no attempts at mass conversion were being undertaken, and the activity consisted chiefly of Bible study and hymn-singing. Indeed, the new policy of recognition was later hailed as a success in that the membership and appeal of the movement appeared to have fallen away.[2] How significant the imposition of these regulations was in restraining the Watch Tower in Nyasaland is, however, dubious. It is unlikely that the territory could have been effectively policed against the emergence of a mass movement in which millennial belief and local grievances were conjoined. The regulations were indeed in later years continually transgressed. Rather was it the case that the focus of African Watch Tower activity had moved by this stage into the neighbouring Rhodesias, where the majority of the Kamwanaist leaders were in employment. Nevertheless, during

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[1] Z. Arch., ZA 1/10/1, Smith to Stanley, 16 April 1924.

[2] Z. Arch. SEC/NAT/312, Bowring to Sec. State Col., 29 Nov. 1935.

the 1920's, the fears of the administration which had given rise to Sir George Smith's order tolerating the Watch Tower movement remained unallayed. Indeed in 1925 a Preachers and Teachers Ordinance along the lines of Northern Rhodesia's Proclamation No. 8 of 1921 - which gave the company administration there considerable punitive powers over 'uncontrolled native preaching'[1] - was mooted, with which it was hoped to stifle the radical critique of the colonial order which was a constant theme of independent African preaching. However, the administration was restrained from placing this bill on the statute book through their concern not to alarm the Islamized population of Nyasaland, which, despite the constant vilifications of the missionaries, was viewed as a welcome source of stability, owing to the apparent immunity of the Islamized sections to Ethiopian ideas.[2]

Nevertheless, following further Watch Tower activity at Dowa in 1927 under the leadership of one Peter Chiponda, District Commissioners were instructed to obtain full details of any native-controlled missions or churches in their areas. Between 1927 and 1932, however, Watch Tower activity appears to have been minimal; and it was as much the dislike of various district officials for local Watch Tower leaders as the latter's failure to comply with local regulations which later led to a series of prosecutions. In 1932 Watch Tower members in the Ncheu, Dowa, Central Shire, Blantyre and Chiradzulu districts were arrested on the grounds of failing

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[1] Cf. below, p. 219.

[2] C.O. 525/111, Confidential despatch of 11 Feb. 1925.

to supply full lists of their adherents; and in Mzimba, Isaac Nyasulu was charged for refusing to allow anti-tsetse measures to be taken against his cattle. These convictions were overturned, however, on the grounds that the orders were ultra vires; indeed, little more than technical non-compliance seems to have been involved.[1] It appears likely that the rejection by Watch Tower members of tribal customs and mores, with a consequent disregard of traditional greetings for European officials and an adoption of European dress, had led to some animus on the part of district officials.[2] While these prosecutions reveal something of the assimilatory patterns of behaviour in some Watch Tower groups, a study of the entanglement of Peter Chiponda with the administration suggests that conflict was in particular occurring at the local level, rather than between African and European.

Peter Chiponda was a Watch Tower leader of a small community in the Dowa district who first came to the attention of the administration through his refusal to comply with the 1922 regulations, with the consequence that his church was closed for three months from August, 1924. However his arrest and deportation to Fort Johnston in 1925 arose not so much out of his flouting of the regulations but as a result of the threat which he posed to the prestige and status of headman Ndarama, in whose village he lived. Chiponda had initially recruited a following of some 130 adherents from headman Nyando's village; Nyando's had as a consequence

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[1] Z. Arch., SEC/NAT/312, Bowring to Sec. State Col., 29 Nov. 1934.

[2] Cp. Hooker, 'Witnesses and Watchtower in the Rhodesia's and Nyasaland', Journal of African History, VI, 1, 1965, p. 94.

fissured, with Chiponda and the Watch Tower moving to neighbouring Ndarama's. Nyando's village was distinguished from the surrounding hamlets in that a Dutch Reformed Church (D.R.C.) mission station was located there, and he welcomed the departure of a section of his village since, as he said, 'before they lived apart, the people used to quarrel'. Ndarama tolerated Chiponda until a D.R.C. catechist - who had been suspended for taking a second wife - was baptised into the Watch Tower. This action led Ndarama to fear that reprisals resulting in divisions would be taken against his village by the D.R.C., and that non-Watch Tower villagers might leave, thus lessening his status as a headman. Consequently he forbade further Watch Tower meetings in the village. Chiponda responded by increasing the number of meetings such that his following came to be 'either ridiculed or detested by the majority of the inhabitants'; at this stage he was reported by Ndarama to the District Commissioner, who effected his arrest and deportation.[1]

It appears then that as for the early period of Tonga Watch Tower belief, but on a much reduced scale, it was the interaction between the local level of village politics and the broader forces of social change which led to the emergence of Watch Tower activities. A noticeable feature of the period indeed is an apparent conjunction of conditions of socio-economic crisis with renewed enthusiasm for the movement and an intensification of the millennial aspects of the belief.

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[1] C.O. 525/111, Confidential despatch to 22 June 1925.

In 1925, for instance, which was a year of privation owing to the failure of the rains, Livingstonia missionaries recorded the existence of much Watch Tower activity and noted rumours that Europeans were about to leave the country.[1]

Similarly, it was noted in 1927 that

> At the lake shore and particularly at certain villages the state of morality at the beginning of the year, and for some months on, was very low; and there were many who joined the Watch Tower movement, and others became members of the Church of the Polygamists [?].[2]

Again, the wave of arrests in 1932 occurred at a time when the effects of the depression were filtering through to the Nyasaland countryside, as remittances from labour migrants dropped and numbers of traders and settlers pulled up their stakes. However, it should be noted that at no stage did the local Watch Tower in Nyasaland revive as a mass movement, and that its following in this period was drawn particularly from the remote and impoverished areas which may be said to have been more or less in a constant state of socio-economic crisis under the impact of colonialism. Secondly, it was as much the rise in the level of rumours - in itself, of course, not without significance - as open Watch Tower preaching which led the administration to take action against the movement, largely on the grounds of technical offences. The picture, then for the 1920's and early 1930's in Nyasaland - fragmentary as it is - is of the subdued maintenance of fitful activity by Watch Tower leaders in relatively remote parts of the country, apparently on the group level or at most on a village

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[1] The United Free Church of Scotland Report on Foreign Missions for 1925 (Edinburgh, 1926), p. 17.

[2] The United Free Church of Scotland Report on Foreign Missions for 1927 (Edinburgh, 1928), p. 87.

basis.[1]

Colonial officials were later to argue on the basis of this fading of the Watch Tower movement in Nyasaland for policies of tolerance in other territories.[2] However great were the other factors involved in this, certainly legislation did make it possible for the reorganised W.T.B.T.S. to establish its control in 1935-6 more effectively than it was able to do in the Rhodesias. Indeed, one might say that with the return of Kamwana to Nyasaland in 1937 the Watch Tower ceased to act as a movement, and the sense of continuity and unity which its main leaders felt finally vanished with the return in person of the man in whose name much of the preaching had previously been done. With Kamwana's founding of a new movement, the Watchman Healing Mission, the Kamwana Society Church thus disappeared in Nyasaland.

4. The Watch Tower Bible and Tract Society

In order to understand the background to Kamwana's career, and the further development of the Kamwanaist movement in Nyasaland, some attention should also be paid to the W.T.B.T.S. in South Africa under Joseph Booth and his successors. The ambivalent relationship between the Society and its independent African offshoots came to be a constant feature of the Watch Tower in Africa; more particularly, the waxing and waning of Booth's interest in Russell's doctrines greatly complicated the movement of African religious independency in

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[1] Material in the National Archives of Malawi, Zomba, which has not been accessible to the author, should throw considerably more light on this period.

[2] Z. Arch., SEC/NAT/312, Young to Sec. State Col., 20 June 1935.

northern Nyasaland, since further emissaries followed on Kamwana's heels, some of whom were Russellites, some Seventh Day Baptists, and some of whom declared simply that they were followers of Elliott Kamwana.

The early interest of Charles Russell and the American W.T.B.T.S. in Africa soon changed its focus from the west coast to the area of major settler penetration, South Africa, where in all probability there were already a handful of Russellites prior to Booth's arrival. Immigration to the Union from Scotland - where the Society's membership was not inconsiderable - was substantial in the period after the South African War; and the list of 40 subscribers to the Zion's Watch Tower magazine from Africa noted in February, 1907, may well have reflected as much a South African as a Liberian interest.[1] Certainly the mining boom and the beginnings of the 'poor white' problem among landless Afrikaners - who, together with coloured, subsequently formed a large proportion of South Africa's Jehovah's Witnesses - had created conditions of rapid industrialization, which led to the formation of new communities of urban immigrants in Cape Town, Durban and on the Rand comparable in some measure to the American home of Watch Tower ideas.

Initially, however, the teaching of the W.T.B.T.S. was particularly directed under the leadership of Joseph Booth at the non-white proletariat, and, according to Booth's own highly coloured accounts, this met with immediate success:

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[1] Zion's Watch Tower and Herald of Christ's Presence (Alleghany, Pennsylvania), XXVII, February 1907. This periodical will henceforth be cited as Zion's Watch Tower.

> On a trip to the Rand - on my first Sunday here [Pretoria] - I entered one of the large native compounds and began singing in several of the native languages successively. The dwellers responded as by an electric shock, and gave close and joyful attention....[1]

But Booth's eyes were still turned predominantly towards the African hinterland - the High Commission territories, the Rhodesias, and Nyasaland. And through recruiting a number of his Nyasaland acquaintances for training in Studies in the Scriptures, Booth succeeded in making Nyasaland the focal point of Watch Tower preaching. Elliott Kamwana was not the only man to learn Charles Russell's theories of the coming millennial dawn at the hands of Joseph Booth. In March, 1909, Booth reported that there were 'three white brethren' in Cape Town (himself, a man named Brink, and possibly one Henry Ancketill) and that 'three black brethren' had been trained.[2] These were probably Kamwana, Gilbert Chihayi and Hanson Tandu,[3] while 'another has just started for [Nyasaland] on foot, a journey of about a month ... with him go six or eight other young black Christians'.[4] This was possibly William Mwenda, who was destined to end up in exile on South Mahe with Kamwana.

By the time of Kamwana's arrest, however, Booth's interest in the W.T.B.T.S. had passed, and increasingly his concern to promote African interests led him in a secular direction. While he had succeeded in launching Russell's

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[1] Zion's Watch Tower, XXX, July 1909.

[2] Ibid., Mar. 1909.

[3] The Sabbath Recorder, 1912, p. 719.

[4] Zion's Watch Tower, XXX, Mar. 1909.

teachings in southern Africa, albeit in his own idiosyncratic way, Booth left much confusion in his wake. In Nyasaland, where he had devoted his major effort, all initiatives associated with his name were immediately subject to hostility and suspicion. Also, it was unclear whether Kamwana's successors had been instructed by him as Russellites or as Sabbatarians, and which particular sectarian guise he was adopting in his constant correspondence with his African associates in the north. The particularities of doctrine and sect to which such importance was attached in the mission environment was increasingly of little consequence for Booth, who by now had developed a continental scheme for African evangelisation, and was leaning towards such directly political organisations as the nascent South African Native National Congress, and his own proposed British African Congress.[1]

That there had been a mass response to Watch Tower ideas in Nyasaland led Charles Russell to explore the possibilities there further, despite Booth's defection. Enthused with a picture of a continent 'ripe for harvest', Russell sent one Brother Brink - an ardent and penniless associate of Booth's in Cape Town, possibly an Afrikaner - to investigate; cabled protests on Kamwana's behalf to the British government; and sent a request to the American consul in Cape Town to use his good offices, plus 500 dollars.[2] Brink's efforts on behalf of the W.T.B.T.S. came, however, to a swift end. Brink arrived at Nkhata Bay in November, 1909, suffering from heatstroke

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[1] Cf. R. Arch., S 138/226, The British African Congress: The Preamble, 4 July 1915.

[2] Zion's Watch Tower, XXX, July 1909.

and malaria, having travelled a considerable distance overland, and died the day after his arrival.[1]

The next official representative of the W.T.B.T.S. in central and southern Africa, William W. Johnston, was a man far less sympathetic to the cause of African independence than Booth or Brink, but who possessed a streak of practicality and savoir faire which enabled him to tour extensively in Nyasaland despite the hostility of missionaries, administrators and the environment. His was an important influence on the decision of the Society to withdraw from direct involvement in the subsequent ramifications of the Watch Tower movement in central Africa, and indeed it was not until the early 1920's after his departure from South Africa for Australia that official interest was again reawakened. Johnston, a joiner by trade from Glasgow where he had been a presiding minister over a Russellite congregation,[2] undertook a four-month tour of the Protectorate late in 1910, and spoke with most of the small groups calling themselves Watch Tower - although he only spent some 10 days at the lakeshore.[3] According to his report to Russell, Johnston was received with great acclaim, and he spoke tellingly of the impact of the movement on the Livingstonia mission, particularly within a 30 mile radius of Bandawe, being especially impressed by the 100 foot by 30 foot church and its 600 strong congregation at Chifira. However, he was less impressed by the demands put to him by Kamwana's successors:

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[1] Zion's Watch Tower, XXX, July 1909; also C.O. 525/29, Despatch on 'The Ethiopian Movement', 30 Oct. 1909; further on Brink, cf. Greschat, Kitawala, p. 35.

[2] Personal communication from the W.T.B.T.S., Brooklyn, New York, 12 Nov. 1968.

[3] The Sabbath Recorder, 1912, p. 719.

> The leading brethren and I did not quite see eye to eye on financial arrangements. They were disappointed when I assured them that the Society could not lend its support in any way to educational work, providing school books and teachers for instruction of the young in the English language and native dialects.[1]

Johnston noted the repeated requests for money, the spirit of bargaining, and demands for his signature on labour certificates (saleable to those who had not worked off their hut tax), and concluded that 'natives are as children, naturally indolent'.[2] Consequently Johnston advised that the Society's interests should be limited to those exceptional individuals who could 'appreciate spiritual things', by which he seems to have meant those Nyasas whom he encountered in his work in South Africa. Johnston did, however, make a recommendation of signal importance, which was that Tonga translations of Russellite literature should be prepared. Indeed, the absence of a vernacular literature, Johnston was to write some years later, was the major problem facing the Society north of the Zambezi.[3]

After Johnston had quit the lakeshore - to the jeers of Kamwana's followers - the Nyasaland Watch Tower movement was left to develop of its own accord until 1925. Individual followers continued to write directly to Brooklyn ('surely we are living in the time of the end...', wrote one H. Simon Achirwa to Russell in 1914[4]), and occasional migrants in

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[1] Zion's Watch Tower, XXXII, Jan. 1911.

[2] Ibid.

[3] William W. Johnston, 'A Message from Africa', in Watch Tower Bible and Tract Society Convention Reports: Fifteenth Souvenir Report (Brooklyn, New York), 1915.

[4] Zion's Watch Tower, XXXV, Sept. 1914.

contact with the W.T.B.T.S. in other centres brought back some word of the Society, no doubt with copies of the Society's tracts.

But Johnston, based at 18 Yorkshire Chambers in Durban - and still the official representative for central Africa - found his sympathies engaged more with 'rescuing Boers from the hell-fire and torment of the Dutch Reformed Church ... and from the modern Babylon of the gold-rush city' than with African adherents.[1] It is true that Johnston organised under strict discipline something of an African following amongst the Zulu at Ndwedwe, Natal, among the Sotho in the Johannesburg Bank Location, and the Xhosa in East London, but his main organisational endeavour was directed towards the white populace.[2] In 1914 he organised the first South African convention of the International Bible Students Association (the name under which the W.T.B.T.S. had been incorporated in England), attended by 34 people, where no mention was made of the witness in Nyasaland; and in 1915 he reported that 'the disturbed state of affairs beyond the Zambezi, due to the war, will I fear make reports from Central Africa impossible.'[3]

This may have been a judicious move on Johnston's part, since the Chilembwe rising from January 23rd to February 3rd of that year was commonly attributed to the Watch Tower, no distinction being made between the official and the Kamwanaist

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[1] Zion's Watch Tower, XXXII, Dec. 1911.

[2] Ibid., XXXVII, Mar. 1916, and XXXIX, Jan. 1918.

[3] Ibid., XXXVI, July 1915.

movements.[1] And his report in 1916 that 'the brethren in Nyasaland were living in that state of detachment and patient waiting upon God which is the attitude of all the Lord's people at the present time' leaves one little wiser on the repression then being meted out to the African Watch Tower, and the hanging of three of its alleged members for complicity in the rising. It was at the end of the second decade of the century, of course, that the W.T.B.T.S. in America was experiencing its own internal upheavals and a succession crisis which certainly hindered the enthusiasm of its representatives abroad.[2] With Johnston's departure for Australia in 1918, the Society's interest in Africa lapsed.

The interest of the W.T.B.T.S. in Nyasaland was probably reawakened in the mid 1920's by the realisation that there was in Rhodesia an active community of emigrant Nyasa Watch Tower followers. The official history states that by 1924 reports were reaching the Cape Town office of indigenous movements in Nyasaland and the Rhodesias which prompted an investigation.[3] The Watch Tower movement had, however, become something of a cause célèbre in colonial circles by this stage, after the Chilembwe revolt and the disturbance at Abercorn and Fife in Northern Rhodesia in 1918-1919.[4] Under the new impetus of Judge Rutherford's leadership, the local officials

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[1] See n. 1 on p. 76 above.

[2] Cf. A. Rogerson, Millions Now Living Will Never Die. A Study of Jehovah's Witnesses (1969), pp. 42-45.

[3] The Watch Tower Story (Brooklyn, New York), 1948.

[4] Cf. below, pp. 194-200.

of the Society probably felt that some action was necessary to counteract their reputation in central Africa as a movement which promoted African revolt. The first moves to re-establish contact were made by Thomas A. Walder, who became the official representative in Cape Town in 1924. Walder's attitudes do not seem to have differed significantly from Johnston's, and he was soon to establish reasonably cordial relationships with the Secretaries for Native Affairs in the Rhodesias and Nyasaland, even receiving something of a commendation from Northern Rhodesia's E.H. Jalland on a visit to Livingstone in 1926.[1] It was under Walder's incumbency that Johnston's proposal to make vernacular translations of W.T.B.T.S. pamphlets came to be put into effect. If Africans were unripe for full membership, so the reckoning seemed to go, at least they should not be denied the opportunity to learn the real truth of God's word, as expounded in the booklets flowing at this stage from Rutherford's fluent pen - in particular The Harp of God, sub-titled Proof Conclusive that Millions Now Living Will Never Die.[2] In 1924, Walder visited Rhodesia to inspect what styled itself the Watch Tower movement there, and reacted even more sharply than had Johnston in Nyasaland to the unorthodoxy of the movement.[3] He gave an undertaking that the Society would withdraw from the territory. Walder however was no doubt struck by the predominantly Tonga origins of the groups in Rhodesia, and

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[1] Cf. below, p. 265.

[2] Brooklyn, New York, 1921.

[3] Cf. below, pp. 133, 224.

in May, 1925, Mr and Mrs. H.J. Hudson were sent to Nyasaland to inspect the activities of the Watch Tower following there.

It should be made clear that neither the administration, which encouraged this visit in the hope that recognition would enable some control to be established, nor the W.T.B.T.S. appreciated the subtle relationship which existed between the Society and the African groups which gathered in its name. To irate district officers, there was no difference at all; to the Cape Town branch manager, a central African membership was officially denied but privately believed in, and certainly sought after; to the African prophet-leaders of Watch Tower groups, money, literature, and what support and protection the Society could offer against the colonial administration were welcome, but official leadership and control of the doctrine were rejected. The rise and fall of various leaders, fissures within the groups, and the multifarious activities of different sections of the Watch Tower were never clearly understood by those very closely concerned parties, the colonial police and the W.T.B.T.S. officials. Increasingly, however, the policy of the W.T.B.T.S. towards its African offshoots came to be one of disclaiming responsibility for subversive acts committed in its name, while nevertheless maintaining the supply of literature, even when this was officially banned. They also displayed a growing readiness to protest on behalf of Africans prosecuted on some charge arising out of membership of the Watch Tower, even though they might in the same breath deny any connexion with the accused. Certainly H.J. Hudson appears to have had very

little understanding of how to approach the movement in Nyasaland. 'The results of the visit were so disappointing', noted Sir Charles Bowring, then Governor of Nyasaland, 'that he was recalled after 15 months'.[1]

One consequence of the failure of European representatives of the Society from Joseph Booth onwards to maintain a presence or establish any influence over the African movement was that in 1926 the first African representative was appointed in Nyasaland. This was Richard Kalinde, of Zomba, a very different man from Elliott Kamwana, who was cast in the mould of the well-groomed, earnest and respectable Africans along the line of rail who would later prove to be the backbone of Jehovah's Witnesses in Africa. Kalinde came to prominence through his membership of a Southern Rhodesian group, where he had demonstrated his organisational talents by preparing membership lists and remitting information to Cape Town.[2] To Kalinde fell the important task of translating into Nyanja - the lingua franca of the mines - the millennial literature of the Society. However in Nyasaland Kalinde was as unsuccessful in enjoining orthodoxy on the Kamwanaist church as were Johnston and the Hudsons. 'During the few years he was in charge', reported Bowring, 'his converts amounted to only a few dozen.'[3]

In 1933, Johannes de Jager visited Nyasaland as part of a general tour of central Africa, after a decision had been

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[1] R. Arch., S 138/226, Bowring to Chancellor, 2 Feb. 1927.

[2] Cf. below, pp.132-133.

[3] Z. Arch., SEC/NAT/312, Bowring to Sec. State Col., 25 Nov. 1935.

taken in 1931 to set the work in Africa on a more regular footing.[1] As a result of the tour, one R.A. McLuckie was appointed in April, 1934, and established his headquarters in Zomba with Kalinde as his right-hand man. The heritage of two decades of uncontrolled Watch Tower activity by Africans in Nyasaland fell to McLuckie, as it was his task to separate out the bona fide Jehovah's Witnesses from the unrepentantly independent members. McLuckie, with the backing of the administration, set about the business of separating the sheep from the goats with great despatch, according to Hoole's report. Travelling through the country, he purged the indigenous movement of some 90 per cent of its following. In the Karonga district, for example, where the local pastor John Matawale claimed a following of 783 members, he and all but 10 of his flock were rejected. The new term Jehovah's Witnesses was used to distinguish those of whom the Society approved - and to whom it was prepared to send its literature - from the old Kamwanaist members.[2] McLuckie also re-established the Society's links with Elliott Kamwana in the Seychelles by correspondence, and was allowed to supply him with W.T.B.T.S. literature.[3] Kamwana, however, upon his release in 1937 rejected the overtures of the Society and returned to the Chinteche district, stating that 'the books of the Society were good, but the Europeans were bad' - which perhaps reflected the consensus of African opinion towards

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[1] Cf. 1932 Yearbook of Jehovah's Witnesses (W.T.B.T.S., 1931), passim.

[2] Hoole, ms. cit., 'The Watch Tower Church'.

[3] Z. Arch., SEC/NAT/313, Governor, Seychelles to Young, 10 Mar. 1935. Also cf. below, p. 359.

the Society.[1] Nevertheless, McLuckie's activities helped to reduce the following of the independent movement to the hardcore of Kamwanaists in the west Nyasa district, and paved the way for the reorganisation and tightly exercised discipline of the Jehovah's Witnesses over an African following, which eventually placed its Nyasaland membership on a comparable footing with communities in other parts of the world.

The resurgence of the influence of the W.T.B.T.S. waned somewhat with the return of Kamwana, and with the departure of R.A. McLuckie, who was succeeded by his brother W.L. McLuckie in 1935. The latter reportedly 'had no transport and therefore spent most of his time in Zomba, leaving the field organisation to his African leaders'.[2] W.L. McLuckie again was replaced in 1938 by another Zomba man, one Alston Kumichongwe, but with the onset of the War, Nyasaland - in concert with South Africa, Rhodesia, and other British territories - reimposed its ban on the Society on account of its pacifist stand. By the time this was lifted, the changed conditions of the post-war world had carried out a new purge of the indigenous movement, such that Jehovah's Witnesses, though still occasionally troubled by the lure of independent action, came to dominate the scene.

Subsequent to Joseph Booth, then, whose personal involvement in Nyasaland affairs was such an important factor in the spread of the Watch Tower movement there, it is remarkable that the main contribution of the official sect was its willingness to supply tracts and Bibles. Richard Kalinde's translations

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[1] Hoole, 'The Watch Tower Church'.

[2] *Ibid*.

into the vernacular of the Society's publications were, as Johnston had predicted, a most important element in popularising the ideas of the W.T.B.T.S. These ideas were interpreted in a local manner, however, and local leaders sought above all for autonomy. Indeed, an important aspect of their appeal was that they should appear as independent men, voicing an all-embracing interpretation of events which depended for its legitimacy and effectiveness not on the authority of Booth or the missionaries or of the new evangelists of the W.T.B.T.S., but on the claim that the prophet was the mediator of a message directly from God to the African people. The lack of success of the W.T.B.T.S. in the period 1909-1945 in controlling the path of development of Watch Tower ideas was also not surprising considering the broadly unsympathetic nature of most of its representatives towards African aspirations in the colonial setting, and the brief periods which were spent actually in the field by them.

5. Conclusion

In Nyasaland it was only amongst the lakeside Tonga that the Watch Tower doctrines of Elliott Kamwana attracted mass support. Their experience of Christian missionaries was obviously an important factor stimulating the adoption of millennial thinking, but it has been argued that the social and political structure of the Tonga also predisposed them to respond to such doctrines. On the one hand, the Livingstonia missionaries introduced a gospel of redemption which served as a basis for a more radical salvationist creed, and introduced

the Tonga to literacy, vocational skills and broader social horizons; on the other, the division of the Tonga into semi-autonomous communities governed the manner in which new ideas were adopted. As has been seen, the basic unit for conversion into the Watch Tower movement amongst the Tonga, much as for the Livingstonia mission, was the village, with the exception that the Watch Tower was open to all, including children. The rite of initiation was baptism by immersion which was a mass ceremony; and the conversion of village notables in itself conferred the notion of belonging to the Watch Tower to the whole community. Where there were non-participants in the village, there was a tendency for the community to split up. In addition, the political and social boundaries between the villages were an important element in the appeal of millennial ideas. Where a chief or headman felt a lack of material and spiritual advantages relative to his neighbour, he might well be inclined to welcome a movement which promised these in abundance.

This pattern of conversion appears to have taken place on the lakeshore in 1908-9. The bulk of the first converts came from an area within a 30 mile radius of the Bandawe mission station, and very few of those who were 'in good standing' with the mission - at least according to missionary reports[1] - were attracted by the movement. Thus it may be argued that the Watch Tower took root as a millennial mass movement primarily amongst those suspended by the missionaries

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[1] The Sabbath Recorder, 1912, p. 719.

for one reason or another - or living on the fringe of the mission areas - who were in a position to compare their status with those in the villages where the U.F.C. had established its presence. For comparative purposes, this feature of the response of the Tonga to the Watch Tower movement is particularly interesting, as it throws light on the relationship between missionaries and their parishes at times of Watch Tower activity which will be frequently discussed in the spread of this movement across central Africa.

The role of Kamwana, the prophet, was crucial in ensuring that the movement provided positive benefits beyond a temporary solution to feelings of relative deprivation and insecurity. His authority was such that he was able to cut across the traditional interplay between chief, headman, and villagers, create new communities of Watch Tower followers, and commence the organisation of the Kamwana Society Church. He offered himself not as a messenger from Joseph Booth, but as a mediator from a supreme saviour who heralded an era of social harmony, material abundance, and freedom from white rule. This idea of an African millennium and the vision of the departure of the white man counteracted the preaching of the Livingstonia missionaries that closeness to God was implied by closeness to European civilisation, and it also inculcated a sense of independence in his following.

As has been argued, Kamwana's followers covered a fairly wide spectrum. Like Kamwana himself, however, the secondary leadership which continued the movement in his absence may perhaps be considered as the beginnings of a new, radical

African intelligentsia in Nyasaland. The important leaders were men like Domingo, Tandu, Chihayi, Makwinja and Msumba, who, deriving many of their ideas from the doctrines of the U.F.C., Elliott Kamwana and Joseph Booth, were at this stage moving towards a new consciousness. Merely as an association free from both missionary control and the norms of traditional society, the Kamwana Society Church marked a step towards independency. There was to some extent an ideological concept of salvation for the chosen few in this, but perhaps more significantly the new consciousness also envisaged the solidarity of the black man against the white. From the fragments of Kamwana's preaching which have been reported, it would appear that this concept of the black man was not only supra-tribal within the Tonga context, but also pan-Africanist in that it posited the continental unity of Africans against the Europeans. For many, of course, the involvement with the Kamwana Society Church was a passing stage, but coming as it did on the eve of early nationalist politics amongst the Tonga, it was an ideological stage of some significance.

Kamwana's doctrines spread wider than the Tonga millennial movement in Nyasaland. Beyond the West Nyasa district, Watch Tower ideas influenced the commerce of new ideas and anti-colonial initiatives, although not as a mass movement. It was in the south, where European settlers were developing plantations, that Watch Tower ideas played their most overt political role. The assertion of a positive African identity, the language of biblical exegesis which depicted the white man as satanic enemy, and millennial ideas concerning the over-

throwing of his power, underlay the mood of all politically conscious Nyasas of the period. Just as in South Africa at an earlier period, political radicalism in Nyasaland was ecclesiastical in nature, and the Watch Tower movement was a central thread in African religious independency.

How important was the colonial administration in shaping the development of the Watch Tower movement in the Protectorate? The degree to which African millennial preaching was tolerated, repressed, or purportedly controlled varied considerably between settler governments in Africa, and with varying effect. Since the state was described in the literature of the W.T.B.T.S. as the major organ of Satan's rule on earth, and since the whites against whom Watch Tower preachers inveighed were effectively part of the colonial state, the relationship between the two is an important one. The Nyasaland administration, alerted by its experience with Joseph Booth, reacted immediately to Kamwana by deporting him and banning the movement. Their fears were apparently confirmed by the Chilembwe rising. It is possible, however, that although repression itself had the effect of on the one hand contributing towards the demise of the Kamwana Society Church in the north as a mass movement, on the other it helped to recommend the Watch Tower critique of colonial rule to other early nationalists as a convincing doctrine.

Despite the policy of outlawing the small African religious movements, it was apparent in the post-war years that the ideological currents of Garveyism, pan-Africanism, and black Christianity could not be stemmed by mere decree.

'Garveyism and Black Republic Progaganda', wrote the South African leader D.D.T. Jabavu in the same year as Sir George Smith announced his new policy of tolerance, 'because of its attractiveness has made a deep impression on our illiterate people, so that even from backwood hamlets rings the magic motto "Ama Melika ayeza" [the Americans are coming]'.[1] These comments hold true for Nyasaland in the mid-colonial period as well, where a precocious development of African consciousness took place as a result of the early entry of missions and the experience of labour migrants. The exiling of Kamwana and the prohibition of the importation of Watch Tower tracts nevertheless certainly reduced the audience and appeal of the movement, and obstructed its institutionalisation. Even so, the policy of surveillance was only successful, it may be argued, because the basis for mass social movements of the type which erupted in 1908-9 no longer existed in Nyasaland. Administrative recognition allowed small communities to continue whose leaders, such as Isaac Nyasulu, were to play key parts in communicating Watch Tower ideas to Rhodesian Africans: and the absence of police patrols and arrests perhaps reduced the attractiveness of Watch Tower arguments on the ungodliness of earthly rule. But the over-riding consideration is that the acquiescence of the Nyasaland administration in the stagnation of the Protectorate as a rural backwater and labour reservoir for neighbouring settler states[2] led to the emigration of many

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[1] D.D.T. Jabavu, 'Native Unrest in South Africa', The International Review of Missions, XI, 1922, p. 250.

[2] Cf. B.S. Krishnamurthy, 'Labour Migration in Malawi, 1909-1914', (Unpublished paper, University of Zambia, May 1969) on this argument (cited by permission of the author).

of Kamwana's key followers, and inhibited social change within the country. The crisis of urbanisation which lay at the root of the appeal of Russellism in America and in other parts of central Africa did not arise in Nyasaland.

The W.T.B.T.S. played a largely submerged role in the affairs of the Nyasa Watch Tower movement. After Booth, the South African-based Society could find little sympathy for the heterodox African groups, at least until after the reorganisation of the 1930's. The translation of key texts into Nyanja by Richard Kalinde helped to keep Watch Tower ideas circulating, but the main organisational effort was directed at the Rhodesias rather than to Nyasaland.

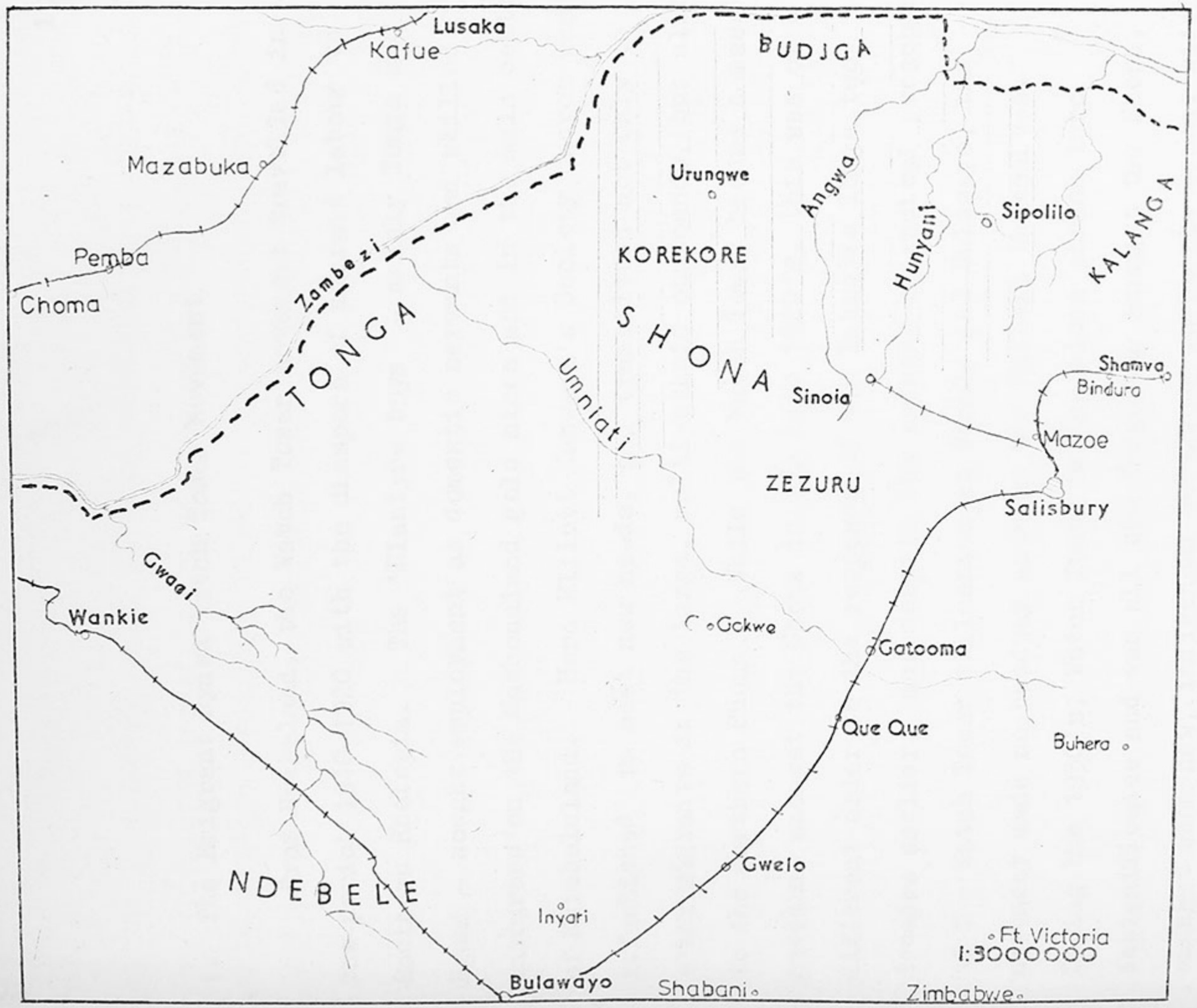
In conclusion, then, one may see the overall significance of the Watch Tower movement in Nyasaland perhaps more as a prelude to the development of these ideas in other parts of south central Africa than in terms of its own fairly minor role within the Protectorate. Watch Tower ideas provided the basis of a short-lived mass movement amongst the Tonga, and contributed to the ideas and language of the educated elite prior, say, to 1925, but the movement rapidly faded in importance after this. Despite the many connexions which linked Watch Tower members in Nyasaland to the urban centres in Northern and Southern Rhodesia and the Belgian Congo, the movement within Nyasaland was solely a rural phenomenon, and increasingly came to be isolated and distinct from the growing communities in other territories. The rapid development of the mainstream of political and nationalist activity in Nyasaland seems, indeed, to have ensured that the phase of millennial populism

was a brief and early one. Significant as Watch Tower ideas were in the decade 1910-1920 in Nyasaland, ultimately their importance lay more in the fact that, having been formed in response to local conditions, they served as the basis of a new movement amongst Nyasa labour migrants and through this came to be an important source of ideas for other African peoples whose introduction to colonialism was very different from that of the Tonga with the Livingstonia missionaries.

CHAPTER III

THE WATCH TOWER MOVEMENT IN SOUTHERN RHODESIA

1. The Emigrant Nyasa Watch Tower Movement
2. The Shona Watch Tower Movement
3. New Directions in the 1930's



MAP III. SOUTHERN RHODESIA

1. The Emigrant Nyasa Watch Tower Movement

From Nyasaland, the Watch Tower movement travelled in the period 1910-1920 with the diaspora of migrant labour to Southern Rhodesia. The 'Blantyre boys' - mainly Tonga and Ngoni - sought employment as domestic servants and skilled labourers on the Mashonaland gold mines and in the main centres of Matabeleland. Here Elliott Kamwana's Society Church was refashioned to meet new needs, and transmitted not only to other migrants in the large, multi-ethnic compounds, but also to the northern Shona. While the Watch Tower became a mass movement amongst the Shona in the late 1920's, this was of a different order to the response of the lakeside Tonga two decades earlier; and despite the success of radical preaching of the Watch Tower millennium at Wankie and Bulawayo, the movement made no headway amongst the Ndebele themselves. During the 1930's, Watch Tower on the mines shrank into insignificance and was all but forgotten amongst the Shona, amongst whom new, indigenous religious movements became widely popular. Nevertheless, the period during which Watch Tower ideas made an impact was the crucial era of transition in Southern Rhodesia from the aftermath of the crushing of the rebellions in 1896-7 to the emergence of modern African politics in the 1930's.

Southern Rhodesia at this time lay at the crossroads of the nascent political activity stirring in the sub-continent, linking south and central Africa. Far more than Nyasaland,

it was a southward-facing domain. South African capital had stimulated the mining of gold and coal, and South African settler values animated the backveld farms; even the system and personnel of native administration had been introduced from Natal and the Cape.[1] Many migrant labourers shared with settlers an experience of the south, whence African trade unionism and many independent churches entered the colony. The Ndebele themselves had retained strong links with the parent Zulu nation, and the mixed community of Sotho, Xhosa and Fingo migrants in Matabeleland enhanced the southern connexion. Ethiopianism first entered the colony in 1902-3 under Zulu leadership, and in 1906-7 the African Methodist Episcopal Church attempted to establish itself.[2] While these movements concentrated predominantly in Matabeleland, the 'Zionist' churches based initially in South Africa - the Zion Apostolic Church, the Christian Catholic Apostolic Church in Zion, and the Apostolic Faith Mission - were prominent particularly in Mashonaland.[3] The Watch Tower, which was probably of less significance in Southern Rhodesia than these groups from the point of view of a continuing, local membership, was considered when it appeared to be part of this emanation from the south. Little of the South African tolerance of African religious independency was in evidence in Southern Rhodesia, however. And as in Nyasaland, the general suspicion directed at African religious independency spread to the smaller

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[1] H. Rolin, Les Lois et l'Administration de la Rhodésie (Paris, 1913), pp. 124-150.

[2] T.O. Ranger, The African Voice in Southern Rhodesia (Nairobi, 1970), pp. 41-43, 55-56.

[3] Ibid., pp. 215-217.

European-controlled churches as well. The Baptist, Adventist and American-controlled missions, were particularly suspected of fostering Ethiopianism, and kept under rigorous surveillance. The Seventh Day Adventists, for example, were banned in 1921 until they had made a declaration to the High Commissioner that 'We have no connection with the Israelite sect, we are in no wise affiliated with the Watch Tower movement, nor with the Ethiopian movement.'[1]

Southern Rhodesia looked for advice in dealing with these movements to its surrounding neighbours, and borrowed piecemeal from their legislation, but ultimately adopted a policy of repression far harsher than all but the Belgians and the Portuguese. Nyasaland's policy of watchfulness was adopted only briefly, while the Union policy which permitted African churches to proliferate as they pleased was never seriously considered.[2] State control of African preachers on the lines of Northern Rhodesian company legislation was more favourably viewed, but for fear of activating Britain's reserved powers over discriminatory legislation, it was not until the passing of a Sedition Act in 1936 that this was established.[3] The fact that the great majority of prophets, churchmen and independent leaders were foreigners, however, gave a measure of control to the administration through constant deportations. The great Rhodesian fear, harking back to the rebellions of 1896-7, which Ranger has described as wars of religion, was that new

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[1] A 3/6/8, Zambezi Union Mission of Seventh Day Adventists Conference, Jan. 1921. All files referred to in this chapter are in the National Archives of Rhodesia, Salisbury (R. Arch.), unless otherwise stated.

[2] B 1/2/327, Sec. Nat. Affairs, Pretoria, to C.I.D., Salisbury, 3 Mar. 1926; further on South African attitudes cf. B.G.M. Sundkler, Bantu Prophets in South Africa (2nd edn., Oxford, 1961), Chap. III.

[3] Cf. below, p.164

rebellions would be sparked off by imported millennial ideas and visiting prophets.[1] While the Kamwanaist movement in Nyasaland had been dogged by the Chilembwe rising, in Southern Rhodesia it reawakened the spectre for white settlers of southern Africa's most bloody rebellions.

As regards missionary endeavour, however, Southern Rhodesia differed from Nyasaland in that settled and centralised African polities rather than small scale societies had first attracted the attention of the major missionary societies. Matabeleland was an area of early initiative by the London Missionary Society (L.M.S.), but with signal lack of success until after the defeat of Ndebele military power. Similarly in Mashonaland the Anglicans, Jesuits and Wesleyan Methodists made little headway in the nineteenth century. With the defeat of the risings, there was a new willingness to turn to the missions, but while a considerable Christianisation of Matabeleland occurred, progress amongst the Shona in the early twentieth century was extremely slow.[2] Certainly amongst the northern Shona that process of elite development through the operation of missions which occurred amongst the Tonga did not take place until later. The Anglican mission, in attempting to cover in its ministration to the Africans as wide a territory as possible, as well as to provide for the settlers, spread its resources thinly, and its activities were supplemented in

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[1] T.O. Ranger, Revolt in Southern Rhodesia 1896-7: A Study in African Resistance (1967), pp. 345-346.

[2] Cf. Edwin W. Smith, The Way of the White Fields: A Survey of Christian Enterprise in Northern and Southern Rhodesia (1928); Paul S. King (ed.), Missions in Southern Rhodesia (Inyati Centenary Trust, 1959); W.F. Rea S.J., 'The Missionary Factor in Southern Rhodesia', Central African Historical Association Local Series No. 7.

the remote rural areas by small evangelical missions such as the Salvation Army, which could offer little by way of schooling.[1] Consequently, while there was some introduction to Christian ideas, very few educational or economic benefits had filtered through by the 1920's. Central and Eastern Mashonaland were somewhat better provided for, but generally it was not until the 1930's that Rhodesian African Christians entered into the mainstream of nationalist politics, or indeed that Southern Rhodesian missionaries began to oppose the racial order of Rhodesian society.

At the time of the implantation of the Watch Tower movement into Southern Rhodesia, then, three main groups of Africans were potential recipients - the foreign labour migrants, the congeries of Shona peoples in the north and east, and the Ndebele and southern immigrants in the south-west. It is remarkable that the Watch Tower movement only made headway among the first two of these groups. Given its origins amongst Tonga migrants it is hardly surprising that the Watch Tower should have proved an appealing ideology to many others on the mine compounds, particularly those from North-Eastern Rhodesia who spoke Nyanja and had as well in many cases undergone the influence of the Scottish and other missionaries. The response of the Shona and the indifference of the Ndebele pose a more complex problem, however. Ranger has argued that the general differences between Shona and Ndebele reactions to the intrusion of settlers in the three decades after the

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[1] L.H. Gann, A History of Southern Rhodesia: Early Days to 1934 (1965), pp. 197-198.

defeat of the rebellions of 1896-7 may be explained by the different social and political structures of the two groups, in conjunction with the different policies adopted towards them in the aftermath of defeat. While the loosely grouped Shona had displayed 'total commitment' in the rebellion, which resulted in a complete and crushing defeat in which many chiefs were executed, land and cattle were confiscated, and the people herded into reserves, the Ndebele managed through the settlement with Rhodes to maintain a national identity under the leadership of their aristocratic class.[1] Ndebele politics in the early twentieth century largely consisted of attempts to restore the fortunes of the royal family, and, using their Zulu connections in the south, to follow the path of the South African Native Congress in protests and petitions against the alienation of their land, labour legislation, and their lack of political power. The Shona, lacking these connections and the continuity of political institutions, were more favourably inclined towards innovatory ideologies which held out the promise of a new social order.

These broad historical considerations are important, but further aspects of the comparison between Shona and Ndebele responses which are of relevance are the differences in socio-economic pressures in the early colonial period, and the fact that only a limited section of the Shona responded to the Watch Tower movement, which are studied below.[2]

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[1] Ranger, Revolt in Southern Rhodesia, Chap. X, passim.

[2] Cf. pp. 143-158.

Perhaps the most significant difference from the point of view of the adoption of Watch Tower ideas, however, is that not only were the Shona considerably more isolated from the diffusion of men and ideas from the south, but also that they were largely neglected by the major mission societies in comparison with the work undertaken in Matabeleland. It might not be too exaggerated a claim to state that it was the Tonga and the small, independent African churches, rather than the Europeans, who popularised Christianity amongst the Shona. These Tonga missionaries were also at this stage adapting the Watch Tower belief to the new circumstances of the labour compounds.

The farms and mines of Matabeleland and Mashonaland came in the post-war period to be dominated by labour migrants from Nyasaland. Around the turn of the century, Nyasas were chiefly heading south, where the high wages and city life of the mushrooming Rand proved a far stronger lure than the mining camps of a pioneer colony. The overland route lay via Salisbury, however, and many interrupted their sojourn to seek temporary employment on the small mines of the Mashonaland goldfields. In 1907 over 5,000 Nyasas - the majority from the lake district - were recorded in employment in Southern Rhodesia, out of over 14,000 leaving the Protectorate annually, although probably twice as many were migrating unofficially.[1]

Rhodesia at this stage was engaged in a triangular battle with the South African Chamber of Mines and Mozambique to secure a steady supply of migrant labour to relieve her

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[1] S.A. Cmd. 3993, p. 81.

chronic shortage.[1] Rhodesian employers preferred foreign migrants whom they reckoned to be cheaper, constantly available, and less liable to organise as workers, while local Africans preferred either to remain on the land - perhaps working seasonally in European employment - or themselves migrate to the south.[2] In 1903 the Rhodesian Native Labour Bureau (R.N.L.B.) was founded in order to combat this shortage by active recruiting north of the Zambezi, and was placed on a firm organisational footing in 1911.[3] With the passing of the Transvaal-Mozambique Convention in 1909 concerning the traffic in rail freight and African labour between Lourenco Marques and the Rand, which excluded Rhodesia from its provisions, the R.N.L.B. gained permission to recruit temporarily in Nyasaland. A second factor which helped to channel the flow of labour migrants from Nyasaland to Southern Rhodesia was the concern of the Colonial Office over the high death rate of Africans from north of the 22nd parallel on the highveld mines, which led to a ban on official recruiting for South Africa in 1913. At first the effect of the ban on the flow of Nyasa migrants was minimal, but gradually the balance began to tip in favour of the Southern Rhodesian mines. By 1916, there were 10,513 Nyasas on the Rhodesian mines, and by 1920 their numbers exceeded those of any other group in employment, including local Africans.[4]

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[1] Cf. P.R. Warhurst, 'Southern Rhodesia and Her Neighbours 1920-1923', (D.Phil., Oxford, 1970), Chap. XI.

[2] R. Gray, The Two Nations (O.U.P., 1960), pp. 91-94.

[3] R.L. Buell, The Native Problem in Africa (New York, 1928), i, 224-227.

[4] F.E. Sanderson, 'The Development of Labour Migration from Nyasaland', Journal of African History, II, 1961.

Conditions of labour on the Southern Rhodesian mines constituted even in settler society one of the scandals of the day. Even though the high death rate of the 1900's had been substantially reduced by the end of the war, scanty and insanitary accommodation, poor feeding, irregularities in wage payments, brutal treatment by mine managers, and the prevalence of debilitating diseases were constantly recorded.[1] More particularly was this true of the farms and smaller mines, especially in Matabeleland, where government control was lax and many ventures were run on a shoestring. These employment centres with a poor reputation were avoided by regular migrants and consequently had to rely on contractual labour secured through the R.N.L.B., with the result that migrants from Northern Rhodesia (the R.N.L.B.'s main sphere of operation) came to dominate the Matabeleland centres, while Nyasas tended to concentrate around Salisbury.

Nyasa migrants managed to capture the more desirable jobs on the mine compounds, gravitating towards surface jobs and such positions as clerks, cooks, capitao's (gang foremen), and stores assistants. As such they formed something of a labour elite, treated the less educated underground workers and local Africans with some disdain, and developed a strong sense of community amongst themselves. Where many from the same district were gathered, kinship groups sprang up in the compounds, serving to relay news from home, welcoming newcomers and initiating them into mining life, acting as burial societies,

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[1] M. Gelfand, 'The Migration of African Labourers in Rhodesia and Nyasaland', Central African Journal of Medicine, VII, 1961; Southern Rhodesia Legislative Council Debates (Salisbury, 1917), c. 217, 20 April 1917; Buell, Native Problem, pp. 230-232; S.A. Cmd. 3993, p. 110.

and, ultimately, providing an associational base for industrial action. Predictably, the Watch Tower religion found a home in Southern Rhodesia amongst these Tonga, Ngoni, and Yao labour migrants.

The existence of Watch Tower communities on the mines first came to the notice of the Southern Rhodesian administration in 1917, although such groupings had almost certainly been found before this, particularly taking into account the passage of Kamwana himself through the territory in 1910.[1] One Alfred Mtewe, described as a 'travelling manager' from the Chinteche district, visited Que Que for three months, where he preached and baptised his fellow Nyasas into the Watch Tower faith.[2] Subsequent enquiries revealed that there were a number of small Watch Tower groups on the Mashonaland mines, led by Sandris Chilwa at the Globe and Phoenix mine at Que Que, by Lamek Mwase at Shamva, and by Gideon Banda - described as a personal friend of Kamwana - at the Eldorado mine.[3] Correspondence with other Watch Tower followers in Nyasaland was maintained, and the following spoke of themselves as belonging to 'Elliot's Church'. Most had mission backgrounds, held positions of responsibility, and kept themselves aloof from other labourers. Many were also distinguished by their dress: for instance, the Watch Tower leader at Sinoia, James T. Stanley Manda, was noted in a police description as '[speaking] English well, is wearing a green Norfolk jacket, white and

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[1] Cf. above, p. 56, n. 2.

[2] N 3/5/8, A.N.C. Shamva, to Sup. Nat., Salisbury, 29 Jan. 1917.

[3] Ibid., A.N.C. Shamva, to Sup. Nat., Salisbury, 4 Mar. 1917; for a more detailed membership list cf. N 4/1/7, C.N.C. to all N.C.'s, 15 Aug. 1917.

black waistcoat, dark trousers, collar and tie'.[1] The prominent feature of the religion noted at this stage was Bible study, and generally the small groups appeared to have maintained a quietist mien.

The Watch Tower movement on the Southern Rhodesian mines could, indeed, be considered as an ethnic association of Nyasalanders which served chiefly as a club, or friendly society. The mines were the centre of a number of organisations catering for the various needs of the many immigrant labourers, and Yao, Tonga, Ngoni, and Mozambiquan Africans (mainly Kunda) each possessed their own association which maintained a sense of corporate identity amidst foreigners, and assisted in times of need. Apart from tribal associations, there were also funeral societies and dance societies, the latter of which caused the Rhodesian Chamber of Mines to investigate compound associations, as they believed that apart from 'helping the sick and doing good generally ... these militaristic societies are the basis of labour movements, [and] strike committees paying the fines of convicted natives'. The Nyasaland Boys Club was to emerge in the 1920's as one of the strongest of such tribal associations.[2] The Watch Tower movement in Southern Rhodesia at first probably provided an associational home of this kind for those whose regional identity derived from the northern lakeshore, and who had undergone together the Livingstonia experience.

'Purely native organisations' were regarded as 'most undesirable', however, by the Chief Native Commissioner, and a

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[1] N 3/5/8, C.I.D., Salisbury, to C.N.C., Salisbury, 10 Dec. 1918.

[2] N 3/21/4, Rhodesian Chamber of Mines to C.N.C., Salisbury, 7 Aug. 1922.

request for further information was immediately circulated.[1] In addition to its own views on what it believed was yet another outbreak of Ethiopianism, the Rhodesian administration based its policy of immediately clamping down on the Watch Tower movement on the communicated fears of the Nyasaland administration.[2] People like Hanoc Sindano and his followers at the Globe and Phoenix (Sindano had also been active at the Lonely Mine) who emphasised the more millennial aspects of Kamwana's teaching were immediately deported,[3] while other members were placed under careful observation, no passes other than those to leave the territory being granted.[4] Sindano was a Mambwe from south-west Tanganyika who had allegedly visited the headquarters of the W.T.B.T.S. in Cape Town, and differed from the early Watch Tower followers in Rhodesia in that he saw the Watch Tower in a broader context than that merely of a Tonga movement. Sindano was later to play an important part in implanting Watch Tower ideas in Northern Rhodesia.[5] The Watch Tower influence had hardly penetrated beyond Mashonaland and the confines of a Nyasa elite by 1918, however, and little further action was taken against it other than that of keeping it under surveillance - even to the extent of stationing an African detective at the Feira staging post[6] - until more

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[1] NSA 2/8/1, C.N.C. to all N.C.'s, 10 April 1917.

[2] N 3/5/8, Supt. Nat. Affairs, Zomba, to C.N.C., Salisbury, 7 June 1917; N 3/5/3, Chief Sec., Zomba, to C.N.C., Salisbury, 19 June 1919.

[3] RC 3/9/5/29, Report of the Res. Comm., Salisbury, 6 Feb. 1919.

[4] N 3/5/1/4, C.N.C., Salisbury, to Sec. Treasury, Salisbury, 7 Nov. 1917; N 4/1/7, C.N.C. to all N.C.'s, 15 Aug. 1917.

[5] Cf. below, pp. 194-197.

[6] N 3/5/1/4, C.I.D., Salisbury, to Supt. Nat. Affairs, Salisbury, 5 Jan. 1919.

radical preaching came to the attention of the administration.

Watch Tower ideas and organisation were not the only new ideological forms brought into Southern Rhodesia from north of the Zambezi at this time, however. It is interesting to compare the actions of the Tonga miners' Watch Tower with the contemporaneous activities of another Nyasa, G.C.W. Kampara. Unlike the Watch Tower adherents, Kampara explicitly linked Rhodesian and Nyasa elements in his Ethiopian church and Rhodesia and Nyasaland Native Council, arguing that Nyasalanders should enjoy the rights of citizenship in the land where they laboured. In January 1915, Kampara and his chief lieutenant, Petrus Mhlauli - both of whom had once been members of the South African Baptist Mission --approached the Native Commissioner at Victoria for permission to establish a 'temple' in the district, near the Zimbabwe ruins.[1] Kampara had founded the Gazaland Zimbabwe Ethiopian Church (G.Z.E.C.) after an experience while en route to South Africa from Nyasaland, when 'he halted in Rhodesia, and whilst contemplating the Zimbabwe ruins, it was vouchsafed to him that this was the ancient temple of Solomon'.[2] Permission to build the temple was, perhaps not surprisingly, refused, as was a later request to 'visit our Nyasaland boys in Rhodesian compounds'. In 1917, Kampara - now styling himself 'General Superintendent' of the G.Z.E.C. of the 'Colonies of the Transvaal, Orange River Colony, and Cape Colony' - wrote to the Chief Secretary of the B.S.A. Co. again requesting permission to establish his church. Kampara

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[1] N 3/5/1/4, Kampara to N.C., Victoria, 17 Jan. 1915.

[2] Ibid., Sec. Nat. Affairs, Pretoria, to C.N.C., Salisbury, 18 June 1915.

at this stage adopted the subterfuge of pretending to be a Rhodesian African, under a non-existent chief.[1]

That Kampara's concerns were with the welfare and advancement of Nyasa Africans in Rhodesia, and not simply with matters of personal status as the Native Affairs department believed, is apparent from Kampara's final correspondence with the Southern Rhodesian administration in February 1919. Adopting the title 'President of the Nyasaland Native Council', Kampara submitted a petition, purporting to come from '5,000 from Nyasaland ... qualified as ministers, clerks, teachers, clafts-men [sic], and solders [sic]':

> Your petitioners find that the pass laws of both stated places [Rhodesia and Transvaal] operate very harshly against them...The better educated and more skilled among your petitioners community feel very deeply the indignity of having to carry the ordinary labourers pass, moreover such pass very hampers any freedom of movement.... Until their [they're] following an independent calling they cannot obtain Registration certificate: unless they obtain a Registration Certificate they cannot follow an independent calling.

Kampara was expressing the basic grievances of ambitious men whose mobility was artificially prevented by the operation of discriminatory laws and the contractual system. Only by misrepresenting their nationality could Nyasalanders aspire to land ownership in Rhodesia or pursue self-employed careers such as carpentry and book-making - part of their Livingstonia heritage. The mistreatment and abuse of African labour on the mines and the system of job reservation also rankled:

> Your petitioners are the body of the Nyasaland Council who also called the Voice of Race namely the Nyasaland and Rhodesia Native National Congress; which has been

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[1] Ibid., Kampara, A.G. Booi, and C.V. Banda to Chief Sec., Salisbury, 29 Sept. 1917.

> instructed by the Rhodesian and Nyasaland community to petition your honour for their freedom of the human race, for they shown their loyalty to the Great Britain and Charter Government and Imperial Government.... If you do not reply ... this Council will send a delegate to the peace conference to England to represent the Nyasaland and Rhodesian natives... His Majesty has promised to ends of this Great War all human races will obtained their freedom therefore every nation which are under the British Imper are to demand their freedom from the Slavery Treatment (A) Corebari [Colour Bar] (B) Land Act of 1913 (C) Syombolk [Sjambok] and to force a native to take his hat off to an a miner or to an member of the B.S.A.P. [British South Africa Police]. To day your petitioners are in the age of politicing for their rights to live as any human being could live in the world which God have given them to live freely.

'There is good reason', commented the Chief Secretary dryly, 'for placing the Nyasaland community in a different category to other native peoples of Africa.'[1]

Kampara's petition contains a critique of settler rule which amplifies several themes found in the preaching of Kamwana and other radical Watch Tower leaders. The Watch Tower ideology distinguished between the black man as the inheritor of a political kingdom to come and the white man as the object of God's wrath which, it has been suggested, contained elements of a pan-Africanist vision. Kampara's 'Voice of Race' locates African political claims more precisely within national boundaries, and on the grounds of citizenship and natural human rights - 'the freedom of the human race' - rather than on manichaean distinctions between black as good and white as evil. Secondly, while Watch Tower leaders saw settlers as fraudulent and deceitful in that they had thwarted God's plans by withholding technological skills and specialised knowledge from Africans, Kampara

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[1] Ibid., Petition of the Rhodesia and Nyasaland Native National Congress, February 1919.

argued that the settler practices of land alienation, the colour bar, and brutal discipline were at odds with the stated aims of the British Empire. The petition is an overt statement of these conditions of frustration and dispossession, which, it has been argued, were important factors leading Nyasa migrants to join the Watch Tower movement, and is similarly based on the idea that Africans are oppressed by the white man 'in the world which God have given them to live freely'.

But the major difference is that while Kampara saw himself as 'in the age of politicing', drew up a petition, and threatened to go to the Versailles peace conference, Watch Tower leaders were not operating at this explicitly political level. Their preaching contributed to the ideological currents on which Kampara drew, but the social ends of the urban communities were not confrontationist. Increasingly these were developing sect-like attributes in which the accent was on social conservatism and accommodation to urban, industrial living. The different directions taken by the G.Z.E.C. and the emigrant Nyasa Watch Tower movement at this stage mark a clear distinction between Ethiopianism properly so called, and the millennial aims of the Watch Tower movement.

With the relaxation of administrative harassment in the early 1920's, new leaders began to emerge in the Rhodesian Watch Tower movement. Some, such as Richard Kalinde, sought to organise the movement into a coherent body with direct links to the W.T.B.T.S., and others attempted to convey Watch Tower ideas to the mixed mining communities in Matabeleland and to local Africans. The success of the new policy of tolerance in

Nyasaland implemented in 1922 at first predisposed the Rhodesian administration to view Kalinde's initiatives with an open mind, but the activities of such radical preachers as George Kunga and Lot Mumbi,[1] and the transposition of the Watch Tower millennium to the northern Shona in the late 1920's,[2] soon led to the thorough repression of all types of Watch Tower activity. By the early 1930's, the Watch Tower movement in Southern Rhodesia was once again reduced to the level of small groupings at the chief employment centres, which were soon brought within the fold of the Jehovah's Witnesses once official organisation was allowed.

Richard Kalinde, a Yao from the Zomba district, appears to have had a vision of the Watch Tower as a settled church in Rhodesia, with direct links to the W.T.B.T.S. in South Africa. He had left Nyasaland in 1917, married a Shona wife, and had not returned to Zomba since.[3] Kalinde had established himself as the leader of a Watch Tower community at Shamva mine, where he held secret meetings and baptisms at night in the local Shambanyana stream. By 1922, he felt sufficiently confident to apply openly for permission to hold Watch Tower meetings in the compound.[4] As the supervisor of the grain store and kitchens, he was regarded by his employers as a 'thoroughly honest and reliable' man, and it was noted that there was a rigid abstention

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[1] Cf. below, pp. 136-138.

[2] Cf. below, pp. 143-158.

[3] N 3/5/8, Supt. Nat. Affairs, Bulawayo, to C.N.C., Salisbury, 30 July 1923; on Kalinde cf. also above, p.103.

[4] Ibid., A.N.C. Shamva, to C.N.C., Salisbury, 12 June 1922.

from beer drinking and an apparent absence of any eschatological beliefs among his following. The fact that Kalinde had written to Cape Town requesting the visit of a European representative was also favourably regarded, and after careful consultation with the Nyasaland authorities on their encouragement of the 'peaceful variant' of the Watch Tower movement, the Rhodesians decided on a policy of cautious tolerance, without however granting full recognition.[1] Contrasting the Watch Tower with Ethiopianism and Zionism, a Native Affairs official speculated that though organised underground the Watch Tower at this stage was a church. 'Its focussing point is the establishment of separate, quasi-Christian churches, freed from the control of European missionaries'.[2] The Native Commissioner at Shamva was also particularly satisfied that 'the Church of the Watch Tower has not hitherto attempted any propaganda amongst the Mashona natives, against whom there appears to be an underlying hostility'.[3] A membership list prepared by Kalinde at this time reveals clearly that the bulk of the 173 members he noted were fellow Nyasas, including many Tonga, with a handful of others from Mtoko in Southern Rhodesia and Fort Jameson in Northern Rhodesia. All were in employment in Mashonaland, with 27 at the Globe and Phoenix mine at Que Que;

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[1] N 3/5/8, C.N.C., Salisbury, to Chief Sec., Salisbury, 12 Feb. 1923; S 138/106, W.T.B.T.S., Cape Town, to Richard Kalinde [n.d.].

[2] N.H. Wilson, 'Native Political Movements in Southern Rhodesia', Native Affairs Department Annual, I, 2, 1923.

[3] N 3/5/8, A.N.C., Shamva, to N.C., Mazoe, 13 June 1923.

10 at Davenport Farm, Eiffel Flats; 11 at the Cam and Motor mine, Gatooma; 12 in Gatooma Township compound; 31 at Salisbury location; 12 at the Asp mine, Bindula; and 70 at Shamva mine.[1] These centres covered an extensive area.

The W.T.B.T.S., as has been noted, was being reorganised under the leadership of Thomas A. Walder in Cape Town and A.C. Lyell in Johannesburg - the latter a sometime member of the Orange Free State parliament - at this time. Several Nyasaland Africans had visited Rhodesia with credentials to preach issued by Lyell, among them one Bennett Siasia, who was regarded as a leader of the Kamwanaist movement in Nyasaland.[2] Encouraged by Kalinde's organisational initiatives, Walder undertook a tour of the territory in 1924 en route to Northern Rhodesia, whence yet further activity was being reported. This was a period during which not only was the W.T.B.T.S. predicting the end of the world in 1925, but the general level of millennial preaching even amongst non-Watch Tower sectarians was marked. 'All white people will leave the territory in March, 1923', was the gospel of John Dingiswayo of the Apostolic Faith Mission, while the Christian Catholic Apostolic Church in Zion - another Zionist movement - also incurred a banning order at this time.[3]

Increasingly alarmed at the trend of African religious movements, the Chief Native Commissioner requested legislation to outlaw any African preaching not under direct European

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[1] N 3/5/8, encl. in Supt. Nat. Affairs, Bulawayo, to C.N.C., Salisbury, 30 July 1923.

[2] Ibid., Supt. Nat. Affairs, Bulawayo, to C.N.C., Salisbury, 30 July 1923.

[3] N 3/5/1/7, A.N.C., Gatooma, to N.C., Hartley, 2 Nov. 1922; S 235/452, C.N.C. to all N.C.'s, 6 Sept. 1924.

supervision.[1] As in Nyasaland, however, the policy of the Colonial Office against religious intolerance and discriminatory legislation - backed up by considerations of the unpopularity of the settler government with the liberal lobby in Britain, following the notorious land case - led the administration to proceed cautiously. The draft bill was submitted to the Southern Rhodesian Missionary conference, which, under the leadership of A.S. Cripps - a man in the mould of Joseph Booth, who had himself written a book entitled An Africa for the Africans[2] - and John White, rejected the legislation; they condemned it as 'panicky class legislation' and 'a blasphemous agency of tyranny'.[3] Officials of the Native Affairs department used the opportunity of Walder's visit to impress on him, however, the disfavour in which African Watch Tower was held. Walder himself, following in W.W. Johnston's footsteps, consequently repudiated the heterodox groupings in a letter addressed 'To the Native Churches of the Watch Tower':

> I have just returned from Rhodesia where I was able to meet some of you. There are many things which are not pleasing to me. You should not call yourself Watch Tower Church. There is no Church of the Watch Tower anywhere.... The Society cannot give preaching certificates to native teachers. Some of you have done wrong in making certificates.... Some of the elders have spoken wrong things and have made much trouble for me with the Government.[4]

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[1] Report of the C.N.C. for 1924 (Salisbury, 1926), p. 3.

[2] London, 1927.

[3] Proceedings of the Southern Rhodesian Missionary Conference of 1924; also T.O. Ranger, 'State and Church in Southern Rhodesia 1919-1939', Historical Association of Rhodesia and Nyasaland, Local Series No. 4, p. 10.

[4] S 138/226, Walder to the Native Churches of the Watch Tower, 10 Sept. 1924.

Walder seems however to have had some private reservations about the W.T.B.T.S.'s attitude towards its would-be Rhodesian membership, for in April, 1925, one William Dawson toured the territory accompanied by Richard Kalinde visiting the small groups.[1] Dawson's equally unfavourable report led to yet another disclaimer by the W.T.B.T.S. of any central African following, although this, too, should be seen in the context of the settler reaction to the mwana lesa movement in Northern Rhodesia.[2]

Despite the new wave of repression in the mid 1920's, and the absence of any European representative who might mitigate administrative harassment, men of Kalinde's type continued to broaden the organisational base of the Watch Tower movement amongst Nyasas in Southern Rhodesia. Gilbert Ambewe, for example, an Ngoni waiter in the Bulawayo Hotel who led a small group at the Shabani mine, expressed a desire to tour the country organising the movement in 1928,[3] while at the Globe and Phoenix mine Northern Rhodesian Africans - 'Salt from Petauke' and 'Witi from Fife' - also led small groups of non-indigenous Africans whom they wished to introduce to a country-wide organisation.[4] The most elaborate of these organisational attempts, however, were those based on Livingstone under the leadership of Elias Mbulo, also a Nyasa migrant in Bulawayo, which will be considered below.[5] In Southern Rhodesia, it was

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[1] Z. Arch., ZA 1/10/1, Taggart to Dawson, 28 Aug. 1925.

[2] S 235/452, C.N.C. to all N.C.'s, 8 May 1926; cf. below, p. 265.

[3] S 138/226, C.I.D., Bulawayo, to Supt. Nat. Affairs, Bulawayo, 31 Oct. 1928.

[4] Ibid., Clerk-in-charge, Que Que, to N.C., Gwelo, 6 Sept. 1928.

[5] Cf. below, p. 221.

at the Wankie colliery - a major employment centre in Matabeleland - that a continuing Watch Tower community took root, however, embracing not only Nyasa acquaintances of Elliott Kamwana but also spreading to the labour migrants from the northern, eastern and western districts of Northern Rhodesia.

Prominent in the emergence of a strong millenarian strain of Watch Tower preaching in Matabeleland were two converts of Bennett Siasia, Lot Mumbi and George Kunga, both of whom had joined the Watch Tower in Chiromo jail (Nyasaland) in 1918. Mumbi was later to become one of the leading exponents of the Watch Tower millennium in Northern Rhodesia.[1] In the Bulawayo location, Mumbi had a following of 86 to whom he preached in 1924 that when the kingdom of God was established in 1925 blacks would turn into whites, and that Europeans would turn into 'amaboys' - i.e., 'boys', the contemptuous settler term applied to Africans.[2] A more elaborate ideology was supplied by Kunga, who, after several years at the Rezende mine at Penhalonga, 'had a dream' that he should go to Bulawayo and preach. Kunga's career was short-lived, however, as his radical message soon brought him to the attention of compound detectives. As with Kalinde's group, Kunga offered a positive prescription to his 30 adherents of an ordered and harmonious life free from beer-drinking, adultery, and quarrelling. But beyond this, Kunga elaborated an explanation of the pass laws, taxes, the deceitfulness of the white man, and the eventual triumph of the 'black races':

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[1] Cf. below, pp. 221-224.

[2] S 138/106, Statement of Lot Mumbi, Bulawayo, 10 Mar. 1924.

> Goliath was a big man. David was a small man. The white race are now powerful, but it will be the same as happened to Goliath. David the small man rose up and killed him. So it will be with the white and black races. The king of the white man will cease to be king and we shall reign. England has fought all the big nations of the world and beaten them with the exception of America, Belgium and Portugal. When England was at war with Germany they promised the natives of this country that if we fought for England we would all be free men. Many of our people did fight and were killed and yet we are not free. America, Belgium and Portugal will fight England and win, and then all we natives will be free. If there is any more fighting, you must remain in your kraals - that is white against white. Only the fool natives will go. When America was helping England during the last war, England promised America Northern Rhodesia at the conclusion of the war, but when the war did finish, England did not keep their promise, and gave to America only money. I warn you now that sometime between next September and November of this year there will be great trouble come to Rhodesia.[1]

Such attempts at mobilising support for the movement reveal a significantly different understanding of the political reality of the colonial world from that of early nationalists such as Kampara. Millennial hopes of liberation are offered rather than constitutional negotiations for securing political rights; the political history is distorted and mythical; and the grievances enunciated are general rather than specific. But this oratory, with its readily understood parables and promises of war, killing, and imminent chaos, appears to have appealed at a popular level where Kampara's petitioning did not. In particular, this style of preaching appealed to migrant labourers of mixed tribal origin on the large mine compounds, who do not seem to have been included in the Watch

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[1] N 3/5/8, Bulawayo C.I.D. Report, 30 June 1923; cf. ibid. Reports of 5, 7, and 14 June; Statement of George Kunga, Bulawayo, 16 May 1923; and for a summary of Watch Tower teaching on similar lines in Southern Rhodesia in 1923-4, cf. W.J.W. Roome, Can Africa Be Won? (1927), pp. 63-64.

Tower communities established by Nyasa migrants. Such millennial dreams as those supplied by Kunga and Mumbi may have been pre-political in the sense that they required no more than a passive contemplation of the reversal of fortunes of Europeans and Africans, but nevertheless this language enabled emotions of protest to be expressed, and they were highly political in the sense that they provided a new group image for workers, and a sense of solidarity which had not previously existed. The extension of such ideas to the Matabeleland centres such as the Wankie colliery was an important stage in the development of the Watch Tower movement beyond the limits of the emigrant Nyasa communities.

The Wankie colliery was the single most important centre in Southern Rhodesia for the diffusion of Watch Tower ideas to the north. Favoured both by Nyasa migrants and by workers from Barotseland and the northern provinces of Northern Rhodesia under contract to the R.N.L.B., the multi-ethnic industrial setting of Wankie was a key link in the network of labour migration which spread from the Transvaal to the Tanganyika goldfields. The Watch Tower leaders at Wankie in 1922-3 were Alexander Mwenda and Isaac Nyasulu, both of whom had been initiated into the movement by Elliott Kamwana at Chinteche in 1909.[1] Nyasulu was described as being 'polite, very confident in himself, the sort of man who would glory in being persecuted', and seems to have possessed considerable personal charisma; when deported from Wankie he was

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[1] N 3/5/8, N.C., Wankie to Supt. Nat. Affairs, Bulawayo, 21 May 1923; S 138/106, N.C., Wankie, to C.N.C., Salisbury, 15 Oct. 1923.

seen off at the station by a huge crowd of followers.[1] A Watch Tower following of 2,700 was reported in 1923, including many Lozi; 'general morality is preached, and meetings last from afternoon till well into the night'.[2] The mass stage seems only to have lasted from 1923 until 1925, however. In 1924, Welder addressed a meeting in the compound where he condemned the practice of baptism, and the failure of a prophecy that Moses and Aaron would visit the compound also served as something of a setback.[3] With the deportation of important leaders, the following was halved;[4] and in 1926 Watch Tower teaching was said to have ceased except for the quietist Bible classes of a hard core remnant.[5] By the time the Rhodesians decided to eradicate the movement in the late 1920's, Wankie was no longer an active area.

At its height in 1923, however, the Watch Tower at Wankie dominated African life, and was a major element in one of the earliest strike actions in the country. The ideology was not dissimilar to that of George Kunga - whites were about to leave the country, and the black millennium was at hand. Unperturbed by what he dismissed as 'loose vapourings and prophecies' and the designation of himself as Satan, the local Native Commissioner, Peter Nielsen, commented perceptively and not unsympathetically on the movement in a report which helped to stay outright repression of the movement at Wankie:

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[1] S 138/106, N.C., Wankie, to Supt. Nat. Affairs, Bulawayo, 4 Dec. 1923; on Nyasulu, cf. above, p. 111.

[2] S 235/501, Annual Report of the N.C., Wankie, 1923; N 3/5/8, N.C., Wankie, to Supt. Nat. Affairs, Bulawayo, 26 Mar. 1923.

[3] S 235/502, Annual Report of the N.C., Wankie, 1924.

[4] Bulawayo Chronicle, 12 Sept. 1925.

[5] S 235/504, Annual Report of the N.C.,Wankie, for 1926; but cp. Ranger, The African Voice, p. 145.

> In estimating the potentialities of this movement I keep in mind the consideration that the natives have, as yet, no other means than that of religion to help them in breaking away from tribal control or foreign dominance. Religion is the vehicle of this movement, but not the end of it, so that, although this sect has neither ritual nor separate doctrines of its own, being a so to speak "go-as-you-please" Church, sui generis, so loosely made that it seems not likely to last very long, it may yet prove itself strong and permanent because of the central, animating ideal of racial self-assertion embodied within.[1]

The fear that the Watch Tower was acting 'as a cloak to some extent for the purposes of a Labour Organisation' somewhat mitigated this tolerance, however.[2] In May, 1923, a general strike of African miners took place in an attempt to secure the dismissal of Johnny Sebelu, a 'police boy' who was suspected by the mine management of extorting money through his knowledge of illicit drinking. More pertinently, Sebelu, an Ndebele, was an unpopular martinet who - in the manner of European compound managers of the day - was not above brutal assaults on African workers; he was also a dismissed teacher of the London Mission Society's Inyati mission.[3] The Watch Tower had attracted many mission-trained migrants to it from the ranks of Anglicans and Methodists, and constituted something of a rival group to non-Watch Tower mission-trained miners; as a Nyanja-speaking community, the Watch Tower was also distinct from the small number of local Ndebele workers. In the brief strike, the Watch Tower appears to have provided the basis of the organisation, although the techniques may

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[1] S 138/106, N.C., Wankie, to Supt. Nat. Affairs, Bulawayo, 4 Dec. 1923.

[2] N 3/5/8, N.C., Wankie, to Supt. Nat. Affairs, Bulawayo, 21 May 1923.

[3] S 707, General Manager, Wankie Colliery, to A.N.C., Wankie, 15 May, 1923.

well have been suggested by the European strike for higher wages in December, 1919.[1] Certainly the mobilising ideology for the peaceful protest of downing tools seems to have derived largely from the Watch Tower critique. Although the strike was unsuccessful in its stated aims, a new aspect of the movement had been revealed. Events at Wankie were consequently an important factor in the growing alarm in Southern Rhodesia which led to steps to outlaw the Watch Tower movement.

While the Nyasa elite sought in their Watch Tower communities to promote their desire for education, self-advancement, control over their religion, and a rejection of white overlordship by positing a new sense of African identity, on the mixed compounds such as Wankie and the Bulawayo location a loosely-knit structure appeared which embraced a far wider audience, and in which active millennial expectancy came to be related with industrial action. How explicit and direct was this relationship? In what sense was the Watch Tower movement the basis for industrial, proletarian action? The Watch Tower movement did not possess the formal political features of a bureaucratic structure as did the voters' associations, royalist movements or even the Ethiopian churches, which enabled these to negotiate with the colonial authorities, present petitions and engage in propaganda abroad. Nor did it succeed in the manner of the Industrial and Commercial Workers Union (I.C.U.) in organising amongst Rhodesian Africans

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[1] Ibid.

who were in wage employment. However in the decade 1915-1925 the Watch Tower movement was the only supra-tribal association of any significance on the Southern Rhodesian mines; and by virtue of the pattern of employment, it was in the industrial setting largely an expatriate movement. It was very much concerned with day to day life in the compound, and engaged in a constant interpretation of the lot of the black man vis-à-vis the white settler. In this way it provided an ideology which channelled and made explicit the grievances and emotions of the migrant labourer; and it increased the consciousness of African workers to the extent that it identified the European employing class as an enemy, and engendered a sense of solidarity and community amongst its adherents.

As a consequence the Watch Tower - particularly in Matabeleland where it grew to become a mass movement - played a preparatory and mobilising part in the expression of protest. It may be remarked that numbers of Watch Tower adherents from Wankie, Shamva and the Mashonaland mines generally were later to play a perhaps more explicit role in disturbances on the Northern Rhodesian copperbelt; the seeds were sown in Southern Rhodesia. It is perhaps unnecessary, however, to depict the Watch Tower movement as a forerunner of the I.C.U. It was not this, but a movement which operated on a number of different levels, which on one plane served to assuage the bewilderment of the raw recruit, and on others did promote something of a proletarian consciousness. Generally speaking, the Watch Tower in Southern Rhodesia in 1915-1925 was as much a workers' movement as it was an expatriate Tonga religion.

2. The Shona Watch Tower Movement

The deliberations of the Southern Rhodesian authorities on the Watch Tower were brought to a head when the movement succeeded in spreading to the rural areas, and awakened the old fears of an African uprising. In 1925-6 and again in 1928-9 the Watch Tower emerged amongst the Shona in the Lomagundi, Sinoia and Sipolilo districts of northern Mashonaland as a mass movement, initially led by Nyasa migrants on the farms and mines in the area and by Northern Rhodesian Africans travelling between Lusaka and Salisbury, but soon acquiring local prophets who spread the movement into the remotest sections of the Korekore reserves.

In November, 1925, Chief Sileya of the Gokwe district brought a dozen of his villagers who had been baptised into the movement to the local Native Commissioner, who promptly sought out and arrested several Nyasa Watch Tower preachers,[1] while from the Sinoia citrus estate reports came that 20 attenders of the St Alban's Anglican mission station near Glendale in the Mazoe district had 'deserted' to the Watch Tower.[2] A year later two Nyasas from the Lomagundi area, Jack Mutshenga and one Adam, travelled rapidly through Sileya's district 'baptising, preaching and witch-testing'; as the movement gained in popularity they were joined by other preachers, who, using aliases and eluding local chiefs, spread the word across the Hunyani and Umniati rivers.[3] The message, according to the Native Commissioner at

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[1] S 138/106, Report of the N.C., Sinoia, 1925.

[2] S 138/226, Report of E.W.J. Crane, Mazoe, 30 Jan. 1929.

[3] S 138/106, Report of the N.C., Sinoia, 1926.

Lomagundi, was that Europeans were leaving the country:

> The Church of the Watch Tower emissaries from Northern Rhodesia operated widely in the district. Beginning as teachers of a moral set of principles, they at first made great headway amongst the most backward natives; as they gained adherents the moral principles were dropped, and their teaching took the form of prophecies concerning the Europeans and their future in the country. It was said that all Europeans and those natives who did not join the Watch Tower would be blown away by a whirlwind in the month of November, and the natives would enjoy our property.[1]

The administrative reaction was immediate. Patrols were sent out, chiefs were warned to report any baptisms, and several preachers were arrested, among them Mutshenga, who was found at the Copper Queen mine. These actions and the failure of the November prophecy reportedly led to a temporary recession; also, a number of deaths from pneumonia were reported following baptisms at night. 'But no doubt there will be a recrudescence after the crops are reaped' was the correct prediction of the Native Commissioner at Lomagundi.[2]

When renewed preaching and baptising was reported late in 1928, however, the initial leaders proved to be Shona followers who had joined in 1926 in the Sipolilo reserve.[3] The principal prophets who emerged, Ruwisi and Andreya, were foreigners from the Tete district who were swiftly deported, but as the movement spread west of the Hunyani river into the Lomagundi area and engendered a mass response amongst the northern Shona, a local following of Shona interpreters of Watch Tower ideas appeared. At first, the main concern surrounded witchcraft fears; a local

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[1] Report of the C.N.C. for the year 1926, p. 4.

[2] Ibid.

[3] S 138/226, A.N.C., Sipolilo, to N.C., Sinoia, 26 Sept, 1928.

headman who joined testified that 'Ruwisi said it is my work to dip people, to clear away sin - do not throw the bones [i.e. divine], do not worship dead spirits, do not commit adultery, and do not steal. He said nothing about white men'.[1] The notion that 'baptism or dipping...may well involve a serious crime through witch-testing' was indeed advanced by the Chief Native Commissioner as the rubric under which Shona exponents of the Watch Tower - who could not simply be deported - might be detained.[2] But by 1929 the movement had spread into the areas of chiefs Bepura, Nematombo, Dendera and Chanetsa, thus embracing most of north-western Mashonaland.[3] Despite deportations and prosecutions under the Witchcraft Ordinance,[4] the movement continued to expand from Bepura's into the Urungwe district, where the three sons of a headman preached that negro Americans would arrive by aeroplane within six months, bringing war against the European, freedom from tax, and immunity from bullets for those who had been baptised.[5]

Patrols, arrests and an array of informers succeeded in driving the Watch Tower movement underground, but not in destroying it. In part, the movement was maintained by non-indigenous preachers:

> Many...are in the employment of Europeans, from whom they obtain a few days' absence of leave periodically, during which they make incursions into the Reserves and other places, spreading their doctrines, and return to their work when the local official hears of them and becomes active.[6]

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[1] S 138/226, A.N.C., Sipolilo, to N.C., Sinoia, 1 Nov. 1928.

[2] Ibid., C.N.C., Salisbury, to N.C., Sinoia, 26 Sept. 1928.

[3] Ibid., A.N.C., Urungwe, to N.C., Sinoia, 24 April 1929.

[4] Ibid., R. v. Marota, 1928.

[5] Ibid., A.N.C., Sinoia, to N.C., Sinoia, 23 May 1929.

[6] Ibid., Report of the C.N.C., Salisbury, 2 July 1929.

The Shona leaders were also concealed by their followers, and it appears that a rudimentary organisation of the movement was maintained, judging from reports of a secret conference of principal leaders, held on an outlying farm, which filtered through to the anxious Native Commissioners.[1] Nevertheless, the movement was apparently waning in popularity towards the end of the year. By 1930, chiefs in areas where Watch Tower was strong - such as Chief Chitsunga of Sipolilo - were lodging complaints with the local Native Commissioner, whereas previously they had not dared to do so.[2] Occasional outbursts of millennial expectancy ('after the whirlwind...you will get £1 for 10 eggs') were noted in the Urungwe district in 1931, but in their reports for 1932 and 1933, Native Commissioners in Mashonaland made no mention of the Watch Tower movement, and it may be said that by the 1930's, the movement had run its course among the Shona.[3]

To what extent was this Shona millennialism a reaction against mission teaching? There is evidence to suggest that the early intrusion of Christian doctrines into northern Mashonaland was not without effect. In 1924, the Salvation Army had been making considerable headway in the Sipolilo reserve, with 'singing and dancing to drums and tambourines, drill, and flourishing of banners' - a situation 'capable of abuse', according to the Native Commissioner.[4] Indeed, Hannock

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[1] S 138/226, Statement of Nyamfukudza and Biri, 11 June 1929.

[2] Ibid., C.N.C., Salisbury, to N.C., Sinoia, 5 May 1930.

[3] S 235/510-12, Reports of N.C.'s, Sinoia, Urungwe, Lomagundi, Sipolilo, 1932, 1933, 1934.

[4] S 235/501, Report of N.C., Sipolilo, 1924.

Ruwa, an 'envoy' in the Army, was one of the first Shona Watch Tower leaders, and later in the 1930's and 1940's, the small kraal schools were much beset by desertions to the Watch Tower.[1] However, while the Salvation Army might have had some predisposing effect towards millennarianism by virtue of its earnest gospelling and brass band ceremonialism, its innovative force in Mashonaland was extremely slight. Similarly St Alban's, whence Shona catechists joined the Watch Tower, 'prior...to 1926 was an outstation', rather than a mission centre of any importance.[2] And although it was noted that in 1929 'in the outlying area of Lomagundi district, the Watch Tower is gaining ground on the scattered Christian missions', these small missionary endeavours had hardly touched the bulk of the population.[3] As the Native Commissioner at Lomagundi remarked,

> It is of importance also to note that the movement has made the most headway in areas on the outskirts of civilisation, and among tribes of natives who are still almost quite unsophisticated, and who live in wild country where there has been very little penetration by Christian missionaries.[4]

At the most, some connexion between white dominance and salvationism may have been suggested by mission teaching. In no way was the situation comparable to the impact of the U.F.C. on Tonga society. Indeed, the success of the Watch Tower movement may partly be explained by the very sparseness of

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[1] S 138/106, A.N.C., Urungwe, to N.C., Lomagundi, 19 Jan. 1928; R. Cox, 'The Salvation Army', in Paul S. King (ed.), Missions in Southern Rhodesia (Inyati Centenary Trust, 1959), p. 35.

[2] Edwin W. Smith, The Way of the White Fields in Rhodesia (1928), p. 60.

[3] S 138/106, C.N.C., Salisbury, to Sec. Nat. Affairs, 9 Jan. 1929.

[4] Ibid., Annual Report of the N.C., Lomagundi, 1928.

missionary enterprise in the area. The Shona desired schools, the transmission of skills, European goods and material progress, the resources for which were usually associated with the missionaries, but which had been denied to the Shona. The Watch Tower appeared to offer an alternative route, as is suggested by the evidence of one convert:

> This year Zure baptised me, and told me Mariya Rei and Johnny Chilembwe would come and that we would fight the white people. Also that when that was over we would go to a school.[1]

The vision of modernisation was however seen within a framework of competition between white and black which was a central theme of Kamwana's teaching. American negroes, those members of the black race who had successfully acquired the white man's technology, would arrive in aeroplanes bearing goods, and would liberate their own kind - 'Our King is now America' was a constant watchword amongst the Shona.[2] In some instances, this vision took the form of a total reversal between black and white:

> They brought the tidings that the white people would be taken by a great wind and that we Blacks would see our dead rise white, and we ourselves would be white after we had been baptised. There was to be a period of unconsciousness, then a miraculous and glorious resurrection in the month of the goat [November].[3]

Most significantly, however, the new belief consisted in a re-interpretation by the local prophets which fused Nyasa Watch Tower figures with traditional Shona religious ideas to provide a wholly African redemption:

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[1] S 138/106, Evidence of Mureya, encl. in C.N.C., Salisbury, to Sec. Nat. Affairs, 29 Jan. 1929.

[2] Ibid., Statement of Chief Bepura, 25 Jan. 1929.

[3] Ibid.

DEITIES - it is alleged they pray to Mwari, but REYI, JOHN CHILEMBWE and MARIYA occupy a great place in all their beliefs. /SONGS - These are all in an alien tongue of Chinyanga, Chisenga, and kindred tribes, not Shona. This suggests a strong northern influence. New songs are constantly added so the older ones are soon discarded. The words of the new ones are not easily recognizable.

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BELIEFS AND OBJECTS - It is believed that Reyi, John Chilembwe and Mariya will rise out of the water and come to the people in the "Mbudzi" moon. They will give the people a potent to drink from a cup. This will send the recipient to sleep for seven days. When they awake they will be white and have amassed wealth. They will not need to work. If they work they will work for present whitemen and the whitemen will work for them. All will be on an equal footing financially and socially.[1]

Thus even though major elements of the Christian millennium of the white man's religion were present, and the vision looked forward to the acquisition of the benefits of white society, the ritual and the mediators had become Africanised. 'Mwari' was a traditional Shona religious figure; it is possible that 'Reyi' and 'Mariya' were also customary figures, but these references are obscure. This, the use of Chilembwe's name, and the language of bullets and spears caused many to see the Shona Watch Tower movement as nativistic in that it was leading up to a second rebellion on the lines of the rising of 1897. A police informer gave a dramatic account along these lines to the Native Commissioner at Urungwe:

> The Watch Tower preach, "if the white people had not taken our guns away and made us like women, we would have done some fighting long ago like they have done in Nyasaland... You must dip and be ready for the day when some power will drive out the white people from the country, otherwise you will not have wealth. All Mburuma's people [Shona living north of the Zambezi river] have dipped, and although they are

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[1] S 138/106, N.C., Sinoia, to C.N.C., Salisbury, 3 Jan. 1929 (The Hulley Report).

> quiet now and play their drums like heathens, one of these days they will sanduka [rebel]".... The Maswina listen too easily. They have no guns.[1]

Chief Bepura himself, along with other senior men, seems to have believed that his people were mobilising for war,[2] and this was certainly the attitude of many officials, who instituted patrols designed to show the self-sufficiency of the white man in the bush, cancelled gun permits, and called in all weapons.[3]

Although the language of violent upheaval was being used, however, this was expressive of a reaction against white domination which was not instrumental in any attempt at rebellion; rather, it was directed towards a positive reorganisation of Shona society. The basically radical feature of the Watch Tower movement was that it was very much a forward-looking movement which attempted to break away from traditional customs. Much of the evidence leading to the interpretation of this restructuring as a preparation for rebellion comes from the dubious sources of police spies, native officials and chiefs whose positions were being threatened. By the late 1920's northern Shona society had reached a critical stage of disorganisation in which new initiatives were required; a millennial social movement under the auspices of the Watch Tower provided this, and while the mobilisation which it effected might have displayed similarities in certain aspects of image and language with previous mobilisatory periods in

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[1] S 138/106, A.N.C., Urungwe, to N.C., Sinoia, 14 April 1929.

[2] Ibid., Statement of Chief Bepura, 25 Jan. 1929.

[3] Ibid., A.N.C., Urungwe, to N.C., Sinoia, 24 April 1929.

Shona history, the postulate that this was of a kind with the millennialism of the 1897 rebellion, is not necessarily valid.[1]

The institution of chieftaincy itself had fallen into considerable decay amongst the Shona in this period. The system of collateral succession had been deliberately perpetuated by successive Commissioners with the result, as the Superintendent of Native Affairs, Colonel Carbutt, admitted to a conference of his colleagues in 1927, that the Shona were 'saddled with old and doddering men', and that there was a general breakdown of the control of their society by tribal elders and chiefs.[2] The primary stage of the Watch Tower movement in which it performed a witchcraft eradicating function suggests that while witchcraft fears had been increasing, the diviners and chiefs whose responsibility and prerogative it was to control these, no longer seemed to be effective. 'A considerable number of natives who prefer old customs are being terrorised', it was reported, and it was also remarked that the Watch Tower preachers, 'almost entirely uneducated but of considerable ability', were maintaining their hold 'through their attitude to witches'.[3]

Hulley, the Native Commissioner at Sinoia, succeeded in collecting details from informers about the organisation of the movement which, while superficial, nevertheless indicate that a fundamental reorganisation of ritual and belief had taken place in Shona village life:

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[1] Cf. below, pp. 170-172.

[2] Conference of Superintendents of Natives and Native Commissioners of the Colony of Southern Rhodesia, held in Salisbury, December 1927 (Salisbury, 1928), p. 10.

[3] S 138/106, C.N.C., Salisbury, to Sec. Nat. Affairs, 9 Jan. 1929.

The sect is divided into six classes, as under:

1. MAPASTARA: are those who carry out the baptism ceremony and burial ceremonies...

2. ODARA: Giver of names to children born and names given soon after birth.

3. MADIKONI: visiting sick, praying at bedside, and burying dead.

4. MAPURUJARA: are those who have to see that kraals etc., are kept swept, are sent on errands and see that children have bodies kept clean.

5. MAPIRICHARA: youths who cut reeds for the coffins.

6. MAKRISTU: other members of the faith.

CEREMONIES

a. BAPTISM - This is carried out at night in the vicinity of a pool, where fires are kindled around which the people emerging from the water sit...

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Names such as Yakobi, Jessiah, Geni, Isaki, Egines, Roda ... are given. Their respective totems have been supplanted by the single totem "Israel" which is to be used to the exclusion of their real totems under ban of punishments.

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b. GREETINGS - When people meet they are not to "hombera" to each other but shake hands, addressing each other "Chikonde amayi" if females, and "Chikonde Baba" if males. Children, men, women and even mothers-in-law are shaken by the hand by all and no modesty, as of old, is shown....

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d. TABOOS - Zebra, Porcupine, Tortoise, Pig and Wart-Hog must not be eaten.... Shawe charms and ornaments and all medicinal charms are to be discarded. Bume beer only is to be imbibed. The dead are not to be mourned. Graves are to be kept up and constantly swept and the kraal site is to be free of rubbish. People not dipped are to be shunned and referred to as "SIADOMA" [evil, unclean] or more commonly "NYOKA" [snake]. An Israel cannot eat food with a Nyoka or live close by one or come into bodily contact with one, Swearing at or striking one another is taboo.[1]

The functionally defined categories of office-bearers noted in this report - pastor, elder, deacon, and preacher -

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[1] S 138/106, The Hulley Report.

are very much akin to those which developed in the mwana lesa witch-finding movement amongst the Lamba in Northern Rhodesia a few years earlier, and the similarities in the attempts to maintain a ritual purity in expectation of the coming millennial event are also striking.[1] By 'totem', Hulley appears to be referring to the clan name, which was of particular importance in marking degrees of affinity within Shona society. By removing this restriction and offering new positions and status roles for its adherents, the Watch Tower movement disturbed the existing pattern of familial relations. Witchcraft fears generally occurred within the family, and often at an inter-generational level, and this reorganisation of relationships perhaps particularly relieved social tensions for women. The Old Testament - the particular source of Watch Tower exegesis - provides, of course, an ample source of rules and regulations concerning ritual avoidances for those who regard themselves as the chosen children of Israel.

Communities of believers, practising new rituals, maintaining an elaborate separateness from non-members, and enjoying inter-personal relationships free of the suspicion of malevolent intent which lay at the basis of witchcraft fears, thus emerged as a positive consequence of the movement. One striking feature of the adoption of Watch Tower ideas was the innovation in burial rites and new ideas about the dead. Reports came to Hulley in 1928 that ancestral graves were being treated by Shona adherents as 'Watch Tower shrines'.[2] Burial customs themselves

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[1] Cf. below, pp. 258-259.

[2] S 138/106, N.C., Sinoia, to C.N.C., Salisbury, 15 Nov. 1928.

were changed; instead of the body being interred in a crouched position, 'the deceased is laid out straight, reeds are cut, and he is placed in a wickerwork coffin wrapped in a blanket'.[1] Graves were flat, not mounded, and were carefully maintained. It may be that the Watch Tower theology of resurrection and redemption struck a chord with Shona ideas of ancestor worship, and that this cult of the dead reflected the customary notion that the well-being of the dead depended on the social action of the living.[2] It is however suggestive that funeral rites were conducted in imitation of the European fashion, and that traditional names, charms and clan identities were rejected in favour of biblical ones. For the new communities, the Watch Tower had become a medium for the interpretation of European values which was leading towards an increasing adoption of European rituals.

There are further considerations concerning the timing of this syncretic response which should be taken into account. At the local level, the late 1920's witnessed an acute social and economic crisis in northern Mashonaland. Even prior to the Carter Commission report which culminated in the Land Apportionment Act of 1930, land alienation and segregatory schemes were proceeding rapidly. With their traditional modes of production, this continual erosion of land-holding constituted a severe challenge for the Shona. While the plough had made headway amongst the Ndebele, hoe cultivation had continued amongst the Shona, and the low productivity of tribal husbandry

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[1] S 138/106, The Hulley Report.

[2] Cf. M. Murphree, Christianity and the Shona (1969), Chap. III.

had led to a concentration on stock-raising which the confined reserves could not support.[1] 'In Northern Mashonaland generally', commented the Native Commissioner at Mazoe in 1927, 'the position is certainly very acute indeed with regard to over-stocking of the native reserves.'[2] Chief Bepura's people had been particularly hard hit by Rhodesian schemes to segregate Africans and settlers by the forced resettlement of Africans in reserves. At the time of their response to the Watch Tower they were living in 'an uneasy state of temporary residence' on unalienated Company land east of the Angwa river, paying rent and liable to twelve months' notice to move, and set about by the restrictions of English land law on the chopping of timber and the burning of pasture.[3] The pressure on the land had been compounded by a slump in the Mashonaland mines and a fall in the tobacco price. In 1928 the Copper Queen and Eldorado mines were forced to close down (followed by the Shamva mine in 1930), while tobacco planters refused to pay large numbers of their seasonal labourers. According to the annual report for 1928 of the Native Commissioner at Lomagundi '2,000 fewer Natives [were] employed in the District than at this time last year'.[4]

The Shona movement, then, may be seen as a response to a sudden increase in the scale of their engagement with white settlers which had resulted in a deep sense of oppression, and

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[1] Report of the Native Affairs Committee of Enquiry 1910-1911 (Salisbury, 1911), para. 24.

[2] Conference of Native Commissioners, p. 19.

[3] N 3/16/2, Report of the Land Settlement with Chief Bepura.

[4] S 138/106, Annual Report of the N.C., Lomagundi, 1928; further cf. Report of the Secretary, Department of Mines and Public Works, on Mines, for the Year 1928 (Salisbury, 1929).

in which customary political and religious leaders were proving inadequate. The Shona Watch Tower may thus be characterised as a rehabilitatory and regenerative movement. However illusory and unreal its visions, it inspired hope and confidence, gave an affirmation of racial consciousness which went beyond the boundaries of clan and tribe, and marked an attempt to adopt new rituals and beliefs, believed to be effective for the new situation. Moreover, historically the Watch Tower marked a transition for the northern Shona to the major Vapostori sects of the 1930's which continued into the contemporary period. Perhaps one of the reasons for the short-livedness of the Watch Tower was that unlike the indigenously revealed Vapostori its complex and well-articulated ideology ran so counter to the grain of Shona tradition that as 'a socialistic alternative' - as Hulley described it - it failed to maintain itself.[1] Chiefs and headmen had re-established their influence by the early 1930's, and subsequent to the mass stage, the Watch Tower was of very little significance in rural Mashonaland.

The success of the Watch Tower movement in Mashonaland led to determined attempts to stamp out its influence in Southern Rhodesia as a whole. The desire to pass effective laws against African evangelism was thwarted, however, by the reserved powers over legislation affecting Africans held by Britain. And the furore at this time over the Juvenile Labour Act, which had led the anti-settler lobby to make accusations against the exploitation of child labour, had also helped to

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[1] S 138/106, The Hulley Report.

to create a climate in which the Native Affairs department had to tread warily in attacking what might appear as an indigenous religion. 'It is beyond the bounds of common sense', protested Charles Bullock, then Native Commissioner at Sinoia and himself a student of Shona customs, and much less sympathetic to innovation than Hulley had been, 'to treat as religionists such imposters with their hotch-potch of fanaticism, witchcraft and thinly disguised rebellious propaganda'.[1] Various euphemistic measures against vagrancy and incitement to subversion on the lines of South African legislation were considered, but withdrawn on the grounds that these would be opposed by whites if they applied to both racial groups, and disallowed by Britain if they discriminated solely against Africans.[2]

The Southern Rhodesian Missionary Conference also fought successfully against the introduction of legislation on the lines of Northern Rhodesian provisions which would restrict the activities of African mission teachers, as these were considered to be essential in the competitive business of establishing a 'sphere of influence'.[3] An answer was found finally in the South African system of investing officials with extreme discretion such that the regulation of African life virtually constituted a parallel system of law. The Rhodesian Native Affairs Act (14 of 1927) provided that 'natives must carry out the lawful and reasonable order of the Native Commissioner',

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[1] S 138/106, N.C., Sinoia, to C.N.C., Salisbury, 19 Mar. 1929.

[2] Ibid.

[3] Edwin Smith, The Way of the White Fields, pp. 161-162.

which was a clause directed specifically against Watch Tower teaching in the rural areas.[1]

Looking back on the implementation of these measures when justifying Rhodesia's policy of outlawing the movement to his opposite numbers in Nyasaland and Northern Rhodesia, Colonel Carbutt, the chief Native Affairs official, commented in 1933:

> We were suffering a good deal from the subversive preachings of these people. They were creating a rebellious atmosphere in the reserves, to such an extent that Natives were displaying definite though passive resistance to orders, and in one district they went so far as to boycott the Native Commissioner's office.[2]

Just as the Watch Tower in Southern Rhodesia was itself a movement in reaction to the colonial order of the settler system, so the administrative response entailed a further hardening of segregatory legislation. A policy of discretionary tolerance allowed the small Watch Tower communities which existed in the 1930's to continue, provided that no overt millennial preaching was undertaken, but the restrictions on the importation of literature and the movement of both W.T.B.T.S. officials and African independent leaders severely curtailed their activities. While there was some mingling of Watch Tower ideas with the major social movements of the 1930's, following its development on the mine compounds and reserves in the 1920's the Watch Tower in Southern Rhodesia lost its cohesiveness as a movement, and ceased to have a political role of any significance.

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[1] Southern Rhodesia Legislative Assembly Debates, cc. 2726-9, 13 July 1928.

[2] Z. Arch., ZA 5/3/1, Victoria Falls Conference of Native Commissioners, 1933.

3. New Directions in the 1930's

The year 1930 was a watershed for Southern Rhodesian Africans. In this year the Land Apportionment Act, designed to entrench white supremacy on a territorial basis, was promulgated; firm measures were taken against the I.C.U., and the Watch Tower as a mass phenomenon was eradicated; and the creation of 'native boards' and the emergence of elitist associations such as the Conference of Christian Natives and the Bantu Congress heralded a new era in African politics.[1] By virtue of its proximity to Northern Rhodesia and Nyasaland, Southern Rhodesia continued to experience the attention of Watch Tower leaders, but with only minor exceptions the local following fell away from the movement. Those groups which survived were quietist rather than revolutionary, in that a passive awaiting of heavenly benefits and quite Bible study were the main activities. At the same time the Vapostori movements attracted a mass Shona following; these indigenous Christian interpretations were the most important social movements in Mashonaland in the 1930's, and proved to possess a far wider appeal than the Watch Tower. The interest of the W.T.B.T.S. in Southern Rhodesia was once again awakened in this period, but the administration was set on a course of outlawing what appeared to be sedition, and very little progress was made. Nevertheless, millennialism was still a distinct feature of African life in the 1930's; occurring spasmodically, and

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[1] T.O. Ranger, The African Voice, pp. 226-227.

failing to establish itself within a coherent movement, it nevertheless formed a significant strand in the current of ideas. As in Nyasaland, it is hard to escape the conclusions that this strand derived extensively from Watch Tower teachings.[1]

After the lapse of activity in the late 1920's, the Wankie compound continued until the post-war period as a centre of Watch Tower belief. Commenting on the absence of religious separatism in 1930, the Chief Native Commissioner stated that

> The Watch Tower movement is reported to be alive in the Wankie District, the centre of its activity being in the Mine Compound. In connection therewith the Native Commissioner reports that the adherents are quiet, well-behaved and never aggressive.[2]

More details appear from a 1932 report that Charlie Mahoka - a Nyasa - plus a following of 40, were studying W.T.B.T.S. tracts and holding services twice a week;[3] in 1933 previous Watch Tower deportees were once again removed;[4] and in 1936 over half the group split off to join the Jehovah's Witnesses.[5] While the groups at Wankie and Que Que were regarded as 'subterranean and ineradicable',[6] other small groups of mostly Nyasa adherents were broken up by the administration at Shabani, Bulawayo, and Salisbury.[7] Generally, these groups seem to have

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[1] The restriction placed on access to subject files for the 1930's in the Rhodesian National Archives has led to a reliance in this section on annual reports. Future research should illustrate developments in this period more fully.

[2] S 235/508, Annual Report of the C.N.C., 1930.

[3] S 138/226, Report of Activity in Wankie Colliery, March 1932.

[4] S 235/511, Annual Report of the N.C., Wankie, 1933.

[5] S 235/514, Annual Report of the N.C., Wankie, 1936.

[6] S 235/512, Annual Report of the N.C., Que Que, 1934.

[7] S 235/511, Annual Report of the N.C., Shabani, 1933;
S 235/517, Annual Report of the N.C., Bulawayo, 1939.

depended on the periodic arrival of notables from the north, but as these were soon detected and deported, activities were at the best fitful.

After its brief revival in 1931, the Watch Tower disappeared from northern Mashonaland except for Lomagundi, where a small group not dissimilar to the compound congregations had established itself.[1] The main purpose of this community was the distribution and study of W.T.B.T.S. literature. 'The native Watch Tower adherents of today, in my opinion, are not a very dangerous body', reported the Lomagundi Commissioner:

> It is popular because it upholds the native contention held for many years, that the native educational system purposely omits certain teachings beneficial to that section, and, also, advances the theory that the lowly and poor, which description natives take to apply particularly to themselves, by continuing a passive life, are qualified without any effort on their part to a heavenly reward.[2]

With the abundance of cheap publications to which the Watch Tower gave access, this feature seems to have been one of its main attractions in this period. As part of the clampdown on rural protest movements, African urban associations had been forbidden in 1930 to make representations about conditions in the reserves;[3] also, 'religious unaided schools' - bush schools not under European supervision - were required to be registered, which led to a number of closures.[4] Such attempts at controlling education were a constant theme of early quasi-nationalist

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[1] S 138/226, A.N.C., Urungwe, to N.C., Sinoia, 28 Mar. 1931.

[2] S 235/517, Annual Report of the N.C., Lomagundi, for 1939.

[3] S 348, C.N.C. to all N.C.'s, 2 Sept. 1930.

[4] Proceedings of the Southern Rhodesian Missionary Conference, 1932.

movements, as Ranger has argued for central Africa generally; and the Watch Tower was no exception.[1]

In the mid-1930's a number of the smaller missions such as the Apostolic Faith Mission and the African Methodist Episcopal Church were also forced to reduce their activities drastically, owing to a shortage of funds. Defections to the Watch Tower appear to have recurred as a direct result of this in places such as Buhera in 1932,[2] at Inyanga and the south Maranke reserve, Umtali, in 1935-6,[3] and at Gwanda in 1936.[4] The outbreak of the war in 1939 reportedly led to an outbreak of Watch Tower prophesying, notably at Umtali, but this was probably a Nyasa rather than an indigenous phenomenon, as its incidence was limited to the migrant labour route between the two countries.[5]

Apart from the mcapi witchcraft eradication movement which swept through the eastern districts of Southern Rhodesia in the mid 1930's, other incidences of movements with a millennial and messianic flavour appear to have been brief and spasmodic.[6] The 'Religion of the Knife' which appeared amongst immigrant Shangaan workers on the De Beers ranch at Belingwe in 1933, causing an Ndebele nganga (diviner, healer) to destroy his medicines and follow the unnamed prophet is one such instance,

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[1] T.O. Ranger, 'African Attempts to control education in East and Central Africa, 1900-1939', Past and Present, XXXII, 1965; cf. below, pp. 362-366, 450-453.

[2] S 235/510, Annual Report of the N.C., Buhera, 1932.

[3] S 235/513-4, Annual Reports of the N.C., Umtali, 1935, 1936.

[4] S 235/514, Annual Report of the N.C., Gwanda, 1936.

[5] S 235/517, Annual Report of the N.C., Umtali, 1939.

[6] On the mcapi movement, cf. below, pp. 305-311.

but details of this interesting episode are sparse.[1] The Jeremiah movement at Chipinga in 1931-3 also displayed a type of pre-Vapostori millennial revivalism. This movement commenced after two German anthropologists dressed in white clothes were hailed as deities when seen walking through the forest; a 'wave of religious fervour' overtook people in the area of the American Board mission at Mount Selinda under the leadership of Jeremiah, who termed the movement the 'Zion Apostolic City Church'. With its rejection of government and missionaries 'whose lot is with the ungodly', night-long praying, and expectation of manna from heaven, this movement was not dissimilar to the Watch Tower in some of its forms.[2] It was the Zionist movement in western Mashonaland and the Vapostori sects of Johannes Masowe and Johannes Maranke in eastern Mashonaland which emerged in the early 1930's, however, that came to dominate Shona religious life. Incorporating many elements of traditional religion and ritual, these movements offered a healing, divining and prophetic role of immediate relevance to the Shona.[3] Far more than the attempts at administrative control, the emergence of these major Shona movements spelled the end of Watch Tower influence.

The W.T.B.T.S., reorganised as the Jehovah's Witnesses, were concerned at this time to re-establish their links with their African correspondents. The attitude of the Southern Rhodesian administration, unlike that of Nyasaland or Northern

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[1] S 235/511, Annual Report of the N.C., Belingwe, for 1933.

[2] S 235/509-11, Annual Reports of the N.C., Chipinga, 1931, 1932, 1933.

[3] Cf. M. Murphree, Christianity and the Shona, Chap. VI; T.O. Ranger, The African Voice, pp. 217-23; M.L. Daneel, The Background and Rise of Southern Shona Independent Churches (Mouton, The Hague, 1971) provides the most detailed study of these movements.

Rhodesia, was however unyielding. Although a brief foray into the field was permitted to a European representative of the Society in 1932, the administration was more interested in outlawing independent African oratory, whether religious or political, than in channelling it.[1] In 1932 a bill 'to suppress newspapers, books, documents and utterances calculated to promote unrest amongst natives' was mooted as a successor to the legislation proposed in 1927-8 at the height of the Shona Watch Tower movement. The Native Preachers Bill, rejected in 1924, was also revived in 1936 to provide for 'the control of fanatical and ostensibly religious movements among natives by the issue of certificates to native teachers and preachers'. Both bills became notorious as targets for the anti-settler lobby in Britain and amongst missionaries, and, with the indication of imperial disfavour as well, were withdrawn.[2] However in 1936 a Sedition Act which achieved the same purposes was passed.[3] The first prosecution under this act was of the leading African Jehovah's Witness in Southern Rhodesia, one Oliver Maidstone Kabungo, who shared his time between Salisbury and the copperbelt. His appeal against the proscription of the Society's literature in his possession was upheld, but the victory was shortlived.[4] In 1939, the Jehovah's Witnesses were explicitly banned in Southern Rhodesia, as part

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[1] Cf. Proceedings of the Southern Rhodesian Missionary Conference, 1932.

[2] A.S. Cripps, 'We Ought to Obey God rather than Man', African Observer, March 1936; R.H. MSS. Afr., G 168 MSS Brit. Emp. s 23, A.S. Cripps to Sir John Harris, 30 Mar. 1936, and S.M. Ndhlovu to Sir John Harris, 13 Jan. 1932.

[3] C. Palley, The Constitutional History and Law of Southern Rhodesia 1888-1965 (Oxford, 1966), pp. 246-247.

[4] Bulawayo Chronicle, 25 Sept. 1937.

of the war measures, and it was not until 1947 that these restrictions were removed. As in Nyasaland, the era of independent Watch Tower teaching had by that stage ended.

While the Watch Tower movement was only of minor importance in Rhodesian African history, and had faded by the 1930's, it nevertheless helps to illustrate the pattern of social transformation which industrialisation in central Africa was bringing in its wake. New relationships and new ideas were emerging among the communities of foreign migrants, requiring new types of association and modes of accommodation, while the pressure on rural society was giving rise to new types of resistance and adjustment. Also, as a centre for the diffusion of the movement to Northern Rhodesia, and thence ultimately to the Belgian Congo, Rhodesia acted as a crucial link. By virtue of its being a settler colony, however, it is apparent that the administrative factor in the demise of the movement bulked large: it was generally interpreted as a political rather than as a religious movement, adherents were regularly deported, and the importation of W.T.B.T.S. tracts strictly controlled.

Indeed, one may speculate that in this climate of repression much of the Watch Tower activity and organisation was hidden from surveillance, and that police files reveal only part of the story. What might have been the course of development, one may ask, if a policy of relative toleration - as in Northern Rhodesia - had been pursued? It is conceivable that the Watch Tower would have become a dominant ideology on the mines, and would have penetrated further into rural Rhodesia,

perhaps more explicitly as a witchcraft eradication movement. Such considerations reveal the limits of the importance of the administrative factor, however. Rhodesia is perhaps more comparable to South Africa than, say, to the Belgian Congo with regard to the interaction between administrative attitudes and African religious independency, in that it was primarily the rapid rate of structural change which restricted the appeal of millennialism. By the 1930's in Rhodesia the white presence was pervasive, the dislocation of African society and its involvement in the colonial economy was thorough-going; and the penetration of the modernising influence of missions had been considerable. In addition, a variety of forward-looking associations - many from South Africa - was available. Thus one may say that the period during which circumstances for the occurrence of millennial movements in Southern Rhodesia were favourable was in itself a brief one.

Moreover, it was chiefly to immigrant Africans that the Watch Tower appealed. By virtue of the fact that most Northern Rhodesian Africans were recruited by the R.N.L.B., these tended to be concentrated in Matabeleland, and in centres where labouring conditions were the harshest. Coming from areas hardly touched by company rule that was only a decade or two old, the regimentation of the compounds and urban locations provided a rude introduction to settler rule. With the exception of the Lozi, Northern Rhodesian migrants came from many different areas. Given that Barotseland itself was composed of an agglomeration of many tribal groups, it was perhaps the

case that such multi-ethnic milieux as Wankie and Bulawayo were unfavourable centres for the establishment of tribal associations catering for northerners. To these migrant foreigners, the Watch Tower offered a pan-tribal associational home, the familiarity for many of the Nyanja language, and an overall explanation of their subjugated position under white colonial rule. It appeared, too, to open the door to the white world through the emphasis on literacy and the Bible.

The extent to which the rejection of temporal authority inherent in the Watch Tower ideology communicated itself to these communities beyond promoting a general anti-colonial consciousness, is, however, hard to say. Its role in the expression of industrial protest in Southern Rhodesia is not a clearly defined one. The Wankie strike in 1923, where the immediate causes concerned an unpopular one-time African mission teacher, seems to have been closely related to the Watch Tower critique of European attitudes and to religious rivalry in the compound, and the strikers do appear to have utilised the movement's admittedly loose organisational structure. But it must be said that the evidence is fragmentary, and that the statements of compound police and mine managers faced with militant protest were neither comprehensive nor unbiased. The tendencies to ignore the grassroots of African social life and to search for scapegoats combined to present a distorted picture. Nevertheless, it is considered that there was a close connexion between the Watch Tower and industrial action, even though this may not have been as clearcut as administrators of the day and later scholars of African nationalism have argued. Certainly

individual Watch Tower adherents who had worked in Southern Rhodesia were subsequently closely connected with unrest on the Northern Rhodesian copperbelt; at Broken Hill in 1924 the Watch Tower was directly responsible for an active defiance of authority by miners; and on the Katanga mines, the movement too played a significant part in the expression of grievances.[1] At the least, then, one may argue that in part the Watch Tower movement on the Southern Rhodesian mines was a workers' movement, even if it did not necessarily promote a sense of proletarianism.

Nyasa migrants in Mashonaland were faced with a double disability in that not only were they subject to the rigours of compound labour, but also in that the avenues of advancement for skilled and literate craftsmen or would-be farmers were severely limited. Not only was racial discrimination open and avowed, but as foreigners the Nyasalanders had no rights to land, no job security, and no freedom of movement, and indeed were treated with the added suspicion of having come from the land of the Chilembwe revolt. The petition of Kampara and the establishment of his Gazaland Ethiopian Church are a most interesting attempt to mitigate these factors at the level of bureaucratic negotiation by positing a joint Rhodesia-Nyasaland national identity, and explicitly attacking the colour bar and white brutality. In a far less direct manner, the Nyasa Watch Tower movement also tackled the problem of identity, offering at one level a general notion of the black race as against the

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[1] Cf. below, p. 409.

white, and at another the sense of belonging to a chosen elite - more explicitly, the followers of Elliott Kamwana - whose rewards would materialise upon the arrival of the millennium. While having no greater instrumental effect than Kampara on the objective circumstances of the grievances of Nyasa migrants, the Watch Tower offered something of a solution by way of providing an enclosed community, in which a process of adaption towards the new, industrial culture took place.

The initial role of Nyasa Watch Tower preachers amongst the northern Shona in 1926 was closely allied with the eradication of witchcraft. In the light of contemporary Watch Tower witch-finding and witch-cleansing movements in Northern Rhodesia and the Belgian Congo, this phase of the movement suggests that the northern movements may have directly influenced the Shona Watch Tower. The first baptisers may well have been associated with mwana lesa in Lala country, and it is certainly probable that word of this adaptation of the Watch Tower movement had circulated widely. This is perhaps an unnecessary postulate, however; it has been argued that the sense of a need for ritual purity arose out of the desire to break with the old and take over the new, and that the local leadership was considered inadequate for this task. And as with witch-cleansing cults generally, the initiators were foreigners. Rather is it the case that the movement arose as a response to the structural inadequacy of Shona society at a time of intensified economic pressures. A further point is that whereas the mwana lesa movement had

strong elements of an anti-sorcery cult - in that it was directed against specific individuals - the first phase of the Shona Watch Tower appears to have been more similar to the later mcapi movements in that it operated at a more general, societal level. Consequently it is significant that when the movement became widespread in 1928-9 it did so under the charismatic leadership of locally recruited men. Little evidence of witchcraft eradication at this stage is forthcoming, and the emphasis of the movement was on discarding traditional religion, customs, and even the symbols of tribal identity for a brief period in which a totally new attempt was made to remove the causes of their condition of oppression.

In characterising the Shona movement then as a regenerative and rehabilitative movement, what significance should be attached to the apparent language and behaviour of rebellion? Ranger, in his detailed consideration of Shona history in the colonial period, has provided one view which should be assessed. While not denying the importance of the religious features of the movement, he argues that the Shona movement should be seen in the context of the 1897 Shona rising - under the charismatic leadership of the Kagubi spirit medium - and the later emergence of mass nationalism. 'It was, in a sense, a half way house between mass commitment to the risings and mass commitment to the African nationalist parties of the 1950's and 1960's', he has argued, characterising it as an attempt 'to transform the tradition of revolt'.[1] The role of mass commitment in modern

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[1] Ranger, Revolt in Southern Rhodesia, pp. 379, 381.

nationalism, and the utilisation of 'the energy of rural radicalism', constitute a type of millennialism of which the Watch Tower is an example, and it is thus a 'step along the road from the risings of 1896 to the emergence of modern nationalism'.[1] Further, the Watch Tower movement occurred as an experiment for those still seeking a means of revolt: 'the movement appealed to Shona intransigents who longed to offer a challenge to the whites similar to that of 1896-7 but at the same time it appealed in terms which revealed a desire to share the material prosperity of the whites....'[2] In fairness to Ranger's arguments it should be stated that these quotations are taken out of lengthy and detailed context, in which the nuances of the Watch Tower movement are explored, and that Ranger has clearly distinguished the Watch Tower from other Shona millennial movements, and does not consider it to be harking back to the past.[3] However, while accepting the validity of much of Ranger's discussion, there are some difficulties in this view.

First, the Shona did not constitute a single unit of social and political action such that broad generalisations relating events over several decades may be taken as generally accurate. The northern Shona did not participate in the 1897 rising - which may in itself be a factor of significance for the later occurrence of millennialism - although it was in the

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[1] Ranger, The African Revolt, pp. 222, 383.

[2] Ibid., p. 204.

[3] Ranger, 'African Politics in Twentieth Century Southern Rhodesia', in Ranger (ed.), Aspects of Central African History (1968), pp. 231-232; 'The Early History of Independency, (1964), p. 73.

Korekore areas that Mapondera staged his rebellion in 1900, and the process whereby the administration established its presence did not differ significantly from/areas where that in there had been rebellion.[1] As regards Shona culture, too, generalisations are suspect; as Murphree has warned, it is dangerous 'to generalise about "the Shona" as a whole, particularly in respect to religion'.[2] It is conceivable that the fortunes of spirit mediums in north-western Mashonaland in the 1920's were at a much lower ebb than those in the other Shona areas, which may have been a predisposing factor to the acceptance of Nyasa mediators and an imitation of European modes. The question of timing and the operation of local factors suggests too that the notion of 'the Shona predicament' is too broad; the northern Shona had had access to Watch Tower ideas for probably nearly a decade before a mass response occurred, nor was Watch Tower influence limited to one area of Mashonaland. Specific factors such as the level of missionary endeavour and the land settlement with Bepura, together with the proximity to the routes of migrant labourers from the north, should also be taken into account.

Secondly, the comparison between the millennialism of the risings, that of the Watch Tower movement, and that of later nationalism appears cogent only on the level of analogy, or that of an ostensive rather than real relationship. The millennial techniques of mobilisation of the Shona rising under the generalship of a charismatic leader were supplementary to the indigenous structure; the expectancy of mass nationalism

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[1] Ranger, 'The Last Days of the Empire of Mwene Mutapa', Conference on the History of Central African Peoples (Lusaka, 1963).

[2] Murphree, Christianity and the Shona, p. 3.

was a general attitude rather than a social movement operating under the vision of millennial change. The Watch Tower was neither 'nativist' nor an enduring set of attitudes, but rather a brief and spasmodic attempt by a section of the Shona to cope with a local situation.

Finally, the Native Affairs officials from whose files knowledge of this movement has been obtained were geared to think in terms of rebellion and the black peril when confronted with evidence of African social mobilisation. The chiefs, who were bitterly opposed to the subversion of their own authority, and the police spies, anxious to provide dramatic information, have perhaps unduly coloured the information in the direction of an apparent Shona rebelliousness. No concrete evidence of any preparedness to fight or of the taking of any measures likely to suggest an actively hostile attitude is given; the passive boycotting of a Native Commissioner's office seems to have been the most overt act. Yet the Watch Tower movement was capable of inspiring rebellious movements under different circumstances, as the Kumu revolt illustrates.[1] To the extent that the language and symbols of rebellion were present, it may be argued, these related more to the salvationist role of the American negro liberators than to a reinterpretation of earlier periods of Shona history. And one may even question whether if a millennial rebellion under the auspices of the Watch Tower movement had broken out at this stage, it would not have been on a very different level to previous movements.

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[1] Cf. below, pp. 419-424.

While the notion of a continuing millennialism amongst the Shona seems dubious, then, it is perhaps permissible to regard the Watch Tower movement as constituting a transitory stage in the development of major Shona religious movements in the 1930's, in the sense that in offering a new avenue of response for certain sections of Shona society - which failed perhaps because of its very alienness and hostility to Shona culture - the Watch Tower movement provided a type of solution which was to become widespread in Mashonaland under the auspices of the far more effectively syncretic Vapostori movements. It was in Northern rather than in Southern Rhodesia, however, that the Watch Tower became an indigenous movement, with a wide variety of form. The full flowering of the heritage of Elliott Kamwana took place north of the Zambezi, in territories ruled by companies rather than by settlers, where the gulf between the industrialised mining belts and the surrounding countryside was far deeper even than in Southern Rhodesia.

CHAPTER IV

THE BEGINNINGS OF THE WATCH TOWER MOVEMENT IN NORTHERN RHODESIA

1. Introduction
2. North-Eastern Rhodesia, 1917-1923
3. Conclusion

1. Introduction

In Nyasaland and Southern Rhodesia the Watch Tower movement for all its effect on attitudes of the day was nevertheless a phenomenon broadly limited to small and specific sections of the overall society. In Northern Rhodesia, however, by the end of the 1930's nearly every part of the country was familiar with the gospel of the black millennium; African independent churches were notably less numerous than in the south, perhaps because of this predominance; and the social and labour movements which have been regarded as key transitional phenomena in the rise of modern nationalism were profoundly influenced by the Watch Tower. How did it come about that this doctrine should have been so widespread north of the Zambezi? To what extent can its appeal be delineated in terms of specific tribal cultures and socio-economic situations, and how significant were the broader historical circumstances of the impact of colonial rule? What was the significance of their participation to those who joined the movement, and for the country as a whole?

In order to answer these questions, some preliminary analysis of Northern Rhodesia in the early colonial period is necessary. Chapters IV, V, VI, VII and VIII all discuss various aspects of the Watch Tower in different periods and places in Northern Rhodesia, in which attention is paid to particular facets of the colonial system. Three sets of interrelated factors which seem to be of particular importance in considering the background of the Watch Tower movement, however, may be mentioned at this stage. These are Northern Rhodesia's

origins as a settler colony under company rule; its ambivalent status after 1924 as an area under imperial control in which the doctrine of the paramountcy of native interests officially held sway; and the particular social, religious and political configuration of the African societies of the area.

By settler colony is meant the establishment of rule by an incoming minority with residential and commercial interests, which sees itself as possessing a peculiar and exclusive claim to the enjoyment of political and economic power, and erects a series of institutions which give expression to these. Like Southern Rhodesia, Northern Rhodesia became incorporated as a territorial state under the administration of Cecil Rhodes' British South Africa Company (B.S.A. Co.). The philosophy, administrative manpower and laws of early Northern Rhodesia consequently were derived from the South African experience. The miners, farmers and also many of the missionaries who formed the white pioneer stock came predominantly from Natal, the Cape, the Transvaal, and other parts of central Africa, rather than directly from Europe. Their attitudes towards Africans embraced not only a profound conviction of cultural superiority, but also political and economic ideas typical of Southern Africa - beliefs in social segregation, economic dualism, and the African as the object of rule rather than a participant, except in the limited sphere of the policy of indirect rule.

It is one of the central arguments of this thesis that the appeal of the Watch Tower movement derived in large measure from the confrontation between white and black within a colonial

relationship. This is to say that policies and attitudes which were perceived as exploitative, discriminatory, depriving and frustrating gave birth to a wide range of emotions, from passive and compensatory fantasies to outbursts of active hostility, for whose expression this millennial movement was peculiarly suited. In particular, the Watch Tower ideology identified an in-group and an out-group corresponding to the ruled and the rulers of significance for a pluralist, settler society where divisions between sections were sharp. This is not to say that protest inspired by the Watch Tower could not be channelled by one section of African society against another (of which the Wiko-Lozi troubles in the late 1930's were a striking example[1]), nor that other forms of opposition might not be inspired by similar causes. Indeed, the relationship between the Watch Tower movement and other more recognisably nationalistic associations and ideologies in this period is a question which will be pursued in considering the Northern Rhodesian case. But both directly and indirectly the presence of settlers, it will be argued, contributed greatly to the widespread appeal of the Watch Tower.

Being further geographically from the heartland of racial exclusivism, as it were, it might be supposed that Northern Rhodesia settler society would be more temperate in its approach to matters of the social and political status of Africans. Racialism was not only a cultural import, however, but was also sustained by the local view of Africans as units of cheap labour.

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[1] Cf. below, pp. 339-350.

As has been argued by H.J. and R.E. Simons, the demand for labour was in itself a major determining factor of racial attitudes.[1] The first decades of Northern Rhodesia's colonial experience were dominated by demands - both internal and external - for migrant labour. The multiple relationships between labour migration and the Watch Tower movement in Nyasaland and Southern Rhodesia are manifest; the case of Northern Rhodesia illuminates this aspect in much greater detail.

In the first decade of the twentieth century, Southern Rhodesia was suffering from a desperate labour shortage which inevitably led the B.S.A. Co. to see northern Zambezia as a natural source of cheap labour.[2] 'Zambezi boys' were not uncommon on the Kimberly diamond fields and Rand mines in the 1880's, but the imposition of hut tax in 1900-1 and the official welcome given to the R.N.L.B. in 1904 turned the trickle of migration to the south (mainly Rhodesia) into a flood, particularly from Barotseland,[3] and the northern districts of North-Eastern Rhodesia.[4] Imperial displeasure at the involvement of the company administration in labour recruiting helped to promote voluntary migration, since it opened the doors to the employment of labour agents, who all too often mounted armed expeditions which engaged in labour impressment rather than in strict contracting. Voluntary migration enabled workers to

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[1] H.J. and R.E. Simons, Colour and Class in South Africa 1850-1950, (1970).

[2] Warhurst, 'Rhodesia and Her Neighbours 1900-23', pp. 44, 62-81.

[3] G.L. Caplan, The Elites of Barotseland 1878-1969 (1970), pp. 87-88.

[4] L.H. Gann, A History of Northern Rhodesia: Early Days to 1953 (first edn., Salisbury, 1963; reprinted New York, 1969), p. 108. This will be cited hereafter as Gann, History.

choose their place of work, and also to proceed from Southern Rhodesia to the higher wages and better conditions of the Rand. Thus despite the high death rates and grim conditions particularly at Southern Rhodesia's small mines, by the time of the first world war the efflux was measured in tens of thousands.[1] The Katanga mines also drew heavily on Northern Rhodesian labour in this period, creating a two-way traffic in men and ideas which was to prove at least as important for the propagation of Watch Tower ideas as that across the Zambezi.[2]

Within Northern Rhodesia, sporadic production at small mines provided a limited amount of local employment. The most important of these were the Kansanshi copper mine, the smelter at Bwana Mkubwa, and the Broken Hill lead and zinc mine, which came into production in the decade 1902-12.[3] With the establishment of white farming communities along the maize belt between Mazabuka and Broken Hill and on the tobacco soils around Fort Jameson this local labour market was extended, but it was not until the development of the copperbelt in the late 1920's that the balance began to swing towards internal rather than external migration. Thus the first phase of Watch Tower activity should be seen against the background of Northern Rhodesia as a labour reservoir for neighbouring territories.

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[1] M. Gelfand, 'The Migration of African Labourers in Rhodesia and Nyasaland (1890-1914)', Central African Journal of Medicine, VII, 8, 1961.

[2] Cf. below, p. 406.

[3] Cf. Gann, History, pp. 121-124.

With the transfer of the administration of Northern Rhodesia from the B.S.A. Co. to the Colonial Office on April 1st 1924, a departure from the Southern Rhodesian model (by this stage under responsible government) in the direction of more liberal policies seemed possible. The colony attained protectorate status and a governor independent of settler pressures, with Sir Herbert Stanley (1924-7) and Sir James Maxwell (1927-32) representing the spirit of trusteeship - men who were sympathetic to policies of indirect rule, and aimed at ruling Northern Rhodesia as a British colony rather than as an extension of Southern Rhodesia. The missionary voice and the liberal lobby came to have more weight in public affairs, and with the enunciation of the doctrine of the paramountcy of native interests in the Duke of Devonshire's White Paper in 1923[1] and the Passfield Memorandum of 1930,[2] settler colonial policies appeared to be on the decline.

Policies favoured by the settlers, while blocked on the issues of closer union with Southern Rhodesia and the broad principles of the administration of African affairs, nevertheless came to be established with the industrial transformation of Northern Rhodesia following the development of the copperbelt. The booming copperbelt produced a white mining community, markets for white commercial farmers, and a series of white towns which came to be the heart of the colony. By virtue of

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[1] Memorandum relating to Indians in Kenya (Cmd. 1922 of 1923).

[2] Statement of the Conclusions of His Majesty's Government in the United Kingdom as regards Closer Union in East Africa (Cmd. 3574 of 1930).

their status as the major employers and revenue-earners, the mining companies exercised a substantial influence on governmental policy, while they in their turn were open to pressure from the white labour force, which demanded the industrial colour bar and segregated urban living conditions.[1] Thus while at one level the idea of the constitutional evolution of the colony towards majority rule obtained, at another the segregatory practices of white settlers were instituted.

The slow rate of development of African education may be particularly noted, as this was a major factor in the popularity of the Watch Tower. During the 1920's and 1930's African education was left in the hands of the missions, which were relatively sparsely established in the territory; educational institutions sponsored by the government in the early 1930's were largely closed for lack of money following the slump; and, with the exception of the government newspaper Mutende, produced in 1937 as an attempt to counteract the popularity of Watch Tower pamphlets, vernacular literature outside the mission presses was non-existent.[2] The ambiguities of an imperial administration in a settler colony thus provide the broad background of the official response to the Watch Tower.

The Northern Rhodesian government was constrained in its dealings with the Watch Tower not only by its own principles of native administration, which included such contradictory

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[1] Cf. E.L. Berger, 'Labour Policies on the Northern Rhodesian Copperbelt, 1924-1964' (D.Phil., Oxon, 1969). This will be cited hereafter as Berger, 'Labour Policies'. I am grateful to Dr. Berger for permission to consult her thesis.

[2] T.A. Coombe, 'The Origins of Secondary Education in Zambia' (Ph.D., Harvard, 1968).

elements as a respect for African religion and a desire to control preaching by licence, but also by the attitudes of settlers and indeed of many of its administrators. The fears generated by the Rhodesian rebellions of 1896-7 and the Chilembwe revolt were intensified in Northern Rhodesia by the connexion between Watch Tower followers and the large scale killing of people accused as witches in 1925-6, assaults on chiefs, missionaries and government officials, and most particularly by its association with the labour unrest of the mid-1930's. Within the administration there was a conflict between those who wished to regulate the movement by officially recognising it and establishing white control, and those who saw any such recognition as a slap in the eye for the chiefs and the cherished principle of indirect rule. Generally speaking, the policies adopted fell between those of Nyasaland and Southern Rhodesia. That is to say that the recognition granted by Sir Hubert Young to the followers of Booth and Kamwana in 1924 was only finally extended to the Watch Tower in Northern Rhodesia in 1947, while the strict policy of suppression adopted in Southern Rhodesia - even if contemplated - was not pursued. Why was the decision to grant recognition so long delayed, and did this ambivalent attitude, as was often alleged at the time, encourage Africans in the belief that the Watch Tower was a successfully subversive movement? Given the generally low level of administrative control in Northern Rhodesia in this period, however, it may be that official policies were not of great moment in the course of events; nevertheless they are not only of interest in

themselves, but also of comparative importance in assessing the development of the Watch Tower in different areas of central Africa.

A striking feature of the territorial area encompassed by the B.S.A. Co. north of the Zambezi was the variety of types of tribal organisation and culture of African societies. As has frequently been noted, these local differences crucially influenced the varying responses to the successive waves of external influences which culminated in industrialism - the slave trade, missionary endeavour, and rule by company and colonial office.[1] The African population consisted of both centralised state systems, and of groups living in only loose political association; immigration, still continuing during the colonial period, came from the Luba and Lunda in the north, from the Mambwe, Lungu, Tumbuka, Chewa and Senga in the north-east and east, from the Ngoni, Kololo and Shona in the south, and from the Mbundu, Chokwe, Luchazi and Kaonde in the west. Only the Ila-Tonga perhaps, and possibly the Tabwa of the Bangweulu swamps, may be said to be indigenous to the area in the sense of being settled there since their iron ages.[2] The extension of rule over this heterogeneous population was a slow

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[1] Cf. L.H. Gann, 'The End of the Slave Trade in British Central Africa 1889-1912', Rhodes-Livingstone Journal, XVI, 1954; also by the same author, The Birth of a Plural Society: The Development of Northern Rhodesia under the British South Africa Company 1894-1914 (M.U.P., 1958). This argument is also pursued by R.I. Rotberg, Christian Missionaries and the Creation of Northern Rhodesia, 1880-1924 (Princeton, 1965). Cf. also Prosser Gifford, 'The Framework for a Nation: An Economic and Social History of Northern Rhodesia from 1914 to 1939' (Ph.D., Yale, 1964).

[2] W.V. Brelsford, The Tribes of Zambia (2nd edn., Lusaka, 1965), pp. 1-2.

and uneven process, with missionaries frequently establishing themselves well in advance of the administration. Primary resistance was notably brief, and limited to Mpeseni's Ngoni and Kasembe's Lunda. Initially, political relations were established through treaties and negotiations with chiefs, and the slow advance of the settler frontier prolonged the active involvement of chiefs as political communicators in the developing relations between their people and the new order.

While the Watch Tower movement came to be widespread in Northern Rhodesia, its reception was by no means total, and there were wide divergences in the form in which it appeared. This variety poses a critical problem of explanation: to what extent was it the case that the political structure of a particular tribal society either predisposed its members to respond favourably to Watch Tower ideas or caused a relative lack of interest? More specifically, did loose and fragmented groups find in the Watch Tower movement a new type of leadership, ideology and organisation which comparatively more immune centralised groups had no need of? One difficulty with this hypothesis is that while it may be observed that the cohesive and hierarchical Bemba and Lozi appeared almost totally uninterested in the Watch Tower, despite a considerable degree of exposure, other strong state systems such as the northern Lunda in the Luapula valley saw considerable Watch Tower activity, and the Ila - otherwise notably immune to innovation - also briefly responded to the Watch Tower in its form as a witchcraft eradication movement. Secondly, other historical

circumstances which affected the spread of the movement - the routes of labour migrants, the nature of mission undertakings, and of course the impact of war, famine, and disease - were not present in equal measure. There is the further question whether indigenous messianic propensities were significant in leading people to participate in the movement, an issue on which the evidence is only fragmentary. A major theme, then, of the ensuing five chapters is the capacity of various rural societies to adapt to the new conditions created under colonialism, seen in relation to their attitudes towards the Watch Tower movement.

The Watch Tower was not only significant in rural Northern Rhodesia, however, but also in the towns. By the 1930's, settled urban communities had emerged around the main employment centres which made nonsense of the official view of the African as solely a rural tribesman. Networks of communication which cut across regional and ethnic loyalties were established; common attitudes towards the boma, the employers, and the conditions of urban living emerged; and increasingly new associational forms giving expression to a wide range of desires came into being. Tracing the course of the Watch Tower movement in these complex and changing currents is a difficult task. At the level of the formation of groups under notable leaders in the compounds, and their relations with the W.T.B.T.S. in South Africa, the picture is - thanks to the police files - reasonably clear. With regard to the influence of the movement outside its direct membership, the degree to which it affected the protests of workers, and

its political role and significance, it is hard to be definite. The characterisation of the Watch Tower as a social movement is of particular relevance here, as it permits a view of this phenomenon as often transient, possessing fluid boundaries, and interpenetrating with other ideological currents. This raises the questions of what was its organisation, what did participation mean, and how and with what effect did its view of the world communicate itself to others?

In particular, the urban Watch Tower in Northern Rhodesia throws light on two important issues which have been discussed in relation to Southern Rhodesia and Nyasaland, namely the emergence of an African church, regarding Kamwana as its founder and mediator and inspired by a broad pan-Africanism, and secondly its particular association with the labour migrant. Finally, it was in the towns that the Jehovah's Witnesses commenced a purging of the independent Watch Tower, thereby gaining what is today one of their major footholds in Africa. While the post-war developments of the Watch Tower in Northern Rhodesia fall outside the scope of this study, it is interesting to note that by 1948 a clear divergence between the urban and rural communities had emerged. The different roles played by the movement in city and country help to illustrate the nature of social change occurring in the colony; and this perspective is also of importance in examining the further extension of the Watch Tower into the Belgian Congo.

2. North-Eastern Rhodesia, 1917-1923

The usual triad of missionary, administrator and settler-cum-trader which marked the European presence in the early colonial period barely extended to the Tanganyika district of Northern Rhodesia, which was one of the most isolated corners of British Africa. It was here amongst the Mambwe in 1917 that the existence of the Watch Tower movement first came to the notice of the B.S.A. Co. administration.

In the pre-colonial period, the patrilineal, cattle-owning peoples of the Tanganyika-Nyasa corridor had suffered not only from the depredations of the Arab slave-traders, but also from raiding by their southern neighbours, the Bemba, who at least by the nineteenth century had entered into a parasitic relationship with the more peacefully inclined Mambwe, Iwa and Namwanga.[1] As for the Tonga, the Mambwe experienced labour migration and the operation of powerful missions several years prior to the establishment of company administration, and it was this combination of conquest by the Bemba and dominance by missionaries which brought the Mambwe unprotestingly into the new state. The part played by various missions in the area should be briefly examined.

The London Missionary Society (L.M.S.) in North-Eastern Rhodesia, represented by A.J. Swann and E.C. Hore, acted consciously as the vanguard of British imperialism, competing with the Catholic missionary societies in establishing their

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[1] Cf. A.D. Roberts, 'A Political History of the Bemba (North-Eastern Zambia) to 1900' (Ph.D., Wisconsin, 1966).

sphere of influence.[1] Having established mission stations near Lake Tanganyika at Fwambo and Niamkolo between 1887 and 1891, the L.M.S. expanded west to Kawimbe over the next decade, and established a presence amongst the Mambwe comparable with that of governmental authority. The stockaded mission stations first attracted the Mambwe for the security which they offered against the Arabs and the Bemba, and this protective relationship was shortly extended to one in which compulsory attendance at the mission was imposed, labour services were required, and a stringent discipline was enforced. Soon the missionaries began to supplant the role of chiefs, through sitting in judgement over disputes, issuing numerous regulations concerning village life, and appointing and dismissing chiefs and headmen.[2] By the time an administrator was appointed to the area, the L.M.S. had established a large network of well-attended outstations in Mambwe country, where they exercised political dominance. Although company rule removed a number of functions from their hands, the missionaries nevertheless continued to enjoy a pre-eminent role.

The Livingstonia mission in North-Eastern Rhodesia was at this stage far less secure. The Mwenzo mission station, near Fife, was founded in 1894 as a key outpost in the attempt of the Livingstonia missionaries to establish their sphere of influence amongst the Bemba in the face of claims to the territory laid by the Universities' Mission to Central Africa

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[1] A.J. Swann, Fighting the Slave Hunters in Central Africa (London, 1910).

[2] R.I. Rotberg, 'Missionaries as Chiefs and Entrepreneurs: Northern Rhodesia 1882-1924', Boston University Papers in African History, I, 1964, pp. 195-216.

(U.M.C.A.).[1] This further extension spread the effort of the Scottish missionaries very thinly, and led to an unusual reliance on African evangelist-teachers. From the turn of the century, bands of these teachers, including such men as David Kaunda (father of Zambia's first President), moved westwards among the Senga and Bemba peoples preaching Presbyterian Christianity without, however, enforcing the draconian discipline which the Scottish missionaries usually imposed on their catechists. The small schools founded by these early converts were infrequently visited, and the Chief Secretary considered in 1910 that 'the native teachers are mostly incompetent, the majority being young boys who have been pupils for a year or two and whose behaviour in some cases is most objectionable'.[2] During 1916 and 1917, when a number of missionaries were engaged in the war, priority was given to manning the Nyasaland stations, and the missions at Lubwa, Chinsali and Mwenzo were left in charge of these evangelists.[3]

A third missionary presence was constituted by the Catholic White Fathers, who were as zealous in seeking to establish control in their sphere of influence as the L.M.S., though they saw themselves breaking new earth not so much for the British Empire as for Rome. Extending south at the end of the century from their unsuccessful station among the forest Mambwe, the

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[1] W. Vernon Stone, 'The Livingstonia Mission and the Bemba', The Bulletin of the Society for African Church History, II, 1968.

[2] NE/A 8/1/4, Annual Report upon Native Affairs for 1910. The angry correspondence over the accusation that these teachers were 'trying too much to take the management of these villages on themselves' between missionaries and the administration may be found in A 3/10/7, passim. All file references in this chapter are to the National Archives of Zambia unless otherwise stated.

[3] Chinsali District Notebook, pp. 48, 100, 125.

White Fathers were intent on proselytising among the Bemba, probably the largest group untouched by mission in central Africa at the time. A favourable site at Chief Mwamba's capital, arising from the alleged appointment of a Catholic missionary as a Bemba chief, became the nucleus of a web of closely controlled schools and outstations.[1] Amongst the Mambwe, however, the White Fathers were only able to make slow headway at their station at Kayambi, north-west of the L.M.S.[2] Hostile towards the surrounding Prctestant missions and suspicious of the administration, the White Fathers found that the major obstacle was the lack of receptivity amongst the Mambwe to what was for them a new and superfluous attempt at establishing a strictly disciplined regime of church authority. 'Le mumambwé n'est pas ce qu'on appelle un enthousiaste', commented Fr. Tanguy wearily, '...Grand mangeur, grand buveur, polygame acharné, plutot lent comme conception, il n'offre pas les aptitudes de son voisin mubemba'.[3]

Apart from the missionaries, however, the Tanganyika district was largely neglected by the B.S.A. Co. at this time. On the eve of the first World War there were only some 500 Europeans in the whole of North-Eastern Rhodesia, the large majority of whom lived around Fort Jameson and Livingstone.[4] This area was nevertheless strategically placed between the

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[1] W.F. Rea, S.J., 'The Bemba's White Chief', Historical Association of Rhodesia and Nyasaland, Local Series 13, 1964.

[2] Cf. Fr. Tanguy, 'Kayambi: The First White Fathers' Mission in Northern Rhodesia', The Northern Rhodesian Journal, IV, 1954.

[3] Chroniques Trimestrielles (Société des Missionaires d'Afrique), i, Bangweolo 1912-1922, 341.

[4] H.M. Hole, The Making of Rhodesia (1926), p. 390.

natural barriers of the lakes, forming a narrow corridor between the colony and German East Africa. In the closing days of the war the redoubtable German commander, General von Lettow Vorbeck, threatened to advance through Fife after a series of hard-fought battles in east Africa. To answer this threat, materially ill-equipped as it was in a largely roadless territory, the British administration resorted to African man-power for transport purposes. Until 1916 troops had only been maintained in the Caprivi strip; von Lettow Vorbeck's campaign made it necessary to move these troops across the country, and keep them supplied by African carriers.[1]

In 1916 an administrative proclamation called on all chiefs to provide men for the defence of the territory, and all recruiting for work in the south was prohibited. Specific duties such as road-making, census-taking, tax-collecting and the enforcement of hygiene were imposed on chiefs and headmen, which tended to draw these authorities into the system of colonial administration.[2] The untraditional and unpopular character of these duties caused the chiefs to rely heavily on the authority of the boma for the maintenance of their positions. The heaviest toll fell on the people of the Tanganyika district. Of the 162,982 men impressed for war work between April, 1916 and March, 1917, 138,930 came from this area; in June, 1917 the monthly

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[1] Cf. C.P. Lucas, The Empire at War (1924), iv, 281-312; von Lettow Vorbeck, My Reminiscences of East Africa (1920), pp. 309-314.

[2] The Administration of Natives Proclamation, 8/1916. This measure disregarded the rule of the equal applicability of legislation to Africans and non-Africans in the colony, and marked the introduction of discriminatory legislation on the general southern African pattern.

figure of impressments was of the order of 34,000.[1] The net effect of this system of war work was that every male adult in the Tanganyika district undertook a total of five months' hard, physical labour. The resultant scarcity of agricultural labour led to an insufficient production of grain crops, and the exhaustion of stored foods such as cassava. The ensuing famine led to bitterness of feeling not only against chiefs who co-operated with the administration but also towards the Europeans who had moved in to prepare thedefences. Active resistance to these demands for labour were, however, short-lived. 'In many cases it may be stated that the labour was forced', stated Charles Draper, the Commissioner at Fife, 'but this was the same elsewhere. It had to be ... at Fife, on occasions, men were brought in on a rope'.[2]

This situation of war also brought Africans into contact with a type of white man very different from the priest or district officer. Not only had there been frequent raids by the Germans and their askaris, but the ill-treatment of villagers by British troops intent on forcing the sale of food at a time of famine had led to a situation where 'villagers would bolt at the sight of a white man'.[3] Justice Philip McDonell, who presided at the trial of Watch Tower leaders in the aftermath of the war, was to comment:

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[1] NR B 1/2/325, Administrator, Livingstone, to H.C., Pretoria, 2 Oct. 1917.

[2] ZA 1/10/1, Draper to Tagart, 11 July 1919.

[3] ZA 7/7/2, Report of the Visiting Commissioner on the Watch Tower Movement, 15 Aug. 1919.

> All through the war this unfortunate division was being traversed by the Nyms and Pistols of the fighting force beyond, the meanest of mean whites, who would now, could they but have their deserts, be serving long terms for Assault and Robbery and Rape.[1]

This, then, was the background to millennial protest in North-Eastern Rhodesia - a sudden intensification of the pressure of colonial rule as a result of imperial rivalries, the chaos and upheaval of war, and a history of missionary endeavour which had both reduced the power and legitimacy of chiefly authority and had brought a new group of mission graduates and migrants into being.

Of the 43 Watch Tower leaders who were expelled in October, 1917, from the Southern Rhodesian mine compounds at Que Que, Shamva, Gatooma and Salisbury, seven returned to homes in the Tanganyika district of Northern Rhodesia - Hanoc Simpungwe Sindano, Shadrach Leviticus Kanjele, Shadrach Sinkala, Pesa, Simuchimba, Yaponga and Makomba.[2] Chief among these was Sindano, a Mambwe labour migrant who had first heard about the Watch Tower at Que Que and subsequently journeyed to Cape Town to find out more. An account of his career related by him to E.B.T. Foord, the Native Commissioner at Fife, indicates something of his restless pursuit of various new ideologies following his first contacts with settler Africa, which ultimately led Sindano to be the first prophet of the Watch Tower millenium in Northern Rhodesia:[3]

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[1] ZA 1/10/1, Memorandum to the Administrator, 5 May 1919.

[2] Ibid., C.I.D., Bulawayo, to Cmnd. Genl., Salisbury, 13 Mar. 1919.

[3] J.R. Hooker, 'Witnesses and Watchtower in the Rhodesias and Nyasaland', Journal of African History, VI, 1965, p. 99, suggests the first appearance of the Watch Tower was at Kasempa in 1913. No supporting evidence is cited, however, and having regard to the many inaccuracies of the article, this question remains open.

> I am a Mambwe native and used originally to live at Malengela in the Mbozi district of German East Africa. In 1905 I went with two white men with cattle to Southern Rhodesia. I stayed four years at Enkeldoorn, one year at Que Que, two years at Gatooma, and for a short period at lots of other boma's. At first as I was a youngster I worked at herding fowls, but afterwards as an underground miner. I entered the church of the Watch Tower at Que Que. Sadles Chilwa, Mwabakuki...all miners there - taught me. They are all Tonga natives from Bandawe.... I have been taught in the Presbyterian Church, the Seventh Day Adventist Church, the Wesleyan Church, and the Watch Tower church at Que Que, Gadzima, and Gwelo, and at the church of the Watch Tower in Cape Town. I went to Cape Town to see the place.[1]

From being a pupil of the Scottish missionaries at Mwenzo, Sindano joined a series of other small missions before eventually becoming attracted by the doctrines of the Watch Tower - an interesting parallel to the course of Elliott Kamwana. It is unknown whether Sindano met Booth or Johnston in Cape Town, but quite probable. His Africanist interpretation of Russell's orthodox doctrine strongly suggests Booth and Kamwana - although, of course, given the critical situation in his home district his preaching of an African millennium is not surprising. Again, as in Tongaland, early missionary activity had helped to open up avenues for labour migration; outside Barotseland, the Abercorn and Kasama areas were particularly favoured by the R.N.L.B.[2]

Sindano and his group attempted to spread the Watch Tower gospel at the small centres of Broken Hill and Serenje on their long homeward journey, but it was not until they preached amongst their own people that conditions proved ripe for the

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[1] R. Arch., RC 3/9/5/29, Sindano to Foord, encl. in S.N.A., Livingstone, to C.N.C., Salisbury, 23 Mar. 1920.

[2] C.W. Coulter, 'The Sociological Problem', in J. Merle Davis (ed.), Modern Industry and the African (1933), p. 53.

popular reception of their ideas. Although the content of the first phase of preaching is unclear, Sindano and Kanjele were reported to be predicting 'the end of the world' for December, 1918, and succeeded in attracting a small following in the Fife district. By July, 1918, Watch Tower followers were refusing to work as military porters, and the administration - already alarmed by the German advance - arrested Sindano and Kanjele, who were sentenced to three months' imprisonment for their part in promoting this defiance.[1]

Shadrach Sinkala began at this stage to preach openly the doctrine of passive resistance to forced labour, stating that everyone should be baptised in preparation for 'the end'. On their release in September Sindano and Kanjele again took up their roles as prophets and began to spread the movement rapidly, preaching at first among the Bemba in the Chinsali district. The pattern of conversion which began to emerge with the increasing popularity of the movement suggests that very few Bemba were actively involved, however. Particularly affected were the Iwa villages of chiefs Terefye, Kafwimbe and Mweni Mpansa, and the Namwanga under Waitwika. Other groups in the area - Lamba, Tambo, Nyika, and Nsenga - were barely affected, and it is remarkable that the only Bemba villages which responded contained large numbers of breakaway Iwa from Kafwimbe's.[2]

The arrival of von Lettow Vorbeck and the attack on the Fife boma in September, 1918, came as a turning point for the militancy of the Watch Tower preaching, and attitudes of open

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[1] KSL, 1/2/1, Draper to Goodall, 10 April 1919.

[2] Ibid.

hostility towards chiefs, missionaries and administrators were expressed. Sindano and Kanjele were arrested once more and charged at Chinsali with illegal preaching, but released for lack of evidence.[1] This apparent invulnerability increased Sindano's following dramatically; travelling amongst the Mambwe around Kayambi, he caused Watch Tower meeting places to be built, and performed many baptisms. He told the Roman Catholic catechists that persecution could not halt the Watch Tower, and - as Fr. Tanguy reported it - that 'tous les hommes sont égaux, le noir et égal au blanc. Soyons nos propres maîtres: l'Europe à l'Européen, l'Afrique aux Africains'.[2] Again it was amongst the Mambwe rather than the Bemba that Watch Tower ideas were adopted, and with the sacking of Kayambi mission station by von Lettow Vorbeck and the retreat of the Protestant missionaries from Kawimbe and Mwenzo, most Mambwe Christians responded with enthusiasm to the new doctrine. Crops were torn up in the expectation of the end of the world in December; continual shouting, praying and singing took place night and day in Watch Tower villages; and elders and headmen who had opposed the movement were abused and attacked. Chief Kafwimbe, a prominent supporter of the administration who had confiscated clothing and otherwise persecuted Watch Tower adherents, was widely rumoured to be pregnant of the devil.[3]

The end of the war and the surrender of von Lettow Vorbeck led to a further increase in the demonstrations of hostility by

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[1] The only law which would cover the offence was that concerning nocturnal disturbances. The White Fathers believed this failure to convict to be a pretext used to try and disturb Catholic missionary work. Cf. Chroniques Trimestrielles, loc. cit., p.221.

[2] Ibid., pp. 238, 243.

[3] ZA 1/10/1, Draper to Administrator, 19 Jan. 1919.

Watch Tower followers. Draper, Goodall and Dewhurst, the District Commissioners of Fife, Abercorn and Chinsali, held an indaba with chiefs and headmen at Chunga in December, 1918, to discuss the armistice and the problems posed by the Watch Tower. While the chiefs were explaining their fears of the new hostility directed against them, some 500 Watch Tower followers interrupted the meeting with praying and singing. Draper attempted to arrest the 10 leaders who were urging their followers on, whereupon he and his messengers were attacked. Followers of the chief rushed to their support and a faction fight ensued. Alarmed by this open violence, Draper telegraphed for police reinforcements.[1]

Following this meeting, Draper decided to tour the district, and found that amongst the Mambwe the Watch Tower doctrine was universally acclaimed. Nights were taken up with praying and hymn-singing, with villagers sleeping in the open lest they should be unprepared for the expected salvation. Sinkala's successes amongst the Iwa had also proved considerable; at Terefye village headman Musamansi complained to Draper that he had been assaulted by Watch Tower adherents, and that the people no longer had any respect for chiefs, headmen and old people. Draper tried the culprits on the spot and sent them under escort to Kasama. Within a few miles of the village, however, they were forcibly released by their followers; Draper went in search of them but was physically attacked and forced to retire to the shout, 'If you come back, bring a

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[1] R. Arch., RC 3/9/5/29, Draper to R.C., 19 Jan. 1919.

maxim gun, talk will not move us'. A few weeks later Jacob Kasuya and three others were convicted of the assault and sent to Kasama jail. Again they escaped at Chiwali village, and their recapture was once more prevented by the local Watch Tower following. Shadrach Sinkala himself was also convicted of seditious preaching and imprisoned, but he too escaped while in the prison hospital at Fife. Most of the Mambwe and Iwa country, it appeared to Draper, was in a state verging on rebellion.[1]

Goodall and Dewhurst were encountering equal violence from the Watch Tower. In an attempt to re-establish boma authority, Goodall toured the Abercorn district, and found that the attempted arrests of the Watch Tower leaders and their escapes had encouraged the defiance of authority. Dewhurst at Chinsali, impatient at what he regarded as half-hearted measures in the face of the Watch Tower movement, determined to arrest ten adherents from his district who had visited the escaped Sinkala, and had reportedly returned in 'a mad and defiant state'. These barricaded themselves in a hut, beat off attacks with sticks, and escaped at night through the game net which Dewhurst had thrown over the hut in an attempt to hold them while more messengers were summoned.[2]

This active defiance of governmental authority by Watch Tower adherents was not, however, long-lived. At the end of January, 1919, Draper summoned the newly arrived reserve troops

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[1] ZA 1/10/1, Memorandum to the Administrator, 5 May 1919.

[2] Ibid., Dewhurst to D.C., Kasama, 22 Jan. 1919.

to a large Watch Tower meeting outside Terefye village, where a Watch Tower camp had been built, and 138 of the 500 in attendance were arrested. Sixty of the rank and file were convicted at the ensuing trials in Kasama on various charges of assault and sedition, most being sent to Livingstone jail,[1] while the main leaders of the movement received sentences ranging from two to four years, with lashes, and were mostly sent to Mazabuka, in the hope that their removal from the scene would help to bring the excitement to an end. Although the evidence on the reactions within the Watch Tower communities in the period 1919-23 is slight, it appears that these mass arrests at least brought to an end the active expectancy of an imminent but vaguely conceived millennial event and the open defiance of authority. The attention which was focussed on the area in the aftermath of the German attack and the Watch Tower activities perhaps also helped to drive the movement underground. By June, 1919, chiefs and District Commissioners at Fife and Abercorn were sending in reports that the excitement had faded away, although in certain areas - such as the environs of the Kawimbe mission - sizeable communities were continuing.[2]

Following the trial and deportation to various parts of the colony of the most militant of the Watch Tower adherents, anxious enquiries were set on foot in Livingstone which brought the history of Joseph Booth, the Kamwanaist movement and the Watch Tower connexion with the Chilembwe rising into the fore-

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[1] This is the basis for the earliest mention of the Watch Tower movement in an academic study, viz. R.L. Buell, The Native Problem in Africa (New York, 1928), i, 243-244.

[2] ZA 1/10/1, Draper to Goodall, 21 June 1919.

front of administrative thinking. After the trial judge's stern strictures on the colonial order in North-Eastern Rhodesia, however, the enlightened view came to be that the Watch Tower movement was a colourful novelty to the rural African, an expression of the rejection of white rule which was more romantic than seditious. As Judge McDonell expressed it,

> This movement is a matter for pity as well as for blame. We have governed the native and over-governed him. We have taken from him the power of self-determination and have hedged him in with a network of rules and permits, a monotonous, highly regulated, and very drab existence.[1]

The relapse into quietism of the Watch Tower following encouraged this view, particularly at the upper administrative levels. Many native affairs officials were determined, however, to prevent the Watch Tower propaganda from spreading further, considering it not only as directly politically subversive but also as a wing of the then nascent pan-Africanist movement.[2] They were supported in this view by Fr. E. Peuth, of the Kayambi mission, who undertook a personal investigation of the movement early in 1920 after one Dominico Patala, a teacher at Kayambi who had been suspended for misconduct, began to preach the Watch Tower in his area, causing many to refuse to fetch wood and water for the missions and to stop sending their children to the mission school. 'It is evident', wrote Fr. Peuth to the commander of the troops stationed at Kasama, 'that the whole thing points to open revolt'. Peuth

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[1] ZA 1/10/1, Memorandum to the Administrator, 5 May 1919.

[2] P.R.O., C.O. 795/1, 32378, Minute of the Native Affairs Department: 'Pan-Africanism among the Natives of Northern Rhodesia', 4 April 1923.

backed up this claim by an interesting statement that the Watch Tower leaders were known to visit frequently the Islamised areas around Bismarckburg (Kasanga) in Tanganyika.[1] Peuth's attack on the Watch Tower began a long tradition of hostility between the Roman Catholic missions and this movement in central Africa, with each side occupying a prominent position in their opposing demonologies. The administration seems to have recognised Peuth's report as such, for no direct action appears to have arisen out of it. Nevertheless, attempts were made to contain the spread of the Watch Tower doctrine by searching the post for the pamphlet literature of the W.T.B.T.S., legislating in the Native Schools Proclamation of 1921 that teachers and preachers should obtain government licences, and employing African detectives to keep known leaders under covert surveillance.[2]

These measures revealed that although the Watch Tower following in the Fife and Abercorn districts were not in contact with any other sections of the movement, a number of Nyasa migrants in the small towns were corresponding with the W.T.B.T.S. in Cape Town and with the Watch Tower following in northern Nyasaland. A telegraph clerk at Ndola, boma clerks at Serenje and Broken Hill, and a number of askaris of the King's African Rifles stationed at Kasama were exposed in this way, and threatened with deportation.[3] Although in this first phase of Watch Tower activity in Northern Rhodesia no organisation as in Southern Rhodesia seems to have emerged among the

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[1] ZA 1/10/1, Peuth to O.C., Kasama, 19 Feb. 1920.

[2] Ibid., Rev. M. Moffat to S.N.A., 26 May 1924.

[3] KSL 1/2/1, Report on the Watch Tower Movement, 1923.

Nyasa adherents, a general aura of suspicion that they were constantly dabbling in politico-religious activities came to surround them.[1]

Despite this evidence of the spreading of Watch Tower ideas, the B.S.A. Co. administration appeared confident that the mass arrests in the Tanganyika district spelt an end to rebellious initiatives, and that a certain amount of tolerance towards the movement could be afforded. Company rule was ultimately little interested in the fate of Africans beyond the safe securing of the terms of treaty, and it was left to the succeeding colonial administration to formulate a coherent policy towards both the emerging urban-based Nyasa Watch Tower groups and the mass following which grew in rural Northern Rhodesia.

3. Conclusion

It is apparent that Watch Tower activity in the Tanganyika district underwent a number of stages. Initially, Sindano appears to have baptised a small following, to whom he preached that a new government was going to be established by the Americans. Except for the date of this event - December, 1918 - this was little different from the standard Russell tradition. As the movement spread, other leaders began to adapt the message to suit local conditions; and an ideological basis for protest against the political _status quo_ was established. The idea of ignoring civil authority

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[1] From as far afield as the Solwezi district, a trader and labour agent, Theodore R. Williams commented, 'Heard from Griffiths today that a 2nd Torga native has come up from Joh'burg to buy ivory - and have told him to keep an eye on the two for Watch Tower activities', _Diary_ (R.H. Afr. MSS.), 21 May 1919.

on account of the impending change led to passive resistance against impressment for war work and an open rejection of the authority of chiefs. There was a rejection not only of European authority, but of all things European, marked by the belief that European technology was not of their own invention but came from God; hymn-singing and shouting prevented the district officials from being heard in their meetings with Watch Tower followers; and there was an open expectation that American liberators would soon remove the yoke of white rule.[1] With the German attack, the Watch Tower moved from passive to active defiance, some leaders even claiming responsibility for the invasion.[2] The inability of administrative officials to tour their districts during this period has left a gap in their reports, but it appears that this was the high point of millennial excitement, with crops being destroyed and assaults made on chiefs. The sudden surrender of the Germans was followed by a series of incidents in which the authority of white men was openly defied; this was perhaps the nearest Watch Tower adherents came to revolt.

This transition in the scale of the movement from the local level of the prophet and his immediate entourage to active defiance by whole districts is notable both for its swiftness and for the clearly marked turning points. General circumstances apart, much of the Watch Tower appeal seems to have lain in the confirmation of its predictions by local events, such as the German invasion, or by pre-arranged 'miracles' performed by the leaders such as the discovery of

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[1] ZA 7/7/2, Report of the Visiting Commissioner, 15 Aug. 1919.

[2] Ibid.

food and drink hidden in the bush.[1] The suddenness of the crisis had also given rise to a situation of confused panic and rumour where explanations which linked both global and parochial events into a coherent order, gave expression to the fear and resentment of the invading white man, and also inspired hope of a new world to come were readily acceptable. The Watch Tower was not only a salvationist doctrine but was also directly related to contemporary events in its interpretations and predictions - and these were not limited by a fixed orthodoxy. The expansion of the movement through definite levels of activity took place in accordance with external events, which suggests that this ideological feature was of primary importance.

Might the Watch Tower following at the height of the excitement have been expected to break out into armed revolt, as some observers feared? Such a question poses two problems: the nature of membership, and the quality of protest expressed. Little evidence is provided in the official reports of the organisation of the movement at this stage. It seems to have been a mass movement, in the sense that whole villages jointly underwent baptism, and later participated in hymn-singing and praying. The boundaries between members and non-members were vaguely defined, the degree of participation at the popular level unclear, and certainly interest in the movement faded rapidly for most. Women and children were noted as prominent, but given the absence of most adult males on war work, this is not necessarily significant. This

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[1] ZA 1/10/1, Moffat Thompson to S.N.A., 22 Dec. 1919.

incoherence of organisation was reflected in the unformulated nature of the protest which emerged.

Hysterical emotions and the association of white men and their technology with death and disease, rather than any attempt to invoke the millennium by force of arms, appear to mark this period. At the Chunga meeting Draper noted that many adherents 'indulged in a wild frenzy, rolling of eyes and contortion of their bodies, making unintelligible ejaculations', and that their main complaint was of starvation and death.[1] Dewhurst's reports of the statements made by Sinkala's supporters whom he had tried to imprison inside a hut also reveal this concern:

> Messengers! Come into the hut and we will beat you. White man! Come into the hut and we will beat you. Mr Draper was beaten at Mwika village, he is now dead at Mwenzo. The white man persecutes us, we are slaves, therefore we want the Askari to be called up to kill us. We want to die. The recognised missions of the country deceived us by withholding part of the truth. Now we know the truth. We want to die, we want you to kill us....[2]

This desire for martyrdom, particularly when set against the background of an Anglo-German war and the prevalence of Watch Tower ideas, is strongly reminiscent of John Chilembwe's wish to 'strike a blow and die'.[3] While far less sophisticated than Chilembwe's philosophy, it contains similar elements of a moral appeal, an accusation of hypocrisy and injustice, a gesture of defiance, and perhaps also the implicit belief

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[1] R. Arch., RC 3/9/5/29, Draper to R.C., 19 Jan. 1919.

[2] ZA 1/10/1, Dewhurst to D.C., Kasama, 22 Jan. 1919.

[3] Cf. G.S. Mwase, Strike A Blow And Die (Harvard, 1967).

that death at the hand of the white man will in itself usher the believers into a new world.

It may be noted that for Africans in North-Eastern Rhodesia the death rate at this time was exceptionally high. Not only had there been famine and war, but epidemic diseases had swept the country in the wake of the troops. Dysentery and Spanish influenza brought about such a toll of death that many villages were obliterated.[1] This crisis was not unsurprisingly linked in the mind of the African sufferer with European technology. 'Natives talk about Lewis guns and maxims and even aeroplanes', commented an L.M.S. missionary referring to these events, 'who only a few years ago regarded a railway train as something akin to magic'.[2]

Despite the images of bullets turning to water, then, and the 'threatening and contemptuous attitude' noted by Draper,[3] the confrontation between the District Commissioners and the chiefs and the Watch Tower adherents did not amount to open rebellion. The movement was one of expressive protest coupled with an intense desire to see the departure of the Europeans who were held responsible for so much misery, rather than an uprising against colonial rule.

After the mass arrests, active membership of the movement fell off, and those who remained did so within settled communities which were marked by passive expectancy rather than by open defiance of authority. A number of the deported

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[1] A dramatic description of the epidemics is given by Williams, Diary, 15 Nov. 1918; cf. also L.M.S. Arch., W. Govan Robertson, 'Mporokoso', Annual Report for 1918.

[2] L.M.S. Arch., H. Cecil Nutter, Decennial Report of the Central African Mission, 1910-1920.

[3] R. Arch., RC 3/9/5/29, Draper to R.C., 19 Jan. 1919.

leaders later returned to the Iwa, Namwanga and Mambwe districts, where they established separate Watch Tower communities, often set apart from neighbouring villages, in which more quietist doctrines were preached. The largest and most enduring of these was at Tukamulozya's village, renamed Jerusalem, where Hanoc Sindano established himself on his release from prison with a following of over 800 people. Despite some initial suspicions, this was tolerated by the administration on the grounds both of expediency and because of the reported pacifism of the preaching, which was still nevertheless anti-white, stressing the fraudulence of the white man. As an African detective reported it, Sindano preached that

> Long ago the Europeans did not know God same as we, but some other people came to their country and taught them, and God helped them and gave them wise and all things, the Europeans did not know about our country Africa but God made them know and sent them with goods and many things we see to come and give us free, and teach us about God, and when they get in this country, they hide everything, and teach us very little about God, they teach us how to write, but they did not tell us what God sent them here for, and they could not give us the things free what God gave them to give us.... therefore if we pray to God very hard with all our hearts, God will hear our prayer and will clear all the Europeans back home to England and everything will be ours and we will be as rich as they are.[1]

This ingenious explanation of the white man's presence in Africa is interesting for a number of reasons. Firstly, it must have had an historical validity for many of Sindano's listeners who had heard the missionaries justify their presence in terms of God's plan for the world, and had experienced the

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[1] ZA 1/10/1, Report of native detective Robert Simpelwe, Abercorn, 26 April 1920.

frustration of slow promotion within the mission church and rejection by white settler society. Secondly, it both looks forward to the day when the white man will disappear and also to the possession of white goods and knowledge. This will come about not through any action against the whites by believers, but simply through the power of prayer. And implicit in this millennial hope is a new identification of self and of the enemy; Sindano speaks of 'our country Africa', and as Fr. Tanguy reported it, 'l'Afrique aux Africains'. The white man, whether missionary, trader or administrator, is seen as an invader who has tricked and deceived the African. These ideas embodied a response to white rule which blamed the white man for the poverty and technological backwardness of the African, looked forward to the day when Africans would participate fully in the modern, industrial culture, and based these views on a scale of action broader than that of the tribe.

Sindano developed his explanation of the superiority of the white man, and the need for prayer to overcome this, in a series of parables and hymns which became widely known in North-Eastern Rhodesia in the 1920's. Some of these were biblical, identifying the white men as those who threw Jonah into the sea, and the blacks with Jonah; and some of local derivation, such as his characterisation of his own prophetic role as that of the man who came in the night to the barricaded Mambwe village to warn them to take to the forest as a Bemba war party was approaching. A particularly ingenious parable told of a man who married a first wife (the black race) and

then a second wife (the white race). After the second wife had borne him several children, who grew up to be big and strong, the first wife eventually bore a child, whereupon the man died. The second wife's children took their father's inheritance, whereas in strict customary law this belonged to the offspring of the first wife.[1] Embodied in such readily appreciated stories, Watch Tower ideas spread beyond the confines of the separatist villages. Indeed many of the Watch Tower hymns dating from this period came to be such popular songs that in later years they were regularly broadcast as favourite pieces of traditional music.[2]

Sindano continued as the leader of a Watch Tower community at Tukamulozya's village until the 1950's, his following gradually shrinking in size. He remained independent of the Jehovah's Witnesses, although he received their literature by post from Cape Town; in this his career closely resembles that of Jeremiah Gondwe, next to Sindano the most notable figure in the early Watch Tower in Northern Rhodesia, whose career is examined below.[3] His contacts across the border in Tanganyika led to the spread of the movement in the south-western districts of that territory,[4] and he remained a much talked about and highly controversial figure in the Abercorn district until his death, allegedly by poisoning, in the late 1950's.[5]

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[1] L. Mus., Papers of J. Moffat Thompson, 'Watch Tower Activities in Chief Mokolo's Country, July 1924'.

[2] Interview with Alick Nkhata, Lusaka, 7 June 1969.

[3] Cf. Chapter VI, pp. 271-284.

[4] Cf. T.O. Ranger, The African Churches of Tanzania (Historical Association of Tanzania, Paper no. 5, Dar es Salaam, n.d.), pp. 12-15.

[5] Cf. W. Watson, Tribal Cohesion in a Money Economy (Manchester, 1958), pp. 56, 85, 143, 199-202; also Meebelo, Reaction to Colonialism, pp. 150-155.

Most of the other leaders of Watch Tower communities were mission pupils like Sindano and Kanjele, particularly from the Mwenzo mission, as Draper remarked.[1] It has been shown that the operation of the Livingstonia mission amongst the lakeside Tonga was a key factor in the success of Elliott Kamwana, and it is again significant that the Scottish missionaries, with their philosophy of moral progress and hard work, should be associated with the Watch Tower in North-Eastern Rhodesia. The conditions under which the U.F.C. operated were very different from those in Nyasaland, however. In particular, they were working far from their base against competition from a number of other missions. It was under these circumstances that those aspects of mission activity which encouraged millennial independency were particularly marked.

With education as the basis of evangelization, an important result of the sphere of influence policy adopted by the missionaries in the early colonial period was the proliferation of bush schools designed more to establish a claim to territory than to convert the local populace.[2] Attendance at these by pupils was generally sporadic, and supervision by even the most dedicated missionaries fitful. Few pupils continued in attendance for any length of time, the acquisition of basic skills combining with other pressures to induce a high proportion to seek employment at distant centres. Nor was financial

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[1] ZA 1/10/1, Draper to Administrator, 19 Jan. 1919.

[2] Coombe, 'The Origins of Secondary Education', pp. 44-46.

assistance offered to the missions by the B.S.A. Co., despite the fact that they were the sole providers of African education. African teachers were seen by many missions as an answer to some of these problems, and with bare literacy as a sufficient criterion for the appointment of senior pupils to the post of teacher, many were tempted to stay at the mission, usually after some experience of migrant labour.

The attitudes of the missionary societies towards these essential functionaries of their miniscule religious empires varied, but all employed them - some imported from other mission fields - and it may be generally said that where competition and the accent on expansion were greatest, the role of the teacher was the most crucial. Also, in this first period of the establishment of mission stations, the keenest pupils were often recruited from the ranks of those who were not fully integrated into village life, and who sought compensatory status by joining the mission. Their advancement was limited, however, by the missionary concept of the African as a product of a barbarous culture, who only after slow progress through hearers' and catechists' classes and years of surveillance could aspire to the ministry. Similarly, sexual relations outside marriage, beer-drinking and other aspects of daily village life were regarded as sinful, with the result that the degree of apartness from the village came to be a measure of success within the mission. Consequently in North-Eastern Rhodesia it may be argued that conditions arising out of the implantation of mission

Christianity were peculiarly favourable for the emergence of a millennial movement: there was very little control of the mission stations by Europeans, yet a reluctance to grant fuller powers of responsibility to the African teachers who made this rapid expansion possible; and there was a high level among the early converts of those who were looking beyond the horizons of village life, who were attracted by what the European world had to offer, but who were nevertheless still bound by tribal culture.

The company administration and local settlers were hostile to the mission-trained Africans, however, precisely because of their fears of his possible attempt to enter European society. In North-Eastern Rhodesia, where missionaries had been fairly active, settlers soon regarded their products as unwelcome. 'In all the main essentials there is no real difference between the mission-teacher, the boma capitao, and the store-boy', noted one local observer, 'together these three represent the native aristocracy.... and the quarrel of the European settler is... with the bumptious, self-assertive native teacher'.[1] The independence of action, particularly of the Protestant mission teachers, had increased during the final years of the war following the withdrawal of the white missionaries, and Dewhurst, the Chinsali Commissioner, was firmly of the opinion that their absence was the major cause of the Watch Tower.[2]

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[1] C. Gouldsbury and H. Sheane, The Great Plateau of Northern Rhodesia (1911), p. 235.

[2] KSL 1/2/1, Chisholm to Draper, 1 Mar. 1919.

Such attitudes as these were aimed not only at quelling African aspirations, but rested also in part on the assumption that Christianity was really a white man's religion, and that attempts to impart it to Africans would give rise to dangerous ideas of equality. As interpreted by Sindano and Kanjele, themselves one-time Mwenzo mission pupils, the Watch Tower belief not only channelled their anger and frustration at such settler attitudes, but also enabled mission pupils to see Christianity as something other than a totally alien ideology. It shared the same root as the multitudinous initiatives towards an Africanised Christianity which were occurring in many parts of southern Africa at this time. Sindano and Kanjele did indeed make particular efforts to convert those with some mission training.

While the leadership of the Watch Tower came from among the teachers and pupils of the missions, it appears however that many adherents were not directly connected to a mission station. A possible view of this is that these were mostly people within the area of Christianization who did not themselves benefit directly through the acquisition of skills or such local developments of trade and transport which often accompanied the establishment of a mission station, and consequently experienced some sense of deprivation, for which the Watch Tower offered compensation at a psychological level. This may help in understanding motivations, but is only a partial explanation in that not all such categories of people were attracted to the movement. A more significant feature of the mass response to the Watch Tower was that almost no Bemba

participated - 'seulement trente gamins' as Fr. Tanguy reported it[1] - while the Mambwe, Iwa and Namwanga proved highly receptive.

Meebelo has argued that the Bemba were not susceptible to Watch Tower ideas since they regarded it as an attempt at political assertion by former subject tribes, and because in any event they were further from the war front and less involved in the disturbances which the war caused.[2] These are certainly pertinent factors, but the fundamental differences in response between the Bemba and others surely arises from differences in their respective political structures at the time. Amongst the Mambwe, Iwa and Namwanga, Watch Tower hostility was strongly directed against chiefs and headmen, consisting of open rudeness, disobedience, and even physical assaults, which had the effect of denying the legitimacy of their status among what was possibly a majority of their subjects. This was not merely a protest against their compromised position as a result of their association with the colonial administration, but a radical rejection of tribal authority as such, which aimed at substituting prophetic for secular leadership, the creation of new communities with new names and customs, and a transformation of the local order. For the Bemba such a rejection of the tribal political order would have been extra-ordinary; their hierarchical and highly centralised system of authority had inculcated a sense of obedience and authority which preserved a powerful conservatism in the face of chance.[3]

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[1] Tanguy, Chroniques Trimestrielles, loc. cit., p. 341.

[2] Meebelo, Reaction to Colonialism, pp. 137-138.

[3] Cf. Roberts, 'A Political History of the Bemba', p. xvi; A.I. Richards, 'Traditional Values and Current Political Behaviour', in L.A. Fallers (ed.), The King's Men (1964), p. 301.

Perhaps the only Bemba of any importance to show an initial interest in the Watch Tower movement was Shimwalule, the custodian of the royal graves.[1] This suggests that the millennialism of the Watch Tower could strike something of a responsive chord in a member of the priestly caste, who was presumably familiar with mythic thinking and whose status had possibly been threatened by the missionaries, but that at a popular level its critique of secular authority was completely without appeal.

For the surrounding peoples, conquered in war by the Bemba and in the process of assimilation by them when the pax Britannica was established, chieftainship was a far weaker institution. The dominance of the Protestant missions, particularly amongst the Mambwe, had also helped to subvert the authority of the chiefs, of course, and their attitudes towards local custom were more uncompromising than those of the White Fathers amongst the Bemba. These differences in evangelistic techniques are of some importance in assessing comparative receptivities to millennialism. The White Fathers, as celibate lay brothers, travelled continually and maintained a fairly strict control over their outstations, while the Protestant missionaries tended to build their stations as family homes, and were less in contact with daily village life. Roman Catholic teaching also avoided the more eschatological sections of the Bible, encouraged orthodoxy rather than individualism, and yet were tolerant of local religious ideas. While these differences in the nature of mission Christianity

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[1] ZA 7/7/2, Report of the Visiting Commissioner on the Watch Tower Movement, 15 Aug. 1919.

between the Bemba and others in North-Eastern Rhodesia may have been of subsidiary importance in establishing the boundaries of the Watch Tower movement, the fundamental difference appears to lie in the failure of customary leadership amongst the Iwa, Mambwe and Namwanga as political communicators, a failure which was determined more by previous historical circumstances and their own internal social system than simply by the presence of Protestant missionaries.

Finally, it is also important to note that Watch Tower ideas entered Northern Rhodesia through the migrant labour system, and became established in an area where forced labour practices were not uncommon. Despite the complex of highly local factors which surrounded this first outbreak, this perhaps is one of the most significant features of the events of 1917-18. The implementation of tax, the stationing of troops, the operation of settler policies and the activities of missionaries all ultimately served to develop a particular economic relationship between ruler and ruled in the Tanganyika district. And it was the perception of this exploitation, articulated by the Watch Tower, which provided the basis for the first acts of violent protest in the colony after the phase of primary resistance.

CHAPTER V

NORTHERN RHODESIA: DEVELOPMENTS IN THE 1920'S

1. The Spread of the Watch Tower, 1924-1927

2. The Mwana Lesa Movement

1. The Spread of the Watch Tower, 1924-1927

The company administration reacted to the Watch Tower movement without an organised policy beyond that of attempting to eradicate its seditious elements by harsh punishment, discouraging African preachers by refusing them permits, and by a halting recognition that in some instances tolerati on would contain the zealousness of its followers more effectively than persecution. In 1921 a law was passed specifically aimed at the Watch Tower movement which forbade Africans to teach or preach unless they were under European control or in the possession of an official permit, but this seems largely to have remained unenforced.[1] The Colonial Office, which took over the administration of Northern Rhodesia in April 1924, very soon discovered however that, far from being limited to the north-east, the Watch Tower movement was widespread east of the line of rail and in most of the country's small towns. The formulation of policy concerning the Watch Tower was consequently one of its first tasks in office.

The new Northern Rhodesian Government (N.R.G.), acting in the imperial tradition of colonial administration, decided on a policy of 'watchful tolerance', namely that there should be no prosecution of Africans for preaching without official permission, as this would be tantamount to religious persecution.[2] It was also generally agreed that prosecutions and threats strengthened what was seen as the fanatical element,

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[1] Proclamation 8 of 1921.

[2] ZA 1/10/1, S.N.A. to all N.C.'s, 6 June 1924. All file references in this chapter are to the National Archives of Zambia, Lusaka, unless otherwise stated.

and the view prevailed that

> an attitude of compassionate tolerance, as towards those who are mentally afflicted, does more to bring the mischievous vanity of those self-styled pastors who pose as prophets and saviours of souls into contempt amongst natives, than direct orders forbidding them to preach.[1]

This policy was in accordance with the wishes of the Northern Rhodesian general missionary conference, which had resolved that 'the movement can only be met by allowing self-expression', while also reflecting a protectionist view of African religion.[2] This view was not of course shared in Southern Rhodesia, where the existence of a vocal settler community acted as a counter-weight to the liberal lobby in England, and neither was it popular with many settlers and officials in Northern Rhodesia, who regarded the bush baptist wandering in remote and potentially rebellious parts of the country as a prime danger - a fear much dwelt on in colonial literature.[3] Many Native Commissioners sought to undermine the broad policy by arresting members of the Watch Tower on charges of sedition and vagrancy rather than of unauthorised preaching. However, in the rural areas actual administrative control was so slight, the policing of so large an area effectively being virtually impossible, that a certain amount of tolerance was inevitable.

The first encounter between N.R.G. and the Watch Tower resulted not from rural militancy but from the emergence of an urban-based network of Watch Tower adherents. As has been

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[1] ZA 1/10/1, Magistrate, Serenje, to S.N.A., 14 April 1925.

[2] Report of the Northern Rhodesian General Missionary Conference, 1924.

[3] Cf. above, p. 84.

noted, the early 1920's was a period in which an indigenous Watch Tower church began to emerge in the Rhodesias. The leaders were predominantly Nyasa migrants, but increasingly Northern Rhodesian Africans began to play a part, particularly those who had learnt the new ideas at the Wankie colliery, which had by this stage earned itself the reputation of being 'the centre of the Watch Tower spider-web'.[1] Elias Mbulo, for example, a Tonga migrant in Livingstone, ordered a special prayer for deacons and a Watch Tower preacher's certificate to be printed, maintained a correspondence with other Watch Tower members in Nyasaland and Southern Rhodesia, and established a small community of the Watch Tower in the Livingstone municipal compound.[2] One of his chief assistants was Lot Mumbi, from the Mbereshi district in the Luapula valley, who had worked at Wankie from 1921 to 1924 before being deported for Watch Tower preaching.[3] He had corresponded with the W.T.B.T.S. in Cape Town, and had requested pamphlets, information on the conducting of services, and recognition from the Society as an African church.[4]

While this and other small groupings at Ndola, Broken Hill and Mazabuka appeared to constitute the Northern Rhodesian counterpart of the type of separatist initiative familiar in the South, their relationship with the W.T.B.T.S. nevertheless remained ambiguous. While a few of the leaders made the long journey to Cape Town to visit the headquarters and subsequently

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[1] Rhodesia Herald, 15 Aug. 1924.

[2] ZA 1/10/1, C.I.D., Livingstone, to S.N.A., 30 July 1924.

[3] Cf. above, p. 135.

[4] SEC/NAT/393, Report on the Watch Tower movement, June, 1928.

regarded themselves as authorised members of a world-wide organisation, for many the relationship was exclusively one of receiving literature with which to expand their role as independent prophets. The Golden Age, a periodical published by the W.T.B.T.S., and Rutherford's The Harp of God were among the tracts translated by this time into Xhosa, Zulu and Nyanja, and supplied at cheap rates on request by individual members of the Society in South Africa, notably by A.C. Lyell in Johannesburg, and by Henry Ancketill in Cape Town.[1] These had little knowledge of conditions in central Africa, and disavowed the adherence of militant preachers while nevertheless believing that they were attracting a considerable and loyal following. Ancketill, for example, on hearing of Shadrach Sinkala's record of convictions when the latter wrote from Mazabuka asking for literature, had replied to the Native Commissioner that 'the Society I represent has no sympathy for law-breakers and we always inculcate obedience to the Government'.[2] Bible classes in the compounds, however, were suspected by the administration of providing a possible basis for seditious preaching in the countryside; the deportations from Southern and North-Eastern Rhodesia had in fact led to a situation where 'undesirable leaders' were thrown together with the quietist elements in the towns.[3]

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[1] The Golden Age (W.T.B.T.S., New York), a companion periodical to The Watch Tower, was first published in 1919. It changed its name to Consolation in 1937, and to its present title Awake! in 1946. Together with The Harp of God: Proof Conclusive that Millions now Living will Never Die (W.T.B.T.S., New York, 1921), this magazine inaugurated a new phase of millennial expectations.

[2] P.R.O., C.O. 795/1, 32378, Ancketill to N.C., Mazabuka, 26 Mar. 1924.

[3] A list of these leaders is given in ZA 1/10/1, Report of S.N.A., 31 Oct. 1926; cf. also Rev. J.M. Moffat, Serenje, to S.N.A., 26 May 1924.

These considerations in general, and the observation of Mbulo's initiative in preparing preachers' certificates in particular, led the then Secretary for Native Affairs, Edward S.B. Tagart, to make contact with the official representative of the W.T.B.T.S. in Cape Town, Thomas A. Walder. Walder denied issuing forged preachers' certificates, claimed that the Society had been reorganised, and prepared to visit Northern Rhodesia to further the establishment of the movement.[1] Walder met Tagart in Livingstone in August, 1924, where it was agreed that the whole position needed investigating and that unauthorised preaching should not be permitted. In Livingstone, Walder had attempted to preach to Lot Mumbi and his following but had met with a cool reception. The urban Watch Tower leaders appeared to want European representation because they hoped this would shield them from administrative harassment, but were not prepared to cede their independence. Consequently towards the end of 1924 a letter was sent to all Africans in Northern Rhodesia in receipt of the Society's literature, just as had been done in Southern Rhodesia, by A.C. Lyell in Johannesburg, headed 'To the Native Churches of the Watch Tower', stating that Cape Town was the headquarters of the movement and all correspondence should be sent there in future.[2] Walder also circularised Watch Tower preachers, promising that a European representative would be sent and asking that preaching should be restrained until such time.[3]

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[1] ZA 1/10/1, Walder to S.N.A., 17 July.

[2] ZA 1/10/1, Lyell to 'The Native Churches of the Watch Tower', 3 Sept. 1924.

[3] ZA 1/10/1, Walder to 'The Native Churches of the Watch Tower', 10 Sept. 1924.

The European representative who eventually visited Northern Rhodesia in April, 1925, was William Dawson, together with his interpreter Richard Kalinde, after his tour of Southern Rhodesia. Dawson visited the Watch Tower groups in Northern Rhodesia's small towns and farming centres, hoping to sort out the responsible leaders, and submitted a list of them to Tagart: Lot Mumbi (Livingstone), Shadrach Sinkala (Mazabuka), Nehemiah Mumbi (Kafue), Yessiah Msanda and Alexander Tembo (Broken Hill), John Daudi Tembo (Serenje), and Joseph Sampwe (Lusaka).[1] Most of these were Northern Rhodesian Africans. Tagart, who viewed these men as 'clever natives who have lost the confidence of their employers for one reason or another', and bore in mind the conviction of many of them for seditious activities, refused to recognise the W.T.B.T.S. in Northern Rhodesia in terms of the Native Schools Proclamation, which controlled preaching by Africans, but nevertheless agreed to suspend the interception of mail to and from the Cape Town headquarters.[2] These tentative steps towards the recognition of the W.T.B.T.S. in Northern Rhodesia were interrupted, however, by a resurgence of rural Watch Tower activism.

In 1924, apart from the continuing activity at the group of villages led by Sindano in the Abercorn area and by Sinkala at Fife, there was a further spread of the movement from Broken Hill to the Ndola and Serenje districts, and to

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[1] ZA 1/10/1, Dawson to Tagart, 27 April 1925.

[2] ZA 1/10/1, Tagart to Dawson, 28 Aug. 1925.

the people of the Luapula and Luangwa valleys. On the southern line of rail - as at Mazabuka - this may be attributed to the activity of deportees from North-Eastern Rhodesia, but generally the message was carried by returning labour migrants from the Southern Rhodesian mines who in some cases passed the mantle of leadership to a local prophet. A factor in this sudden increase in activity was that, apart from the rise in general level of expectancy among the post-war Russellites, 1925 was the year held out in the literature of the W.T.B.T.S. for the arrival of the millennium, and the radical tone of this literature together with the new organisational impetus from the Society in South Africa spurred on the millennial excitement.[1]

But of more significance than this, perhaps, were the social and economic changes brought about by the first wave of settlers in Northern Rhodesia, at this time in full flow. In 1923 the world copper price revived, new mines began to open, and further prospecting was started in earnest, while settlers moved in to the central highlands and the Fort Jameson area to farm tobacco, cotton, maize and cattle. By 1924 the North Charterland Exploration Company (N.C.E. Co.) was seeking to extend its vast land concession, perceiving that the cheapness and mobility of African labour in the territory would attract settlers who might make good the company's failure to find minerals.[2] Apart from the area of the N.C.E. Co.'s concession,

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[1] Cf. Rutherford, The Harp of God, p. 21; The Watch Tower, XLV, Jan. 1924, XLVIII, Oct. 1927; and generally Studies in the Scriptures, vii, The Finished Mystery (New York, 1918).

[2] Gann, History, p. 218.

however, which was heavily settled by the Ngoni, it was not so much pressure on the land as the new drive towards labour recruitment for the expanding mining industry and farms which accelerated the pace of change in rural life. During the 1920's both settlers and the mining companies were anxious to prevent the exodus of Northern Rhodesian labour to the Katanga and Southern Rhodesia, and although this goal was never finally achieved, internal migration to the railway belt increasingly began to replace the external traffic.

The impact of labour migration, of course, varied considerably from area to area. Migration was particularly heavy in the northern province (Bemba and Mambwe), and amongst the Lunda and related peoples of the Luapula valley, who now began to favour the copperbelt. A considerable level of local migration to the copperbelt was also found among the Lala, Lamba and Lenje, while migrants from Barotseland and the eastern districts, particularly the Nsenga, Chewa and Tumbuka, still tended to travel south rather than to the railway belt. Migration was however slight amongst the Ila-Tonga and in the north-west, the latter a remote part of the country, and the former managing to retain a local economy fairly independent of the money sector. Also, even between the areas of heavy migration there was a substantial difference in the effect of the absence of adult males for long periods, some economies being better able to withstand this withdrawal of labour than others.[1]

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[1] The classic comparison is that of the Bemba and grassland Mambwe. Cf. A.I. Richards, Land, Labour and Diet in Northern Rhodesia (O.U.P., 1939), and W. Watson, Tribal Cohesion in a Money Economy (M.U.P., 1958).

Labour migration helped to provide a ready access to Watch Tower ideas for all these rural peoples. This system was important not only for its role in the diffusion of new ideas, of course, but also in that it undermined the subsistence basis of rural society and created long term instabilities, and led to a situation where a growing proportion of people within the village had broadened their horizons and aspirations by their journeyings. The spread of the Watch Tower movement to the eastern districts of Northern Rhodesia - Petauke, Feira, Fort Jameson and Msoro - was clearly determined by the situation of this area on the labour routes, and by the rapid rise in migration in the mid 1920's. The small-scale societies affected by the movement nevertheless varied considerably in their manner of reception of Watch Tower ideas. A comparative survey of the Watch Tower in the eastern districts helps to illustrate how significant purely local socio-political features were in determining its role.

Petauke and Feira were trading centres on the south-eastern border of the Luangwa valley, the Nsenga area of settlement, which lay athwart the main routes of migrant labour between the Southern Rhodesian mines, North-Eastern Rhodesia and Nyasaland, and were consequently regularly traversed by those who had every opportunity of being converted to the Watch Tower. The Nsenga, scattered in small villages in the tsetse-ridden valley, had little vestige of an indigenous state system. There were no paramount or sub-chiefs, and even headmen enjoyed merely a nominal authority. This acephalous structure reflected both the unsettled subsistence economy,

based on hunting and the cultivation of small patches of maize and millet wherever fertile ground offered precarious crops, and a history of raiding at the hands of their powerful neighbours, Mpeseni's Ngoni. No Europeans settled among the Nsenga, numbering some 50,000 at this time, although they were on the fringes of the sphere of influence of the Dutch Reformed Church (D.R.C.) mission.[1] Although the Afrikaans missionaries maintained the second largest establishment of schools and outstations after the L.M.S. in Northern Rhodesia at the time, this was centred among the Ngoni, where they had established themselves after the defeat of Mpeseni, and expansion was taking place mainly to the east among the Chewa and Senga, without affecting the Nsenga.

Within a few months of its first appearance among the Nsenga in August, 1924, the Watch Tower became a mass movement. The first preacher was one Katyoka, known locally as Zerubbabel, who performed a few baptisms at Mlilo village in the Petauke district. Katyoka was a follower of Shadrach Sinkala, and had himself studied under A.C. Lyell in Johannesburg. It was particularly against the missionaries that hostility was expressed by the local following; a mission outstation was burned down, and the few local mission converts who refused to join the movement were assaulted. Bitter complaints by missionaries at the D.R.C. Hofmeyr station led to a number of trials in which adherents were accused of sedition and vagrancy,

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[1] E.H. Lane Poole, The Native Tribes of the East Luangwa Province of Northern Rhodesia (Livingstone, 1934), p. 46; cf. also R.J. Apthorpe, 'Clanship, Chieftainship and Nsenga Political Adaptation', in From Tribal Rule to Modern Government (Proceedings of the Thirteenth Conference of the Rhodes-Livingstone Institute, Lusaka, 1959).

but since the support of the headmen - who were in any case not particularly authoritative within the villages - was largely given to the Watch Tower, these attempts at control had little effect.[1] All but a very few headmen failed to report the Watch Tower activity in their areas to the boma, and it appears that the Watch Tower excitement, which continued for some months, operated at every level of Nsenga society. Local political authority was insufficiently strong either to contain the movement or to be compromised vis-à-vis white rule by supporting it. Bearing in mind their position relative to the missionaries and the Ngoni, and their own poverty, the Nsenga appear to have sought in the Watch Tower an answer to their own extremely marginal situation. Mission Christianity had brought hopes of change and development which were however never realised. The Watch Tower movement provided both an Africanised Christianity and a means of expressing anger and resentment against the white missionaries.

By February, 1925, the movement had spread as far as Feira. It was in this inaccessible but well-populated area of the southern Luangwa that the Watch Tower came to be accepted by a new type of migrant, the rural immigrants from Mozambique. The widespread adoption of Watch Tower ideas in this area by people escaping from repressive action by the Portuguese - 'fleeing from the yoke they had found too heavy' - was noted in the complaint of a Jesuit missionary on the difficulties of

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[1] KSY 1/4/1, D.C., Fort Jameson, to Asst. Magistrate, Petauke, 21 May 1925; ibid., Report on the Watch Tower, Petauke, 1925.

proselytising at the Zambezi stations of Kapoche and Katondwe.[1] A most unsettled situation had arisen generally on Northern Rhodesia's borders with Portuguese Africa as a consequence of the Portuguese system of forced labour. The shibalo, a hunt through the bush by recruiters, caused many to flee to British-controlled territory; those who resisted the recruiters were sent in irons to the coast for a spell of five years' servitude. In the decade 1919 to 1929, it has been estimated that some 14,000 people crossed the border from Mozambique to settle in the Petauke area.[2] The accent among these unsettled people was on salvationism:

> Watch Tower teaching at the old slavery centre [Feira] is partly Ethiopianism. They tell of great airstrips that are going to come and bring the Americans, and also lions and giant locusts which will eat up all those who have not been baptised.[3]

Whatever other function participation in the movement may have played in helping new arrivals to settle in a strange territory, the Watch Tower ideology at Feira also directed hostility against Europeans as a whole, not merely against the missionaries, and provided an expressive outlet for rebellious feelings against the harshness of colonial practices.

While the Watch Tower offered only a dream of liberation, the fears and rumours of political unrest that were prevalent communicated themselves to the local Commissioner:

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[1] Rt. Rev. Mgr. Browne, S.J., 'A Missionary Tour to Northern Rhodesia', Zambesi Mission Record, VIII, April 1924, p. 161.

[2] Gifford, 'The Framework for a Nation', p. 76.

[3] W.M.M.S. Arch., Rev. S. Douglas Gray, Zambesi and Luano Trek Diary, 20 May 1925.

> Personally, while not fearing any immediate revolt, I cannot but think, especially when one remembers that Watchtower teaching here is rife and that this corner of the earth is particularly inaccessible, that a rebellion will break out sooner or later.[1]

These fears of course were based on the knowledge that resistance to Portuguese rule was still very much alive in western Mozambique, with the Mapondera and Gungunhana revolts fresh in people's experience.[2] It is quite possible that Watch Tower ideas may have infiltrated into rural Mozambique via Nyasa migrants working on the sugar plantations, or even through returning Mozambiquan migrants from Southern Rhodesia, as is suggested by scattered references to Watch Tower communities there in the Annual Yearbook of the Jehovah's Witnesses.[3] Whether or not Watch Tower millennialism affected the Mozambiquan rebellions in this period is a question, however, which awaits further investigation. The Nsenga and Chewa who fled from the Portuguese into the Feira district may well have used the imagery of revolt, but adherence to the Watch Tower seems primarily to have served in creating new community structures amongst recent immigrants.

The spread of Watch Tower belief to the Fort Jameson district and the Kunda people late in 1924 convinced the new administration that this movement was destined to reach country-

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[1] B 1/1/A/765, N.C., Feira, to S.N.A., 2 April 1925.

[2] Cf. T.O. Ranger, 'The Last Days of the Empire of Mwene Mutapa', Conference of the History of the Central African Peoples (Lusaka, 1963); 'Revolt in Portuguese East Africa; the Makombe Rising of 1917', in K. Kirkwood (ed.), St. Antony's Papers, XV, 1963.

[3] E.g. 1937 Yearbook of Jehovah's Witnesses (W.T.B.T.S., New York, 1938), p. 113. Cf. also references to Mozambique in subsequent yearbooks.

wide proportions. The Kunda were far more numerous than the Nsenga, with whom they had freely inter-married, and possessed a far more strongly articulated political structure. Up until this time the Watch Tower in Northern Rhodesia had appeared to be confined to relatively small numbers of followers, even in the most enthusiastic occurrences. The Kunda area of settlement, 'clotted thick with innumerable villages' as a touring missionary described it, offered a much larger prospect.

The first indications of Watch Tower success were reported by U.M.C.A. missionaries in July, 1924:

> News comes from the Akunda country that the Watch Tower enthusiasts have been hard at work and have for the time being won over all the people at Kantuma and Mukanya, so that our teachers are likely to have a difficult task. We have passed on the news to the boma ....[1]

The chiefs in whose area this took place - Kawaza, Jumbe, Nsefu and Kakumbi - were, however, violently opposed to the movement. From the earliest period of European penetration into the area, these chiefs had sought to accommodate themselves to and benefit from the colonial presence. A warm reception was given to the Livingstonia mission which visited the Kunda from the Tamanda station intermittently during the first wave of missionary enterprise in North-Eastern Rhodesia, but this stopped at the time of the war.[2] Subsequently insistent and repeated deputations were sent by the chiefs to the U.M.C.A. missionaries at Msoro begging for the establishment of stations; a poll was held among the villages to decide

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[1] R.H. MSS. Afr., Msoro Station Log-book, 25 July 1924.

[2] Central Africa, Aug. 1924, pp. 167, 172.

whether the D.R.C. or the U.M.C.A. should establish out-stations; and two villages decided for the D.R.C. while the majority requested teachers from the U.M.C.A. Teachers were accordingly promised to the Kunda, but owing to the shortage of funds and mission staff, these could not immediately be sent.[1] But by the time teachers had been appointed and government permission obtained, the U.M.C.A. found that they had been forestalled by the Watch Tower.

Amongst these Watch Tower preachers, as in North-Eastern Rhodesia, were a number of local migrants, 'often quite raw and uneducated, who have been working down south, have listened to Watch Tower preachers and probably been baptised by one of them', as Bishop Alston May noted.[2] These adapted the message according to their own knowledge of the local situation, varying even from village to village. As Bishop May again remarked:

> The Watch Tower ... is a movement rather than a sect. The teaching is in a state of flux, changing its character according to the circumstances of time and place, and the predilections of the individual teacher.[3]

The particular objects of local grievances in this case were the chiefs, who were insulted and threatened with physical assault and their orders disobeyed. As regards the whites, the expectancy of millennial change was encouraged, but a reversal of fortunes rather than the departure of Europeans appears to have been envisaged. All white men would in future

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[1] A.G. Blood, The History of the Universities' Mission to Central Africa (1957), ii, (1907-1932), 191.

[2] Central Africa, May 1925, p. 20.

[3] Ibid.

work for Africans, and all those who joined the movement would take white women as wives.[1]

The prominence of the chiefs as objects of resentment appears to reflect a situation where these local leaders, in an area remote from European contact yet considerably unsettled by its effects, had surrendered their administrative prerogatives to the boma yet had not been successful in acquiring the benefits believed to be associated with foreign rule. This rejection of the legitimacy of the chiefs was accompanied by a search for a new way of life which, while accommodating European influences, aimed at being independent both from the whites and from tribal values, which were seen as inadequate. The missionaries noted with surprise that a moral code 'much higher than the ordinary heathen standard' was adopted by the Watch Tower following, which included the discouragement of polygamy and beer-drinking, and enjoined personal cleanliness and hospitality amongst members.[2]

Bishop May once again contributed a most perceptive remark on the positive features of the movement:

> The revolt against authority, though disquieting, is yet (I believe) only a passing phase, incidental and symptomatic. What our people are really feeling after is a social and religious order which on the one hand is superior to tribalism as they know it, and on the other is African - their very own.[3]

This first phase of the Watch Tower movement amongst the Kunda soon led, however, to open clashes with the chiefs, and

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[1] SEC/NAT/312, D.C., Fort Jameson, to P.C., Fort Jameson, 5 Fen. 1930.

[2] G.H. Wilson, The History of the Universities' Mission to Central Africa (1936), p. 208.

[3] Quoted in Blood, op. cit., pp. 196-197.

the extension of the movement to most of the people in the Fort Jameson district, following the alienation of African land by the N.C.E. Co. In October, 1925, the U.M.C.A. missionaries noted that the villages where their teachers were stationed were so thoroughly occupied by the Watch Tower that there was no alternative but to withdraw them.[1] The removal of the missionary presence not only encouraged Watch Tower adherents, but also seems to have directly increased the hostility towards the chiefs. The fighting which took place in 1926 between the Kunda chiefs and their supporters and the Watch Tower also resulted, however, from the new pressures created by the setting up of tribal reserves at this time.

The N.C.E. Co. had made a number of attempts to clear land in the Fort Jameson area for European settlement through the establishment of tribal reserves, but their plans had been thwarted largely by the U.M.C.A., which maintained a powerful lobby in Britain.[2] With the new wave of settlers after the war lending power to the company's pleas to move Ngoni, Chewa, Nsenga and Kunda out of the area over which the company possessed land rights, N.R.G. decided in 1924 to go ahead with the scheme, in the face of evidence that the reserves set aside were far too small and waterless to support a sizeable African population for any length of time.[3] Consequently early in 1926 reserves were established in the lower Fort Jameson

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[1] Msoro Station Log-book, 20 Oct. 1925.

[2] R.H. MSS. Brit. Emp. G/164, Anti-Slavery Society Papers, John Harris to Bishop of Northern Rhodesia, 7 July 1922.

[3] ZP 1/1, Beaufort Commission Report on the North Charterland Concession Area.

area, and Africans of all tribes were forcibly removed from their fertile grazing lands. This was an area in which Watch Tower ideas had already penetrated, but the atmosphere of resentment and uncertainty created by the removals, the alarms and the rumours, led to a situation of restlessness and discontent which was extremely favourable to the adoption of millennial thinking.[1]

The major outburst of militant Watch Tower activity occurred amongst the Kunda in Chief Jumbe's district, in mid 1926. The ranks of the local preachers were increased at this time by the presence of Isaac Chulu, a Tonga from Bandawe who had been baptised into the movement by Isaac Nyasulu, an associate of Elliott Kamwana.[2] Nyasulu had returned to Bandawe, and it is possible that Chulu too was en route from Southern Rhodesia to Nyasaland. It is perhaps also of significance to note that the renewed Watch Tower activity in Northern Rhodesia's eastern districts coincided with the Watch Tower revival which took place in Nyasaland in April, 1926.[3]

Although the evidence is unclear, it appears from missionary reports and the notes of a police patrol, that the presence of Chulu and his more revolutionary millennial preaching caused the local opposition by Watch Tower adherents to the chiefs to break out into an open struggle. Mass meetings were held by the Watch Tower at a number of villages mainly on the fringe of the mission areas, particularly at

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[1] Report of the Commission appointed to enquire into the Financial and Economic Position of Northern Rhodesia (Col. no. 145 of 1938), 60-62.

[2] Cf. above, pp. 90, 111, 138-139.

[3] Cf. above, pp. 91-92.

Mzinga, Malemia and Malama, which were the occasion for baptisms, hymn-singing and the preaching of liberation from the rule of chiefs and Europeans.[1] One chief, Kavimba, attempted to prevent his people from attending these meetings, and when they disobeyed, punished them for disregarding his orders. Hearing of this, Chulu and his fellow preachers called up several hundred supporters from other Watch Tower villages and attacked Kavimba's village on the following day, badly beating him and his headmen, and destroying houses, gardens and household goods. The chiefs in their turn sought assistance from the boma at Fort Jameson. This arrived in the form of a squad of police, who arrested 91 Watch Tower followers in a series of raids on the Watch Tower villages. Although most of the local leaders of the movement managed to avoid being captured, Chulu was arrested and subsequently sentenced to 15 months hard labour for his part in the disturbances.[2] Just as in 1918, these mass arrests were followed by a rapid fading in the popularity of the movement, although the D.R.C. and U.M.C.A. schools remained closed some while thereafter.[3]

The main theme of the events of 1926 was not so much opposition to the whites, however, as to the chiefs. Removals from the land and the new insecurity following the establishment of reserves created a further divergence of interest between chief and commoner, because the former were seen both

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[1] Msoro Station Log-book, 23 May 1926.

[2] ZA 1/10/1, Patrol Report of Constable W.F. Stubbs, 10 June 1926.

[3] ZA 1/10/1, Annexure to Quarterly Reports, Fort Jameson, Sept. 1926.

as inadequate in providing protection from or accommodation to the colonial presence, and by virtue of their role as functionaries in the new administrative system, were also regarded as common oppressors with the Europeans. Apart from these considerations, perhaps it is also the case that individual chiefs acted as scapegoats, or focal points around which accumulated resentments could take shape. Chief Kavimba, certainly, was not forgiven for his part in the repression of the Watch Tower, even after interest in the movement in the Fort Jameson area had died down. When Kavimba visited his people at the Wankie colliery in 1930, he was remembered for his part in the repression of the Watch Tower, jeered at and refused a hearing.[1]

It is interesting to note that whereas the Watch Tower obtained a large following amongst the Nsenga, Kunda and Chewa, very few Ngoni appear to have been attracted to the movement. Labour migration was high amongst the Ngoni, particularly after 1918, mainly as a result of population pressure on over-worked land, a situation exacerbated by the establishment of tribal reserves.[2] Fort Jameson also lay directly on the route of labour migration from Nyasaland. Despite the easy access to Watch Tower ideas and the apparently favourable conditions for its reception, however, Watch Tower activity was reported only from the outlying areas under Kapatamoyo and Mnukwa, and from the Angoni reserve southeast of Fort Jameson.[3] The former

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[1] SEC/NAT/312, D.C., Fort Jameson, to P.C., Fort Jameson, 5 Feb. 1930.

[2] Cf. W. Rau, 'Mpeseni's Ngoni Under Colonial Rule', (University of Zambia, unpublished paper, 1971).

[3] ZA 1/10/1, Rev. A.S.B. Ranger to Bishop, 1 Oct. 1924; D.C., Fort Jameson, to S.N.A., 12 Nov. 1924.

bordered on the Nsenga and Chewa areas where there was a mixed population, while in the Angoni reserve the movement 'only flourished at villages where the menfolk were away at work'.[1] These circumstances suggest that the Ngoni system generally had little need at this stage for a millennial component in its process of response to colonialism. The notable features of this system were its pastoral economy and powerful political structure. The cattle economy, which was the bastion of local custom and the social system, underwent little change despite the demands for tax and labour, since it yielded a saleable commodity and was not totally dependent on adult male labour. The Ngoni possessed a strong, centralised state system as well, based originally on their position as an invading military force. Thus chiefs, who opposed the movement, could enforce their authority, while the conditions which might have provided the Watch Tower with a popular base generally did not obtain.

The main factors affecting the reception of the Watch Tower movement in eastern Northern Rhodesia in this period were, then, the common ones of ready access to the ideology via labour migration and the impact of Christian missionaries. The response nevertheless varied from the total adoption by the Nsenga to the virtual lack of interest shown by the Ngoni, while among the Kunda the Watch Tower acted as the vehicle for the clash of interests between chiefs and commoners. These developments suggest that the capacity of local authorities to act as political communicators within the system through the securing

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[1] ZA 7/1/8/4, East Luangwa District Annual Report, 1925.

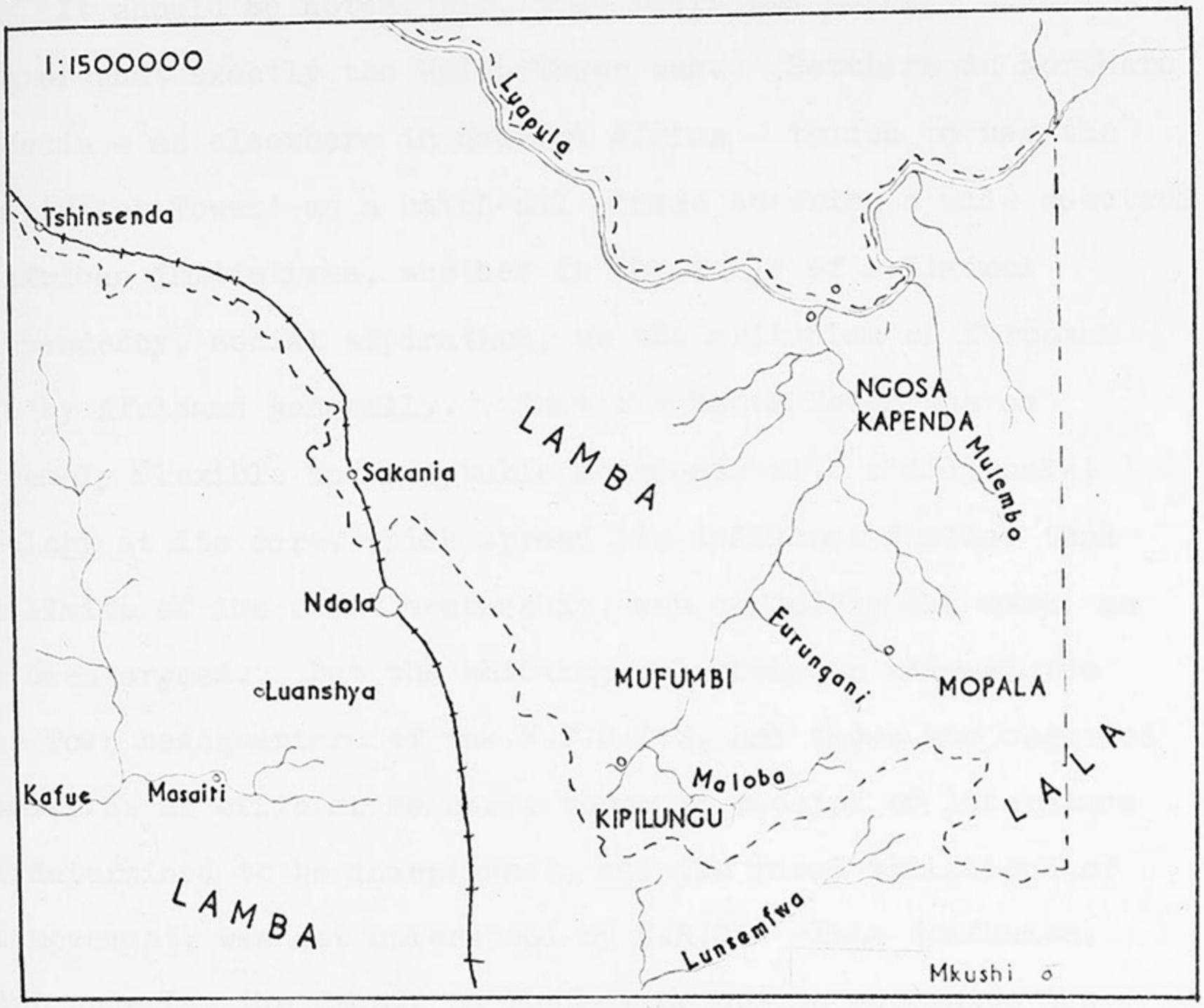
of benefits - the services of missionaries, the protection of land rights, and the prosecution of grievances against the white man - was directly related to the likelihood of local people joining the movement. One might also argue that, as in the case of the northern Shona, dreams of rebellion against white rule may be more frequently expected amongst societies which have not resisted the imposition of foreign rule. In the absence of a centralised political system and effective political leadership, there was a turning towards the charismatic authority of prophets, who offered an alternative Africanised Christianity to the services of the missionaries, and a new way of life which was neither tribal nor European.

2. The Mwana Lesa Movement

By 1925, the Watch Tower movement had spread throughout most of the eastern districts and the small towns. Even the highlands bordering the line of rail, an area particularly favoured by incoming white farmers, were experiencing a wave of desertions amongst their labourers who wished to travel to their villages in order to be baptised.[1] Faced with the knowledge that a local leadership of the movement had emerged, and that the Watch Tower was widespread, hostile to chiefs, missionaries and Europeans generally, Tagart was consequently reluctant to recommend that it should be granted recognition. When it was simply a matter of the urban-based groups, recognition and the subsequent control by European officials was hoped for, but the extension of Watch Tower ideas to the rural

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[1] ZA 1/10/1, Report on the Watch Tower at Chisamba, Feb. 1925.



MAP IV. THE CONGO PEDICLE

areas created a new situation.

It should be noted, too, that there was no very clear idea of what exactly the Watch Tower was. Settlers in Northern Rhodesia - as elsewhere in Central Africa - tended to use the term 'Watch Tower' as a catch-all phrase covering a wide spectrum of African initiatives, whether in the field of religious independency, social aspiration, or the criticism of European rule by Africans generally. That the Watch Tower was an extremely flexible and adaptable movement, with a millennial ideology at its core, which spread its influence further than the limits of its overt membership, was certainly the case, as has been argued. But the shifting relationship between the Cape Town headquarters of the W.T.B.T.S. and those who regarded themselves as official members, those in receipt of literature but determined to be independent, and the rural variations of the movement, was not understood by N.R.G. This confusion, which underlay the debate on whether or not to recognise the W.T.B.T.S., was substantially increased by the mwana lesa movement of 1925-6, when Watch Tower ideas fused with local belief systems to give rise to widespread killings. This was the furthest remove of the Watch Tower in central Africa from the orthodoxy of the W.T.B.T.S. In the Lunsemfwa valley area between Chisamba and Mkushi, inhabited by Lenje, Soli, Swaka and Lala, the elements of cleansing people from the fears and suspicion of witchcraft, which were attached to the initiation rite of baptism by total immersion on joining the Watch Tower, were developed into a cult for the eradication of witchcraft. Apart from the many questions which this phase of the movement

raises, it served to increase settler fears and administrative hostility towards the movement to such a point that it was virtually driven underground for the ensuing five years. It was not until the early 1930's that the question of recognition could even be raised again.

The mwana lesa (son of God) movement was a perhaps predictable development of the Watch Tower activity in eastern Northern Rhodesia. There was a considerable variation in the degree and manner in which Watch Tower ideas were adopted, and that it should on occasion be adapted to reinforce local ideas pertaining to witchcraft is not surprising. What should be examined is under what circumstances this syncretism occurred. The Lala amongst whom the movement developed did not differ greatly from the surrounding peoples: anthropologists and historians have indeed argued that there is little distinction to be found in the scattered populations between the Kaonde in the west and the Soli in the east.[1] J.E. 'Chirupula' Stephenson, the B.S.A. Co.'s first administrator in Lala country, considered that Lala chiefs constituted a class of 'priest-kings', but this combination of secular and religious functions was hardly exceptional.[2] Lala belief in sorcery was however prominent, perhaps as a result of the insecurity of their society in the face of raiding both from the Bemba in the east and the Lozi in the west in the late nineteenth century. Stephenson mentions that witchcraft eradication movements had swept through the

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[1] C.M. Doke, The Lambas of Northern Rhodesia (1931); Brelsford, The Tribes of Zambia, pp. 49-56.

[2] J.E. Stephenson, Chirupula's Tale. A Bye-way in African History (1937), pp. 63-64.

Irumi mountains in 1901-2 and again in 1910-11.[1] Periodic anti-sorcery cults, as Douglas has argued, are a common feature of a number of relatively small and stateless societies in central Africa.[2] The Watch Tower amongst the Lala appears to have been in sequence with these earlier movements. Chiefs, normally hostile to the movement, had especial duties in the matter of witchcraft eradication. How did it come about that certain Lala chiefs should welcome the Watch Tower in this manner?

In order to answer this question, some analysis of the legal position of witchcraft is necessary. Amongst the first laws to be imposed in Northern Rhodesia, in accordance with the standard principle of selectively outlawing native customs held to be morally repugnant, was the Witchcraft Suppression Act (1899).[3] There was an implicit confusion in this legislation in that it tended to penalise the testing of witchcraft without controlling accusations of the belief underlying the practices which gave rise to this; and it also undermined the position of the chief whose duty it was to ensure that witchcraft fears were resolved, usually through divination. While this was recognised at a later stage and the law modified, the early enforcement of this law obstructed the operation of a theory of social causation, and hence of the response to social change.

Rituals such as the mwabvi poison ordeal whereby those accused

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[1] R.H. MSS. Brit. Emp. G/164, J.E. Stephenson, 'Affidavit re Enquiry into the Causes of Unrest' (disallowed evidence given before the Russell Commission of Enquiry into the Copperbelt Disturbances, 1935).

[2] M. Douglas, 'Techniques of Sorcery Control in Central Africa', in J. Middleton and E.H. Winter (eds.), Witchcraft and Sorcery in East Africa (1963).

[3] Cf. J.R. Crawford, Witchcraft and Sorcery in Rhodesia (1967), p. 297.

or under suspicion might rehabilitate themselves in the eyes of society could no longer be practised openly, nor could chiefs legitimately invite witch-finders of renown. For chiefs, headmen and villagers alike shared a common interest in the successful operation of witch-finders, as it was believed that these were able to expose and neutralise the malevolent individuals who were, consciously or unconsciously, in some way responsible for the climate of unrest.

Typically, situations of increasing fears about witchcraft have been noted during periods of rapid change when the external world impinges upon small communities. Inter-generational disputes are frequent where the younger members of society become more familiar with the new culture; conflicts and jealousies arise when in the absence of labour migrants the old become increasingly dependent on the support of those at home; and the declining authority of the chief gives rise to fears that the powers of witchcraft are uncontrolled.[1] Witchcraft beliefs thus constituted a particular interpretation of and reaction to social change. The Lala, like others in eastern Northern Rhodesia, were experiencing the pressures of taxation and settler expansion, although the exodus of labour to the copperbelt was yet to come. The adoption of the Watch Tower as a witchcraft eradication movement amongst them should be seen, then, not so much as a radical departure from the development of this movement in

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[1] Cf. J.C. Mitchell, The Yao Village (1956), pp. 156 ff.; M.G. Marwick, 'The Sociology of Sorcery in a Central African Tribe', African Studies, XXII, 1963. Of comparative interest is A.D.J. Macfarlane, Witchcraft in Tudor and Stuart England (1970), Chap. XV.

other parts of the country, but rather as one amongst many variants of a single broad social movement which acted as a vehicle for responses to the colonial situation. What is really significant about the mwana lesa movement, perhaps, is not so much the dramatic killings as the fact that certain chiefs gave the movement their whole-hearted support. In order to understand the background of this, the route whereby the Watch Tower came to the Lala must be studied.

The first evidence of the transition to witch-finding occurred amongst the Lenje, and the failure of the movement to establish itself as a fully-fledged eradication cult amongst them compares interestingly with the subsequent events amongst the Lala. The first missionaries active amongst the Lenje came from the Wesleyan Methodist Missionary Society (W.M.M.S.), which had entered the field at the comparatively late date of 1912, and had its sole mission in Northern Rhodesia at Chipembe, on the edge of the Lunsemfwa escarpment. From this base, the W.M.M.S. missionaries expanded ambitiously through numerous outstations in an attempt to establish a sphere of influence in competition with the Jesuits, who were already operating in the Zambezi valley.[1] Supporters of the mission were alarmed to learn in 1925 that

> the work in some areas was seriously affected with a strange new African sect called the Watch Tower movement... our own Mission lost over 600 members on trial, and 200 junior members through it.[2]

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[1] W.M.M.S. Arch., The Challenge of Today (112th Annual Report of the W.M.M.S., 1926), pp. 78-79.

[2] Ibid.

Although the administration was unaware of it at the time, the notes of the W.M.M.S. missionaries reveal that the popularity of the Watch Tower amongst the Lenje derived in part from their hopes that this movement would serve as a witchcraft eradication cult. In October, 1924, an African evangelist of the mission reported to Rev. Oliver Roebuck, the senior incumbent at Chipembe, that everyone had been baptised at Luswatu's village, and that the series of hamlets on the missionaries' itinerary route of Mpimpwa, Makandu, Mburumbu, Kandoko, Ndadima and Kanyangara had all followed in rapid succession, mostly at the invitation of the local headmen. Even the local Lenje prophetess, Wundawunda, was reported to have joined. By mid 1925 the W.M.M.S. schools were deserted, and teachers reported that the entire local population had gone over to the Watch Tower en masse.[1] It appears from a report of the preaching that the universal acceptance of the Watch Tower arose not only from the appeal of promises of salvation, and the departure of the Europeans, but also because baptism served to remove anxiety over the believed prevalence of witchcraft.

The preaching itself was not untypical of the Watch Tower message in the eastern districts and elsewhere:

> In the beginning of 1925 there would be a resurrection of all their friends from the dead, led by Abraham, Isaac and Jacob. There was no need to buy limbo, it would come of itself into their huts. Those who are not dipped will die this time. Most of the white men will go back to their own country, but those that stay here will die. All the tax will be finished, therefore it is foolish to pay tax this year. Some of the white people who stay here will be turned into snakes.

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[1] W.M.M.S. Arch., Box 7, 'Kasukila', Notes compiled by Rev. Oliver Roebuck.

What is important, however, was the local interpretation of this message:

> The people say they all go to be dipped because the dippers can find and point out those who deal in witchcraft when he is dipping them, and they want to find out these things.[1]

The appeal of the Watch Tower preachers to the Lenje, then, was the hope that they would allay fears of witchcraft. In this it appears that people were looking to the Watch Tower as a substitute for ineffectual mission work. From the first the missionaries had noted what they regarded as the mercenary attitude of the local chief, Shembe, towards them, who had 'blown hot and cold ... exploring and questioning what he could get in return for giving up beer-drinking, immoral dances, and initiation rites'.[2] Doubtless Shembe also hoped that this powerful new religion would help to protect his people against witchcraft. With the growth of witchcraft fears and the hopes of a successful alternative offered by the Watch Tower, the chiefs issued instructions that no portering should be undertaken for the missionaries, and that those loyal to them who refused to be baptised into the Watch Tower should be 'persecuted'. School cards were burnt and spelling books returned to the mission.[3]

Although the evidence is unclear, it appears that the Watch Tower preachers amongst the Lenje were either unable or unwilling to adopt the ritual and the ideology of the movement to the purpose of identifying suspected witches. The

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[1] *Ibid*.

[2] W.M.M.S. Arch., Box 7, Report by Rev. Herbert Carter for the year 1925.

[3] *Ibid*.

failure of salvationist promises was probably also significant in the disillusionment with the Watch Tower. The support given to the movement by local religious figures such as Wundawunda and its acclaim by chiefs and headmen suggest that the Watch Tower was seen not so much as an alternative variant of Christianity, however, as a modernised eradication cult. And as such it failed. By June, 1925, the missionaries at Chipembe were receiving messages from Shembe disavowing the Watch Tower, and requesting that teachers should be sent back to the villages.[1] Thus after a brief period of mass popularity, the Watch Tower, having failed to develop into a witch-finding movement, rapidly declined.

The missionary presence amongst the Lala was constituted by the U.M.C.A., which had first opened a station at Fiwila near Mkushi in 1918 that closed again in the same year. Fiwila was reopened in 1924, primarily as a training school for teachers rather than as a mission to the Lala, who nevertheless at first responded enthusiastically to the missionaries, who had neither the manpower nor the facilities to undertake large-scale teaching.[2] Inadequacy of mission work seems to have been a factor influencing the initial response of the Lala to the Watch Tower in much the same way as with the Lenje. The major difference, however, was that amongst the Lala the elements within the movement stimulating a hope for the control of sorcery became fully developed. This development depended not only on Lala beliefs and social circumstances, but also on

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[1] Ibid.

[2] Blood, The History of the Universities' Mission to Central Africa, ii, (1907-1932), 193-194.

the chief Watch Tower preacher.

The Watch Tower leader amongst the Lenje was one Jeremani, a Ngoni from the Petauke district, whose 'head dipper' - as he was described by the missionaries - was Gabriel Aphiri, from Nyasaland. Aphiri had attended the Jesuit mission at Broken Hill, used a Jesuit catechism during the baptismal ceremony, and required charms and horns of medicine to be submitted before baptism.[1] It was one of Aphiri's converts, Tomo Nyirenda, who succeeded in developing these minor anti-witchcraft features of the movement into a fully-fledged eradication cult.

Some details of Nyirenda's career are given in the record of his trial. Tomo Ulwa Nyirenda, a Tumbuka from the Karonga district of Nyasaland, had spent six years at the Livingstonia mission at Bandawe before travelling to Northern Rhodesia where he worked in Broken Hill as a cook. After a conviction there for a sexual offence, he moved to the Jesse mine near Mkushi where he was baptised into the Watch Tower by Gabriel Aphiri, who appears to have handed on to him some knowledge of anti-sorcery techniques. Nyirenda was first discovered to be preaching early in 1925 when he was arrested at Mandoka's village in Lala country, on the grounds that he was an alien without a registration certificate. He reportedly preached at this stage that those who were baptised would never die, that the aged would again be young, and believers would see their forefathers; that the white man would soon be driven away, but their women would remain to be enslaved and carry loads, and Europeans' property would be divided amongst the believers;

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[1] W.M.M.S. Arch., Box 7, Chipembe Mission circular to members, June, 1925.

that taxation would cease, food would fall from heaven, and great wealth would be brought by Americans.[1] It was after his release from Mkushi jail in April, 1925, that this standard message of the African Watch Tower millennium took on a new aspect.

On being freed, Nyirenda immediately continued his journeying through the Lala villages, preaching and baptising, his reputation for immunity from the white man enhanced by his brief brush with the colonial authorities. He attracted to him an entourage of young men and women who travelled with him, and a number of these provided important evidence of Tomo's progress. From one Mulakasa's account, it appears that Tomo at this stage stated that those who came to be baptised could harbour powers of witchcraft, even unknown to them, and hence should submit all their charms before being dipped. In addition, he preached that people should cease from fighting and quarrelling and abusing one another, that they should not steal or commit adultery, and that they should receive strangers hospitably.[2] While a positive prescription for social behaviour was generally a part of the Watch Tower message, Nyirenda emphasised not so much the public and perhaps more symbolic gestures, such as abstention from beer-drinking, as harmony at the inter-personal level of behaviour, where friction would pose a grave threat to the coherence of a small community. It was through his success at this level, embracing the functions of the traditional diviner, that Nyirenda swiftly established a

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[1] B 1/2/234, Rex v. Nyirenda (1926).

[2] R.H. Afr. MSS., F.L. Browne, 'Mwana Lesa: Legal Proceedings. Statement by Mulakasa, 6 Sept. 1925'.

reputation as a Watch Tower prophet of great renown in the surrounding area, and became known as mwana lesa, the son of God.

This acclamation suggests that the initiative for his actions in cleansing the district of witchcraft was very much a local one. The term mwana lesa denoted not only an indigenous messianic belief, as described by Doke, but also the institution of prophetism, the baami or seer, a number of whom were reported to have been active in the Lamba, Lala and Ila areas in the early colonial period.[1] As has been argued, it was a typical feature of the movement that local grievances should feature prominently in Watch Tower activity. In preaching against witchcraft Nyirenda was taking the lead from the villagers he baptised as much as from his own understanding of the Watch Tower. In doing so he was adapting his own position from that of a preacher of an independent Christianity to that of the prophet and diviner, the baami.

Nyirenda visited five villages in Chief Mulungwe's district preaching in this manner. Baptism by total immersion in a local stream was accompanied by the singing of hymns which called for the abandonment of the instruments of witchcraft, and a ritual questioning of candidates for baptism aimed at eliciting confessions of possible witchcraft practices. At this stage a number of elderly people were indicated as witches through their failure to immerse properly. Immersion, of course, depended not on the voluntary act of the candidate but on the dipper, who held them by their shoulders and, taking his

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[1] Doke, The Lambas of Northern Rhodesia, pp. 30-31, 226, 231-232; cf. also below, pp. 319-320.

cue from the attitude of the surrounding villages, could either immerse them or hold their heads above water. No action was taken against those who floated, however, apart from jeering and further calls to confess their witchcraft. Thus by the time Nyirenda extended his activity into Chief Shaiwila's district he had not only built up a reputation as a diviner but had indeed indicated a number of people as being witches.[1]

After baptising at several villages in Shaiwila's district, Nyirenda was arrested by a headman for witch-finding. On the way to the boma, however, a messenger interrupted with instructions from Shaiwila that Nyirenda should be released and should proceed to clean the country of witches. Nyirenda visited Shaiwila, and that evening commenced to kill those whom he divined as witches. Systematically all those who had been previously found to be witches were drowned, and in all 16 people in Lala country were killed in this way. Villagers readily conspired to conceal these doings from the administration, and blandly reported the deaths as the result of accident, disease and old age, while Shaiwila kept Nyirenda informed of the whereabouts of the district messengers.[2]

Invitations to baptise and cleanse people of their witchcraft fears flowed in as Nyirenda's renown spread. Contrary to contemporary belief, the mwana lesa did not flee to the Congo, but was invited there by letter by Chief Mufumbi, following a

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[1] KSM 3/1/1, Memorandum on the Mwana Lesa Movement by J. Moffat Thomson, 8 June 1926.

[2] Ibid.

report by Mufumbi's headman who had met Nyirenda at a beer-drink at a relative's village on the Lunsemfwa river.[1] After despatching six people indicted as witches at Chief Chondoka's near Ndola, Nyirenda crossed into Katanga in June, 1925, with some 60 followers, established a camp on the Muloba river amongst Mufumbi's Lala, and proceeded to test for witchcraft by baptism all those who at their own and their headman's promptings visited him. Following the witch-testing at the Muloba river, where 16 people were drowned, Mufumbi installed Nyirenda a few miles to the north on the Furungani stream, where a large village of some 85 interconnecting thatched huts was constructed.[2]

The Furungani encampment marked the high point of Nyirenda's career, and he established himself at the head of this settlement as might a chief. According to witnesses, he held court in a central chamber of the thatched village, where he accepted and dispensed gifts of cassava, maize, goats and chickens, and arbitrated in disputes. Baptisms, witch-testing and the questioning of suspects were delegated to chosen members of his entourage, and those indicated as guilty were no longer drowned but ritually beaten to death. In all 65 people were killed at the Furungani stream.

Nyirenda himself seems to have limited his religious functions to daily preaching, which not only contained a promise of a renewal of life on earth but also claimed the invincibility of those who joined the Watch Tower over the whites.[3]

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[1] Anon., 'Crimes et Superstitions Indigènes', Revue de Droit et Jurisprudence du Katanga (Elizabethville), II, 9, 1926, p. 225.

[2] Ibid., pp. 226-227.

[3] Ibid.

From the Furungani camp Nyirenda was invited to Chief Mopala's, where - more prudently from the point of view of possible administrative reprisals - he was taken by the chief's son on a conducted tour of the villages, preaching and baptising, eventually establishing another camp on the Mulembo river. While the neighbouring Lamba chief, Kipilungu, had apparently rejected the offer of Nyirenda's services, Mopala - a Lala - was keen for his entire district to be cleansed.[1] At the Mulembo camp, however, Nyirenda encountered Belgian askaris. Alerted by anti-white rumours and by the desertion from domestic employment at Sakania of many who wished to be baptised, the administrateur territoriale had sent a platoon of askaris to effect the arrest of mwana lesa and his followers. According to witnesses, Nyirenda remained seated in front of his hut when the askaris entered the camp, but on being struck by one of them, cried out that the day of battle of which he had spoken had arrived, and killed the leader of the platoon with a blow. Most of the remaining askaris were then set upon and killed by his followers.[2] Following this brush with Belgian authority, Nyirenda and his entourage, now swollen with many villagers from Mufumbi's, returned to Northern Rhodesia.

By this stage the witchcraft murders at Shaiwila's had been discovered, however, and the hunt for mwana lesa was on. Nyirenda performed a few baptisms in the Serenje district, but was forced to move on rapidly through Mkushi south towards Petauke. Here he was eventually discovered in a camp with a

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[1] Ibid.

[2] Anon., 'Crimes et Superstitions Indigènes', Revue de Droit, II, 8, 1926, pp. 203-204.

number of young women, tightly bound, and taken to Broken Hill for trial. With both arms amputated on account of gangrene resulting from the tightness of his bonds, Nyirenda was tried, sentenced to death, and executed in February, 1926. Executed with him were Shaiwila and most of his chief lieutenants.[1]

Perhaps the most striking feature of the mwana lesa movement was the complicity in it of various chiefs. It was at Shaiwila's instigation that Nyirenda first started to drown his suspects, rather than just indicate them. Shaiwila, like other Lala chiefs, was a minor dignitary who was closely dependent on popular acclaim for his status, and the operation at his behest of a successful witchcraft eradication cult was a means of achieving this acclaim. There is evidence to suggest that Shaiwila had additional reasons for inviting the services of Nyirenda, however. Shaiwila was an unpopular man who had allegedly achieved his post by killing the rightful heir, and was none too secure in his position.[2] Much was also made by the prosecution at his trial of the allegation that Shaiwila had presented Nyirenda with a list of 13 people to be killed as witches, who were shown to be his personal enemies.[3] How crucial these personal factors were in Shaiwila's relations with Nyirenda is uncertain. Other chiefs against whom no such accusations could be made were equally implicated, and it should

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[1] B 1/2, Report of Judge McDonell, Feb. 1926.

[2] KSM 3/1/1, Memorandum on the Mwana Lesa Movement by J. Moffat Thomson, 8 June 1926.

[3] B 1/2/234, Rex v. Nyirenda (1926).

also be borne in mind that the colonial authorities wished to preserve the tribal system, and hence may well have tended to attribute to personal failings conduct which was in accordance with custom. Mufumbi and Mopala were also fairly minor chiefs, in areas relatively remote from the colonial presence. Mufumbi had advanced the complaint of pains in his eyes and legs as a reason for inviting Nyirenda, while Mopala believed simply that there were too many witches in his district.[1] The chiefs saw in Nyirenda's Watch Tower movement, it may thus be argued, a solution to conditions of both personal and social malaise, which, while it may have been new in technique, nevertheless reflected a well-established and customary belief that social disintegration, sickness and disaster stemmed from the malevolence of members of the society themselves.

Despite this fusion with witchcraft beliefs, the mwana lesa movement was nevertheless very much part of the overall Watch Tower movement. The W.T.B.T.S. and the urban groupings both attempted to deny any connexion between Nyirenda and themselves, yet it is clear that Nyirenda believed that he was initiating his converts into an indigenous African Watch Tower church. Upon his arrest, Nyirenda had in his possession letters which clearly indicate that he was in communication with other Nyasa leaders of the movement such as Isaac Nyasulu and Isaac Nguluwe. Nguluwe indeed had written stating that he was sending an emissary, one Yakoba Kunda, to Nyirenda to dissuade him from preaching because of police repression.[2]

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[1] Anon., 'Crimes et Superstitions Indigènes', Revue de Droit, II, 9, 1926, p. 229.

[2] KSM 3/1/1, Isaac Bright Malenga Nguluwe to Nyirenda, 19 July 1925.

Also amongst Nyirenda's papers were tracts published by the W.T.B.T.S., a small book of biblical quotations, hymn texts, and the names of many hundreds of baptised followers, by clan and village.[1] Nyirenda's literacy must indeed have been a significant factor in his appeal as a diviner, as this modern technique - so much in evidence in rural colonial administration - was popularly believed to be the basis of European material prosperity and power. The use of the Bible in baptism, the display of literacy, and the registering of the names of those converted was standard Watch Tower practice. Nyirenda's innovation was to use the Bible as an instrument of divination. It was somewhat curiously suggested in later years that Nyirenda had in fact used not a Bible but a copy of John Foxe's Book of Martyres to baptise with, a much-repeated claim which probably originated with the W.T.B.T.S. in their attempts to discredit Nyirenda as a heretic and a Roman Catholic.[2]

It is not merely on the basis of letters that Nyirenda may clearly be seen as part of the Watch Tower movement, however. While testing for witches came to be the central ritual, prayer meetings, nightly gatherings for religious instruction and even marriages were noted by witnesses.[3] The liturgy of these meetings largely consisted of hymns which enjoined ritual purity

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[1] KSM 3/1/1, Papers of Tomo Nyirenda (encls.).

[2] E.g., K.S. Rukavina, Jungle Pathfinder. The Biography of Chirupula Stephenson (1951), p. 183; Scott Lindberg, 'The Mwana Lesa Murders', Sunday Times (Johannesburg), 1 July 1924, encl. in KSM 3/1/1. Cf. also Anon., 'Roman Catholic Watch Tower in Northern Rhodesia', The Watch Tower, LVII, Jan. 1936. John Foxe, Actes and Monuments, popularly known as The Book of Martyres, was first published in 1563, and appeared in numerous subsequent editions.

[3] Cf., Browne, 'Legal Proceedings'.

and dwelt on the expectancy of Armageddon. Through this religious instruction, a new code of moral precepts came to be established which provided the basis for a movement of renewal wider than that of the witchcraft eradication cult. And in conjunction with this Africanised Christianity, new social relationships were established. Particularly noticeable among Nyirenda's entourage was the large number of women who were popularly believed to travel with the group in order to provide sexual service. While there may well have been a disregard for traditional betrothal rites which would give rise to such charges of promiscuity, what is important is that through the organisational rank of deaconesses (madikoni) the women who joined the movement appear to have found a status and prestige denied to them by the patriarchal structure of village life. A contemporary report from Chilanga, near Broken Hill, within the area of Nyirenda's preaching, indeed describes this special status of women as the most notable innovation of the movement and its motivating purpose.[1] It is possible that women were also particularly attracted to the movement since they were particularly subject to accusations of witchcraft at a time when the absence of male labourers had resulted not only in an imbalance of the sexes but also in a change in their role in production. The majority of the victims were in fact women, according to Belgian reports.[2]

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[1] ZA 1/10/1, Magistrate, Chilanga, to D.C., Broken Hill, 30 Mar. 1925.

[2] Anon., 'Crimes et Superstitions Indigènes', Revue de Droit, II, 10, 1926, p. 243.

The role of women within Nyirenda's movement should also be seen as part of the new corporate structure which was temporarily erected, and which may be described as an attempt to institute an anti-witchcraft church. In addition to the madikoni, the organisational ranks of elitala (elder), mapashitala (pastor), and maprichala (preacher) - all somewhat reminiscent of the organisational hierarchy outlined by Russell in his Studies in the Scriptures[1] - were filled by Nyirenda's supporters, according to Mulakasa.[2] The duty of the elders was to give instruction to the newly initiated, and pastors officiated at baptisms, hymn-singings and gatherings. The preachers appear to have been those who - with bare literacy and a Bible - stayed in their villages to keep the movement alive by providing a Watch Tower interpretation of local events. Thus the creation of new inter-linking relationships between the Lala villages and the emergence of organised groups of followers of the prophet may be said to have constituted an indigenous anti-witchcraft church, demonstrating a strikingly new feature of the Watch Tower movement.

As much as the killing of an estimated 174 people suspected as witches, it was indeed this mass base of the movement, and the existence of an organisational structure outside the administration's control, which caused alarm amongst the settler population, as this type of social renewal was viewed through the distorting lens of the fear of a black uprising. In the aftermath of the trial and the executions, the villagers who

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[1] Cf. Russell, Studies in the Scriptures, vi, The New Creation (1904), pp. 175 et seq.

[2] F.L. Browne, 'Legal Proceedings'.

had conspired to support Shaiwila and Nyirenda were severely punished. Under the terms of the Collective Punishment Proclamation of 1912, which imposed group responsibility for acts of defiance of colonial authority, 18 Lala villages - comprising some 2,000 adults - were ordered to undergo compulsory labour, and were required to pay £400 in fines.[1] This punishment was very much in accordance with Stephenson's views, who had written strongly to Tagart:

> There is nothing noble about these savages. They are deceitful even amongst themselves, and the surest way of preventing future witchcraft murders is by so punishing the present offenders that the memory of the hurt will remain for a generation.[2]

The support given by chiefs and the anti-white preaching of the movement had of course lent colour to the interpretation that the mwana lesa movement was a form of nativist rebellion. How accurate was this view of the movement?

It has been argued that the nature of the Watch Tower movement amongst the Lala was a Christianising renewal which embraced the traditional function of eradicating witchcraft. It is in terms of this modernisation of customary rituals and beliefs that the elements of hostility towards the whites may perhaps be explained. Firstly, the attitude towards whites of the participants appears mainly to have been one of rejection, aiming at concealing the nature of the new movement, as this was known to contravene the white man's law. Just as in the early stages of the extension of the Watch Tower to the Lenje, so amongst the Lala it was the missionaries who felt the brunt of these new attitudes. 'The heathens and hearers, who

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[1] KSM 3/1/1, Watch Tower Activities in the Mkushi Sub-district; cf. also J. Merle Davis (ed.), Modern Industry and the African (1933), p. 241.

[2] ZA 1/10/1, Stephenson to Tagart, 13 Feb. 1926.

hitherto had been friendly disposed', noted the U.M.C.A. annual report for 1925, 'changed their attitude to one of stubborn resistance to, and avoidance of, us'.[1] This rejection of European overtures was a long way from rebellion. These attitudes appear to have arisen rather out of a desire to seek an answer to the social problems of the day in terms of Lala beliefs rather than by stepping outside them. Shaiwila, Mufumbi, and Mopala, it has also been argued, were mainly concerned about their own status and role as chiefs, and actively sought to avoid a confrontation.

Secondly, the evidence on which suspicions of a possible uprising were based is dubious, and equally consonant with the view that the aim was to rehabilitate the powers of the chief in specific ways rather than to confront those of the white man. The U.M.C.A. missionaries noted that they were constantly treated in what they regarded as a hostile manner by the converts because of certain rumours. As late as September, 1925, they found it necessary to send out evangelists to the Lala villages to 'stop the false report that we had caused Shaiwila ... and Mulemgwe [Shaiwila's headman] to cast away their ancestral spears'.[2] The missionaries interpreted this report as indicative of a desire for rebellion; more plausibly, such rumours most probably stemmed from the belief that the impotence of the chiefs in the matters of their religious functions arose from the effect of mission Christianity. Ancestral spears were symbols of chiefly power generally, rather than necessarily

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[1] R.H. MSS. Afr. U.M.C.A. Annual Report for 1925.

[2] Fiwila at Mkushi Station Logbook, entries for 30 Mar., 6-15 June, 29 June, 30 July, 12 Sept. 1925.

those of resistance. Similarly, Nyirenda was alleged to have elides his name with that of Nyendwa (womb), a Lala royal clan name.[1] If true, this again suggests a local desire to set Nyirenda within the customary context of witchcraft beliefs by imputing chiefly attributes to him, rather than a nativist urge to rebel.

It was in the Katanga, however, that the interpretation of the mwana lesa movement as a rebellious conspiracy was most frequent. This was based on the killing of a number of askaris by Nyirenda and his following, prevalent rumours that the Belgians were about to leave the country and that taxation would cease, and the discovery at the riverside camps of large numbers of spears, guns, and axes.[2] The events at the Mulembo camp do indeed suggest that Nyirenda's immediate following were engaged in a millennially inspired revolt against Belgian rule. Open fighting only occurred, however, when the askaris attempted to arrest Nyirenda, and no confrontation was sought by Nyirenda and his followers either before or after this fracas. Certainly, the large-scale armed revolt which was suspected by the Belgians was never contemplated by the chiefs under whose auspices the movement developed. It is notable that, in comparison with events in the Mkushi district, in Mufumbi's and Mopala's area Nyirenda enjoyed an ascendancy over the chiefs in terms of his freedom of action, acclaim by the people, and his privileged treatment. One interesting feature which may be noted in Nyirenda's witch-finding in the Katanga was the ransom which he introduced. According to

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[1] Cf. J.T. Munday, 'Some Traditions of the Nyendwa Clan of Northern Rhodesia', Bantu Studies, XIV, 1940.

[2] Anon., 'Crimes et Superstitions Indigènes', Revue de Droit, II, 9, 1926, p. 229.

witnesses, the purpose of the elaborate thatched encampments was to imprison those accused of witchcraft until they were ransomed by their relatives; if no ransom was forthcoming, they were drowned or beaten to death.[1] It was stated at the time that Nyirenda was a swindler and blackmailer as well as a murderer, and obviously the motive of obtaining support for himself and his large retinue cannot be discounted. The notion that sorcerers could be redeemed by the payment of a fee constituted a radical departure from the normal practice, however, and Mufumbi opposed the idea vigorously.[2] But by killing only those who had no one to plead for them, Nyirenda not only ensured his popularity but also modernised the mechanism of accusation by making it less drastic and final. This innovation is in accordance with the overall shift away from the poison ordeal towards the non-fatal practices of the mcapi medicine men noted by Douglas.[3] This difference of interest between Nyirenda and the Katanga Lala chiefs again indicates that the movement was more forward-looking than nativistic. Despite the new remedial hopes which Nyirenda aroused and the elements of millennial revolt which accompanied these, however, the movement as a whole did not succeed in superseding the conservative aims of petty chiefs.

Set in the context, then, of the Watch Tower movement in Northern Rhodesia in the 1920's, the mwana lesa movement displayed a syncretism between those hopes of salvation and

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[1] Anon., 'Crimes et Superstitions Indigènes', Revue de Droit, II, 10, 1926, pp. 244-245.

[2] Ibid.

[3] Douglas, 'Techniques of Sorcery Control in Africa', loc. cit.

social renewal typically inspired by the Watch Tower in the surrounding districts and customary Lala responses to situations of crisis. Shaiwila and Nyirenda played crucial parts in bringing this about: Shaiwila legitimised the divinatory aspects of Nyirenda's preaching and encouraged him to conform with tradition by destroying those suspected of witchcraft. Nyirenda himself was capable of adopting the role of witch-finder in a way that Aphiri amongst the Lenje and other Watch Tower preachers facing similar popular pressure - such as Jeremiah Gondwe amongst the Lamba and Kamboni Wankilongo amongst the Ila[1] - were not. This combination of circumstances which led to the mwana lesa movement provides further evidence of the relationship between the diffusion of the ideology and the structural basis for its reception, which has been the main perspective for the discussion of the Watch Tower in the eastern districts of Northern Rhodesia at this time.

The long-term implications of the mwana lesa affair for the development of the Watch Tower movement were, of course, important. The sensational nature of the killings and the complicity of chiefs led to international publicity of the actions of the W.T.B.T.S. in central Africa, and incidentally also provided fuel for those who were arguing against the then emerging policy of indirect rule.[2] There was also an explosion of popular feeling against the Watch Tower movement in colonial

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[1] Cf. Chapters VI and VII below.

[2] Northern Rhodesia: Legislative Council Debates (Livingstone, 1926), 5 Mar. 1926 et seq.

society in southern Africa which caused official attempts at regulating it to be delayed by a further decade, and effectively drove it underground for several years. The exposure of the killings and the pressure of public opinion finally led the W.T.B.T.S. in South Africa to reject formally 'the purely native Watch Tower movement'. William Dawson paid a second visit to Northern Rhodesia in October, 1925, in order to investigate the mwana lesa affair and the doings of other Watch Tower preachers who had crossed swords with the colonial administration. Witchcraft murders and instigation to rebellion, Dawson explained to Tagart, the Secretary for Native Affairs, could only be the work of Roman Catholics, but he had nevertheless decided that the W.T.B.T.S. should withdraw from the field. Subsequently Dawson toured the mine compounds and the line-of-rail towns to explain the Society's decision to the urban Watch Tower groupings.[1] The break was formally expressed by Thomas A. Walder in Cape Town, who himself visited Tagart's successor, E.H. Jalland, in 1926 to reiterate the decision:

> Recent investigations have satisfied me that the so-called Watch Tower movement has no connexion with my Society and I here again entirely repudiate the same. Nor do the foolish and fanatical doctrines that are being preached by self-styled Pastors and Prophets bear any resemblance to the doctrines held by us and as set forth in our publications. There is now therefore no person in Northern Rhodesia authorised to represent us or to make use of our name.[2]

For most of the urban groupings the withdrawal of support which followed this break meant the cessation of their activities.

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[1] KSN 1/4/1, Dawson to N.C., Ndola, 8 Oct. 1925.

[2] KDD 1/4/1, Walder to Tagart, 21 Nov. 1925.

Despite the independent attitude of such groups as Lot Mumbi's at Livingstone, these derived much of their support from the provision of literature obtained from the W.T.B.T.S. in South Africa. Although these groups - particularly those on the copperbelt - did at first act as springboards for more radical preaching in the surrounding rural areas, they were at this stage increasingly becoming more sect-like. In the absence of advice and support from the W.T.B.T.S. and in the face of administrative hostility, they consequently virtually disappeared for some five years after the clamp-down.

In the rural areas, however, the Watch Tower movement was independent of the W.T.B.T.S., despite the acquisition of the Society's pamphlets or the occasional attempt to request its officials to intervene on behalf of the local preacher. The mwana lesa affair caused the rural movements to go underground and also served as a warning against acceding to popular requests to divine for witchcraft, but it did not mean the disappearance of the movement. The late 1920's and early 1930's were times of rapid change in Northern Rhodesia, with the first years of expansion of the copperbelt immediately succeeded by the slump. The new pressures which formed the basis of the continuing appeal of the Watch Tower movement in this period were not so much those of taxation, forced removals, amd neglect by the mission societies, as those brought about by the internal migrant labour system. But the development of the movement amongst labour migrants in the period 1925-1935 was overshadowed by the memory of the mwana lesa movement.

CHAPTER VI

NORTHERN RHODESIA: TWO CASE STUDIES

1. Jeremiah Gondwe, a Watch Tower Prophet

2. The Luapula valley, a Watch Tower area

The development of an urban complex surrounding the copper mines in Northern Rhodesia created a situation of rapid change far greater in scale than had the processes accompanying the slow extension of colonial rule in the period 1899-1927, which have thus far been studied. As the most widespread and significant movement amongst Africans at the time, it is hardly surprising that the Watch Tower movement should have been deeply involved in these changes. It has been noted for both Nyasaland and Southern Rhodesia that there was a close link between the labour migrant and the Watch Tower ideology, not only from the point of view of the diffusion of ideas, but also from the perspective that the movement responded to the peculiar needs of the migrant worker in the urban compound. In this chapter, two case studies are made of the impact of the developing copperbelt on neighbouring rural areas.[1] The central theme is thus once again the nature of the relationship between labour migrancy and the millennial social movement.

The first section is a study of the career of Jeremiah Gondwe, perhaps the only Watch Tower prophet of note who is still alive and active as an independent prophet today.[2]

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[1] I am indebted to the Research and Higher Degrees Committee of the University of Zambia for support for the fieldwork on which much of this chapter is based. I also wish to acknowledge a debt of gratitude to Jeremiah Gondwe for the hospitality extended to me during a stay at his village, and to my many informants there, on the copperbelt, and in the Luapula valley.

[2] Cf. also, Sholto Cross, 'A Prophet not without Honour: Jeremiah Gondwe', in C. Allen and R.W. Johnson (eds.), African Perspectives: Papers ... Presented to Thomas Hodgkin (1970).

Gondwe's career is interesting from many points of view. It will have been remarked that the careers of most of the major Watch Tower figures were cut short by imprisonment for greater or lesser periods, by death, or by absorption into the bureaucratic structure of the W.T.B.T.S. The phenomenon of the prophet torn from his following is a common one in central Africa; not only may Watch Tower leaders such as Elliott Kamwana be cited, but also notable figures such as Simon Kimbangu and André Matswa.[1] The myths which have subsequently been built around these figures are important in themselves, it is true, but too often little is known of the leader himself and the routinisation of charisma which occurs as the leader establishes himself amidst a settled group of followers. Gondwe's career provides an illustration of this.

Secondly, Gondwe's early preaching compares interestingly with those of his contemporaries in other parts of central Africa, in particular with that of his close neighbour and acquaintance, Tomo Nyirenda. Like Nyirenda, Gondwe's renown spread widely, particularly into the Congo, and he was faced with popular pressure to eradicate witches. Gondwe continued the work of Gabriel Aphiri, one might say, rather than following in the footsteps of Nyirenda, through developing new techniques of allaying witchcraft fears which did not single out individuals for ill-treatment. In so doing Gondwe may be said to have preceded the mcapi eradicators who traversed east and central Africa in the mid 1930's.[2]

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[1] Cf. G. Balandier, Sociologie Actuelle de l'Afrique Noire (Paris, 1955), pp. 396-416.

[2] Cf. below, pp. 305-311.

Thirdly, the tribally mixed community which Gondwe established on the outskirts of the mining complex became a centre for new patterns of economic co-operation and production. This reflected the desire of a number of labour migrants to stay in the towns upon retirement, in the face of administrative attempts to send them back to their villages of origin, in order both to maintain their network of social relationships and to find an outlet for their new-found economic status and sense of prestige which might have been denied them at the village level. It also marks a shift from the kin-group as a subsistence unit to the beginnings of a peasant economy, with nuclear families producing for themselves, the community, and the market.

The Luapula valley is also an area of particular interest for the study of the Watch Tower movement, as it was not only a key link in the chain of diffusion of Watch Tower ideas from the Rhodesias to the Belgian Congo, but also perhaps the area in central Africa with the highest incidence of millennial activity during the colonial period. Even today the Luapula valley, comprising one-eighth of Zambia's population, contains over a quarter of the country's Jehovah's Witnesses; and Zambia has one of the highest per capita populations of Jehovah's Witnesses in the world.[1] Many factors may be adduced to explain this circumstance. This study will examine in particular the successive waves of Watch Tower activity in the province, the structure of Lunda society, and the labour history of the Luapula valley and its peculiar relationship with the Katangan and

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[1] 1969 Yearbook of Jehovah's Witnesses (W.T.B.T.S., New York, 1969), p. 269; cf. also, Sholto Cross, 'Jehovah's Witnesses and Socio-Economic Change in the Luapula Province', (unpublished seminar paper, University of Zambia, 1972); forthcoming in S. Cross and T.O. Ranger (eds.), The Problem of Evil in Eastern Africa (1973?).

Northern Rhodesian mining centres. Inasmuch as the Watch Tower was the religion of the labour migrant on the margins of both urban society and village society, the Watch Tower activity in the Luapula valley is comparable with Gondwe's movement, and provides a further illustration of the appeal of the movement in the urban hinterland during the period 1927-1937.

1. Jeremiah Gondwe, a Watch Tower prophet

Jeremiah Gondwe was born probably in the early 1890's near Isoka (Fife), at Muyombe village, among the Tumbuka of the northern Luangwa valley. He describes his father as being a poor man, without traditional authority other than that accorded to the family head. This was the period when the missionary frontier was just beginning to encroach on North-Eastern Rhodesia, with the opening of D.R.C. mission stations among the Nsenga in the south and the expansion from the west of the Livingstonia mission in Nyasaland. Among Gondwe's earliest recollections are his attempts to gain an education not available in his home area by travelling to Nyasaland, possibly inspired by the African evangelist-teachers sent out by the Livingstonia mission to the Bemba and Nsenga.[1] Although Gondwe failed to attend a mission, he became a private pupil of one of the most well-known of these early evangelists, David Kaunda, at Kondowe in about 1901, where he learnt the rudiments of reading and writing.

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[1] Cf. above, p. 190.

This early schooling spurred Gondwe's ambition to travel and seek employment at the distant labour centres. He joined the diaspora of migrant labourers by walking to Salisbury where he worked in domestic service for a few years, learnt to speak English, and encountered the racial prejudice of white settlers. His experience of settler attitudes was increased when on a return visit to Muyombe village he was forcibly recruited as a military porter in the campaign against von Lettow Vorbeck, which took place in his home district. As has been previously argued, this campaign and the widespread unrest which followed in its aftermath created the conditions for the first mass millennial movement in Northern Rhodesia.[1] Although Gondwe did not then participate in the Watch Tower, he knew of Sindano's preaching, and appears to have derived some of his own strongly anti-white attitudes from his experiences at this time.

Gondwe left government service after the war, and continued his travels, which indicate that the adventurous labour migrant of the day was by no means a simple commuter between his home village and a fixed place of employment. From Isoka Gondwe visited the Congo, working first with a brewery and then with Robert Williams and Co., the main recruiting agency for the Katanga mines. He returned to Muyombe in 1920 as a brick-maker. The next year he travelled to Bwana Mkubwa, Broken Hill and Nkana, taking on a variety of jobs and ending as a trench-digger at Nkana. From the copperbelt he worked his way down to the Mkushi district hawking tobacco, and helped in the construction of the Mulungushi dam in 1923. It was on a trip to Broken Hill

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[1] Cf. above, pp. 192-194.

at the end of 1923, selling firewood, that Gondwe again encountered the Watch Tower, and his wanderings took on a new purpose. The main Watch Tower preacher in the Broken Hill compound at this time was Isaac Nyasulu, one of Elliott Kamwana's original converts, who had led the Watch Tower congregation at Wankie colliery before his deportation from Southern Rhodesia.[1] Gondwe recounts that he met Nyasulu in a store, and noticed the books he was carrying. He recognised the name Watch Tower, followed Nyasulu home, and asked if he might be taught the Bible. Nyasulu then 'wrote his name' and baptised him.

Gondwe soon became one of the chief preachers amongst the labour migrants in the Broken Hill compound. He describes his preaching at this stage as being 'Elliott's message for the black man - love your neighbour, be good to strangers, and drink no beer'. That his preaching also contained strong anti-white aspects, however, emerges from a highly coloured account of Watch Tower militancy in the Broken Hill compound in 1924 given by Frank Melland, then the local magistrate, who may be quoted at some length as his remarks illustrate the general official attitude:

> "Come and Wash in Jordan" was the cry. The mine spruit [spring], a muddy canal carrying off the water pumped from the mine: that was Jordan, so called by the leaders of the Watch Tower church with whose doctrines the whole compound was honeycombed. This hotch-potch of a religion, backed by literature - save the mark - gloating over the worst horrors of the Inquisition as if they were the modern practice in the white man's land, caught on like wild fire.... This movement assumed such dimensions and

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[1] Cf. above, p. 236.

was so all-embracing that the oldest and most trusted native employees all became converted, and it became increasingly difficult to keep track of the propaganda. But native detectives were borrowed from Southern Rhodesia ... and were employed in the mine compound office, as smelter boss boys, and in every activity on the mine. Actual sedition, never very common, was reported and put down but the undermining of morale went on.[1]

It became known, however, that in April, 1924, there was to be a change of government in Northern Rhodesia. Melland reports that under the instigation of Watch Tower preaching that the white man's government was to end, that American negroes were coming to liberate Africans, and that white women would remain, there was a tremendous upsurge of conversions and expectancy. As a result, one of the last decisions taken by the B.S.A. Co. was to send troops to Broken Hill as a demonstration. On the day before the hand-over the mine manager held a mass meeting to explain that 'Kampani was making way for Bwana Kingi' and that the only change would be in the design of postage stamps. This was not a sufficient answer, according to Melland's melo-dramatic account:

> But the leaders were not satisfied ... they raised their banners and surrounded by their gaily-clad bandsmen surged on the solitary figure in flannels ... they pressed on him, shouting all at once, yelling defiance within inches of his face. The leaders, mostly Nyasaland natives, shouted "Reduce the tax! Tax in Nyasaland six shillings, in Northern Rhodesia ten shillings! We must be free to brew our own beer."[2]

This account is interesting in that it suggests that the dance societies were united with the Watch Tower in leading the protest over taxation and the restrictions on brewing beer in the compound. It was not unknown for the musical bands and

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[1] F.H. Melland, 'Washing in Jordan', The African Observer, III, 1935.

[2] Ibid.

dance societies to be generically classed as 'Watch Tower',[1] and Melland may be confused in his recollection of the event. However, it may be noted that in the major disturbances on the copperbelt in 1935 - when Melland was writing this reminiscence - the Watch Tower was associated with the mbeni society as a predisposing cause of the rolling strikes which closed the mines.[2] If Melland is accurate, this would suggest that close links did exist between the two types of association and that they were capable of making common cause in the prosecution of workers' grievances. This protest seems to have come to very little, however. The Union Jack was raised on April 1st, 1924 without incident, and Gondwe, Nyasulu and John Manda - also one of Kamwana's converts - were each sentenced to three months imprisonment for preaching without a certificate.[3]

This spell in jail was a turning point in Gondwe's career. On his release, he moved not to the compounds but to the Lamba villages around the copperbelt, preaching the Watch Tower doctrine in secret with such effect that he soon attracted a large following. A Baptist missionary working in the area, Rev. W.A. Phillips, found that the attractions of Gondwe were greater than those of his own mission:

> Russellism, or Watch Tower teaching, has invaded our territory and its emissaries are baptising the people in large numbers.... Some of these teachers are of this people, of our bringing up, of our baptised members. The earnestness that these teachers have suddenly evinced is remarkable for this ease-loving people; they have never shown it when going on tour with the Message when in the pay of this our Mission.[4]

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[1] E.g. R.J.B. Moore, These African Copper Mines (1948), indexes as 'Watch Tower' a reference to the mbeni societies.

[2] Cf. below, pp. 381-382.

[3] ZA 1/10/1. D.C., Ndola, to S.N.A., 25 April 1924.

[4] Rev. W.A. Phillips, 'The Watch Tower', Lambaland (South African Baptist Missionary Society), October, 1925.

This preaching was contemporaneous with that of Tomo Nyirenda, and the response by the Lamba to the Watch Tower message seems similarly to have in part been motivated by a desire for an effective African Christianity which could also serve as a witchcraft eradicating movement. Gondwe recalls, however, that for the Lamba there was a general distrust of the chiefs, who were believed to be monopolising the appurtenances of witchcraft and refusing to sanction testing rituals in order to bolster up their own dwindling authority. Consequently in providing a means of allaying witchcraft fears, Gondwe was acting against the interests of the chiefs, rather than on their behalf. This difference may perhaps account for Gondwe's freedom of action in modernising the technique so that it acted at a societal rather than individual level, and his success in incorporating witchcraft beliefs within a wider millennial vision.

Gondwe, indeed, was extremely hostile to Nyirenda, as he believed that he had misapplied one of the most important of the Watch Tower doctrines. Gondwe relates that he received a message from Nyirenda from the Congo saying 'we must baptise the people to kill the whites; let us meet in the Congo', and appears to have believed that the witchcraft killings were connected with Nyirenda's attempt to lead a rebellion. Gondwe himself rather wished to use the popular desire for freedom from witchcraft fears to create a lasting and institutionalised Watch Tower religion. His techniques in the matter of witchcraft were to require all those baptised to surrender all their charms, whether protective or malevolent, and to confess their sins, much in the manner of the mcapi eradicators, as described by

Richards.[1] Gondwe recalls composing a number of 'dipping' hymns especially for this purpose. Those who floated were required to go and search for further charms, and in extreme cases, special hymns were sung over them. No further action against individuals, however, was taken, suggesting that Gondwe was offering remedial action at the level of the community rather than through conducting the customary hunt for guilty individuals.

Gondwe's movement like Nyirenda's was organised around a central core of minor functionaries, named deacons, elders, and pastors, although as far as one may judge, the structure of Gondwe's organisation was hierarchical rather than based explicitly on a division of function. This perhaps reflects the fact that Gondwe was accompanied by a number of friends from the compounds and had also recruited a number of mission-trained teachers, whose literacy and status were significantly higher than those of the ordinary villager. The need for secrecy and the more settled nature of the movement also seems to have allowed the leadership of the movement to be less a personal entourage and more a village-based organisation than was the case with the mwana lesa movement. Gondwe's pastors did not limit their activities to the Lamba villages, but also acted as evangelists.

This feature may well have reflected the fact that the labour migrants on the copperbelt were drawn from many different areas, but it also indicates something of Gondwe's pan-Africanist

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[1] A.I. Richards, 'A Modern Movement of Witchfinders', Africa, VIII, 1935.

understanding of the Watch Tower ideology, in the sense that he perceived the Watch Tower as the black man's salvation in the face of oppressive white society. A most important development of Gondwe's attempts to spread the movement was his sending of two pastors, Simon Busi and Simon Mufwampama, across the border into the Katanga to spread the message. According to a Luba informant, many adherents of the Watch Tower movement in the Congo associate Gondwe's name with the founding of their religion, much in the way that Kamwana's name was associated with the Watch Tower in the Rhodesias.[1]

The concerted effort which was made by both N.R.G. and the Belgian administration to break the Watch Tower movement following the trial and execution of Nyirenda brought this phase of Gondwe's career to an end. After a brief visit in 1926 to Fort Rosebery where he worked as a cattle-feeder, Gondwe returned to the Ndola district and continued his secret Watch Tower preaching. Hunted both by detectives and the senior Lambe chiefs, Gondwe managed to elude capture through constant warnings from villagers.[2] A number of his followers were nevertheless arrested both in the Katanga and in the copperbelt district. It was believed by the police in Northern Rhodesia that Gondwe was fomenting revolution, and indeed his preaching was still strongly anti-white in appeal, although this expressed anger and rejection at white exclusivism, rather than an appeal to rebel, as appears from a police report of Gondwe's message to the Lamba:

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[1] Interview with Noah Kasongo, Gondwe village, August 1969.

[2] SEC/NAT/393, Magistrate, Ndola, to D.C., Broken Hill, 3 May 1929.

> The white people here are snakes, and all you who believe in the white people are snakes, and their churches are snakes... The white people who are here treat us badly, they are beating the natives, making us pay taxes, and chasing away the natives saying "Clear away! We don't want you here!"[1]

This note of anger at the treatment meted out to Africans by whites perhaps reflects not only Gondwe's early experiences as a military porter, but also the sort of discipline that migrant labourers could expect from the white miners and compound bosses who were at this stage flooding in from the south. Gondwe thus appears to have transferred some of the militancy of the mine compound to the broader scale of rural protest.

Gondwe was eventually arrested in 1929, following a report to the Ndola magistrate by Chief Mushiri and surveillance of his movements by a mission teacher whose class had deserted to join the Watch Tower. Gondwe was convicted of sedition, and after a year's imprisonment in Livingstone, was deported to his home village, Muyombe, for a further period of two years.[2] As for many of the peoples in Northern Rhodesia, participation in the Watch Tower movement became for the Lamba the major response in the crucial 1920's to the increasing pressures of colonialism. Although in Gondwe's absence the movement died down, a lasting basis had been created through the many functions which were integrated into the movement, which were capable of being renewed on the prophet's return.

Gondwe returned to the Ndola district in 1932. As a result of several years of inactivity of the Watch Tower movement,

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[1] Ibid.

[2] C.I.D., Ndola, to C.I.D., Livingstone, 14 Sept. 1929.

the administration decided to risk an experiment in tolerance by allowing Gondwe to reunite with the remnant of his following in Mushiri's district. Consequently Gondwe and 40 of his followers were summoned to the boma, where they were warned against the four Watch Tower offences of preaching sedition, undermining the authority of the chiefs, witch-finding, and advocating immorality.[1] The Commissioner also stipulated that a chief should take responsibility for Gondwe, and it is possible that but for Gondwe's friendship with Chief Malembeka he would again have been deported. Malembeka appears to have been a minor chief who welcomed the addition of a charismatic leader with a substantial following to his district, since he doubtless believed this would add to his own prestige. Gondwe and his followers accordingly joined Mukunkami's village near Luanshya. In 1941 Gondwe obtained permission to build his own village near Masaiti boma, some 20 miles from Luanshya, which, although settled from the first exclusively by Watch Tower members, nevertheless provided Gondwe with the prerogatives of a headman of substantial status. In this manner Gondwe proceeded to insert himself into the structure of traditional authority.

With the establisbment of a settled community, Gondwe indeed increasingly appears to have fused his role as prophet with the traditional duties of the village headman, as noted by Gluckman and others.[2] It is important to note that Gondwe's community differed markedly from the groups along the line of rail who at this stage were providing the nuclei for the

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[1] SEC/NAT/314, Ndola Tour Report, March, 1933.

[2] M. Gluckman, J.C. Mitchell, and J.A. Barnes, 'The Village Headman in British Central Africa', Africa, XIX, 1949.

establishment of the Jehovah's Witnesses. The latter were at this stage almost exclusively labour migrants, whose doctrines were coming to be bound by the orthodoxy of the W.T.B.T.S., and who were withdrawing from day-to-day compound activities into sectarian separatism. In the rural setting of Gondwe village - where one-time migrants were able to engage in agriculture - the Watch Tower community developed along different lines. Gondwe's preaching changed to emphasise the peaceable and respectable aspects of Watch Tower belief, with an accent on clean living, mutual economic co-operation, and community values within the exclusive group. An indicator of the decline in expectancy which accompanied the establishment of the community was the change in witchcraft eradication. Whereas previously individual confessions of wrong-doing had been made at the baptismal ceremony, Gondwe states that since the move to Masaiti the modus operandi has changed to a general call for the submission of potentially harmful medicines, ufwiti and wanga. Although infrequent, baptismal ceremonies in the local river - attended by most of the village - remain important occasions, where the emphasis on the removal of fears of witchcraft is distinct. This perpetual witchcraft eradicating function, it may be argued, serves mainly to legitimate the prosperity of the village and protect its inhabitants from the jealousy of poor neighbours.

For Gondwe village today has been noted as a model of rural development, and its inhabitants congratulated by President Kaunda for their economic success. This is particularly remarkable, considering the hostility between the ruling United

National Independence Party (U.N.I.P.) and the Jehovah's Witnesses, and the fact that Gondwe village contains many non-Zambians. While many independent Watch Tower followers were absorbed into the Jehovah's Witnesses in the post-war years, Gondwe remained steadfastly independent, although occasionally attending rallies on the copperbelt and making use of W.T.B.T.S. literature.[1] Particularly since 1960, the village has grown rapidly through the settlement of independent Watch Tower adherents from Angola, north Katanga, and western Zambia. The composition of the village has consisted of a number of accretions led by one-time followers of Gondwe from the 1920's, who brought their own small communities to settle in the prophet's village:

Group	Size	Date of Arrival	Leader
Lamba I	300	1933	Jeremiah Gondwe
Lamba II	60	1945	Filipo Musakabantu
Lala I	100	1945	Misheke Tembo
Lala II	30	1951	Abraham Chulu
Luvale	200	1957-60	Thomas Kampemba
Luba	350	1961-5	Noah Kasongo

The organisation of the village is based on this widespread ethnic diversity, in that each group occupies a residential section, screened by banana and mango trees, with a few outlying farm settlements. Religious leadership under Gondwe - the ranks of teacher, pastor, and elder are still recognised - is also based on this division. The largest group are the

[1] Times of Zambia, 25 Jan. 1968, Statement by Smart Phiri.

Lualaba Luba, whose leader, Kasongo, first visited Gondwe in 1960 and organised the planting of cassava gardens before the mass migration between 1964 and 1965. (This move appears to have been prompted by reprisals taken against the movement in the Congo by Moïse Tshombe, following allegations that Kitawala was responsible for the north Katanga rebellion in 1961.) Supra-tribalism nevertheless is marked, both in the religious and economic spheres. Kasongo has been appointed Gondwe's heir apparent; the lingua franca is Lamba; and Nyanja is used for sacral purposes. Gondwe conducts religious meetings twice a week, and arbitrates in all disputes.

Religious ritual apart, the most distinctive unifying feature of the village is its communitarianism. The economic life of the village consists in peasant farming, with a degree of integration into the trading nexus surrounding Luanshya. Cultivation is regarded as a religious duty, and the surplus is either distributed from a common store to those in need, or transported to the copperbelt on one of the village's two lorries and sold. As well as the vehicles, the village also possesses a motorised grain-crusher, which has helped to make it a focal economic centre for non-Watch Tower producers in the district as well.[1] Gondwe village today is consequently a striking illustration of the path of development outlined President Kaunda.[2]

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[1] For further details, cf. S. Cross, 'A Prophet Not Without Honour: Jeremiah Gondwe', op. cit.

[2] Cf. K.D. Kaunda, Humanism in Zambia: A Guide to the Nation (Lusaka, 1967).

While an exclusivist tendency among his followers is becoming increasingly marked,[1] Gondwe has sent his children to school (at a Roman Catholic mission), and adopted a markedly different attitude towards U.N.I.P. from that of the Jehovah's Witnesses, which perhaps reflects his enduring Africanism. He has ensured that all his followers are registered voters, instructed them to vote 'yes' in the constitutional referendum, and has on several occasions publicly announced his support for Kaunda.[2] Gondwe's career thus displays a creative type of response both to colonial rule and to subsequent change in marked contrast with those who were absorbed into the bureaucratic sectarianism of the Jehovah's Witnesses. From the restlessness of his early wanderings and the initiative taken to educate himself one may see that he found in the Watch Tower doctrine certain satisfactions of his own particular needs. He emerged as a prophet when the potentialities of rural rather than urban-based preaching became apparent, and in transferring these ideas from the forum of the labour compounds to a mass following of preliterate people he achieved a critical breakthrough in ideological awareness, whereby a new language for the identification of the white man as an enemy was fashioned and new hopes for the pan-African millennium instituted. Gondwe village under his leadership also marks the establishment of a cohesive community in which labour migrants are effecting a transition to life as peasant producers, integrated with the market of the large urban complex which has developed in the midst of Lamba country.

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[1] Times of Zambia, 24 Jan. 1968.

[2] Ibid., 14 Sept. 1969, 5 Nov. 1969.

2. The Luapula Valley, a Watch Tower area

While the initial spread of the Watch Tower movement to the Luapula valley was fairly typical of the development of this movement in Northern Rhodesia in the early 1920's, the valley area, as Cunnison has pointed out, was a unique source of migrant labour in Northern Rhodesia in that a two-way flow of labour between the village and the compound was maintained until the late 1950's.[1] This prolonged existence of a rurally-based proletariat, it will be argued, was of great significance for the popular appeal of the Watch Tower, and helps to illustrate further under what circumstances migrant labourers might be expected to join the movement.

The Luapula valley was situated at the centre of the triangle formed by the Katangan mines and railroad, the Tanganyikan mines and plantations, and the Northern Rhodesian copperbelt. Although at the turn of the century it was a sparsely populated area, by the mid-colonial period it had become one of the most densely settled areas in central Africa. This resulted from the conjunction of ongoing migrations from the east and west into the valley, the stability of the Lunda paramountcy, and the productive capacity of an economy based on fishing and the cultivation of cassava.[2] Although at first regarded by the B.S.A. Co. officials as such a remote and

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[1] I. Cunnison, The Luapula Peoples of Northern Rhodesia (1959), pp. 25-29; also Sholto Cross, 'Jehovah's Witnesses and Socio-Economic change in the Luapula Province', op. cit., where this theme is extensively discussed.

[2] Cunnison, The Luapula Peoples, pp. 19-23, and passim.

MAP V. THE LUAPULA VALLEY



unhealthy area that the idea of resettling the population was considered,[1] the Luapula valley was perhaps comparable with Barotseland in that both a foreign and local trade flourished from the earliest recorded period; the passage of new cults and visitors was frequent; and it was occupied by missionaries - at least in the north - at an early stage, with the Plymouth Brethren (Garenganze Mission) at Johnston Falls from 1897, the White Fathers at Mwense-Nsakaluba in 1905, and the L.M.S. at Mbereshi from 1915.[2] H.T. Harrington, for instance, who established the boma at Fort Rosebery in 1900, reported the visit of a witch-finder from Bagamoyo, on the east coast, (whom he peppered with his 12-bore shotgun), dancing bands of the mbeni type,[3] and also

> an American negro missionary who came through the territory at about that time, accompanied by two Nyasaland disciples as interpreters. He preached some nonsense about Africa for the Africans ...[4]

The favourable location of the valley from the point of view of the labour recruiter ensured that this tradition of its villages as centres for the reception and diffusion of new ideas would continue.

Until 1931 the majority of Luapulan migrants sought employment in the Katanga. Labour migration was not simply motivated by the imposition of hut tax, but also by the fact that it could be combined with local trading and visiting

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[1] BS/1/86, Report of a Conference between Officials of North-Eastern[Rhodesia] and Congo Belge Held at Fort Rosebery, 17 July 1910.

[2] R.I. Rotberg, Christian Missionaries and the Creation of Northern Rhodesia (Princeton, 1965), p. 125.

[3] Cf. below, p. 382.

[4] H.T. Harrington, 'The Taming of North-Eastern Rhodesia', Northern Rhodesia Journal, II, 1954.

relatives. More labourers travelled voluntarily than were recruited to work on the Katangan railway, Kambove mine, and on the Etoile du Congo diggings in the period 1900-1910, and from the Mansa district alone it was reported for the year 1905 that migrants had earned £5,000 at a rate of 3s per month.[1] Tax revenue was welcome to the B.S.A. Co., but more particularly so when it arose from labour in their own mines. The rivalry which arose between the Comité Speciale du Katanga (C.S.K.) and the B.S.A. Co. over Luapulan labour was later to have a significant bearing on the Watch Tower movement. In 1907 the B.S.A. Co. administration instituted a dual policy of relocating the routes of labour migration out of the valley and controlling sleeping sickness. Canoes were destroyed, official crossing of the river limited to two points, and travel to the Congo prohibited.[2] Despite the administration's decision in 1910, when sleeping sickness was believed to be under control, 'to throw open the district for the recruitment of labour for Southern Rhodesia', migrants continued to travel predominantly west.[3] The Belgians, as anxious as the B.S.A. Co. to ensure a steady supply of labour, continued to employ Luapulans, despite assurances that they were trying to prevent migrants from crossing the river.[4] Until the mobilisation of Africans in North-Eastern Rhodesia during the first world war, then, the

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[1] Mansa District Notebook.

[2] BS/1/86, Administrateur, C.S.K., to Administrator, North-Eastern Rhodesia, 9 July 1909.

[3] Ibid., D.E. Brodie (B.S.A. Co. Sec.) to Administrator, North-Eastern Rhodesia, 12 Feb. 1910.

[4] Ibid., Administrateur, C.S.K., to D.E. Brodie, 22 July 1910.

Katanga continued to receive the major benefit from the rapidly growing volume of labour from the valley.

In the early 1920's labour migration from the Luapula to the Katanga reached its peak. With the development of the copperbelt, the B.S.A. Co. embarked upon a policy of cumulatively reducing the labour quotas of agencies recruiting for external employers, and mounted an intensive propaganda campaign advertising the pay and conditions on the company's mines.[1] The world depression provided the opportunity for finally banning labour recruitment for the Congo, and the offices of the chief recruiters in the Luapula were closed in July, 1931.[2] The successful rerouting of the bulk of Luapulan labour away from the Katanga, however, resulted more from the policies adopted in this period by the Union Minières du Haut Katanga (U.M.H.K.) than from the restrictions and persuasions of the Northern Rhodesian officials. Perceiving the threat to their local supplies of labour, employers in the Katanga searched for new areas of recruitment in other parts of the Congo, Angola, and Ruanda, institutionalised new policies which aimed at developing a settled labour force, and very largely closed the door to foreign voluntary labour.[3]

Those Luapulans whose services were retained in the 1930's were 'mainly skilled or trained workmen who have long periods of service with the Union Minière behind them and who have been retained for this reason.... Consequently the Rhodesian natives

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[1] ZA 1/9/18/34/1, Report on Rhodesian Natives in the Katanga by H.Y. Willis (British Vice-consul, Elizabethville), for the six months ending December 31 1931.

[2] Ibid.

[3] Ibid.

actually in the Katanga may be said to be detribalised and to have settled down'.[1] This was a very different situation from employment practices on the Northern Rhodesian copperbelt, where the migrant labour system was assiduously maintained at least until the 1950's. The Luapulan labour force was consequently excluded from the Katanga at a time when urbanisation was replacing migrant practices, and forced to continue a life of constant shifting from mine compound to village.

The situation of the Luapula valley as a source of labour for both the Congo and the Rhodesias was a key factor, it has been stated, in the extension of the Watch Tower movement into the Congo.[2] What is of more particular interest, however, is that the phases of development of labour migration from the Luapula may be correlated with the successive waves of the Watch Tower movement there. The first phase of induction into the labour market was not dissimilar from that occurring in other parts of Northern Rhodesia; and the first wave of the Watch Tower movement may similarly be compared to the development of the movement in North-Eastern Rhodesia in 1917-1921 under the leadership of Hanoc Sandano.[3] In contrast with other major areas of labour migration such as Bembaland, however, migrants continued to return regularly to their home villages during the 1930's and 1940's. Many of these had been influenced by Watch Tower ideas in the urban setting, and such was the social situation in the valley that large rural communities of Watch Tower adherents of a more enduring type than in 1924-1926 emerged in the period 1932-1945.

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[1] Ibid.

[2] Cf. below, pp. 406 ff.

[3] Cf. above, pp. 194-196.

The first stage of the Watch Tower movement was a transient one which indicated nevertheless that widespread social dislocation had occurred in the valley. In the early 1920's, migrants returning from the Wankie colliery spread the message in the southern part of the valley, outside the missionary spheres of influence, that the whites were soon to depart. In June, 1924, four Watch Tower prophets under the leadership of Jacob Mumbwa - who came to be known as Napoleon - came to the attention of the Rev. R.S.M. O'Ferrell of the L.M.S. mission at Mbereshi, near Kawambwa:

> There is much confusion. Some villagers profess to worship in a Christian manner, some profess to follow Satan. Holy days are Wednesdays and Saturdays each week. Baptism by immersion takes place. All are anti-white. At Malapula it is reported that cassava is being uprooted and fowls killed, as no provision for the morrow should be made.[1]

The excitement caused by the initial success of Watch Tower preaching, which is still widely remembered in the valley today,[2] led the commissioner at Kawambwa to express the concern that

> Given enough rope they will work themselves and the people into such a state of religious frenzy by continuing praying, shouting, drumming, sleepless nights, that all ... will get out of hand and harsh methods will be needed.[3]

Napoleon, a Chishinga from the Kawambwa district who had learnt of the Watch Tower movement from Nyasa migrants at Wankie and had subsequently travelled to Cape Town in 1922 to visit the European headquarters of The W.T.B.T.S.,[4] was however unable

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[1] KDF 6/1/8, Annual Report for Mweru-Luapula Province, 1924.

[2] Interviews with Thompson Kangale and others, Mansa, 2 Sept. 1969; Richard Chisanga, Mulumbwa village, 5 Sept. 1969; and Reuben Chabwe, Chabwe village, 10 Sept. 1969.

[3] ZA 1/10/1, D.C., Kawambwa, to S.N.A., 13 June 1924.

[4] Ibid.

to retain a position of leadership in the movement in the valley. Partly this was because he and his chief lieutenants soon left to seek work again, and partly because a group of preacher-prophets emerged who, like Sindano and Gondwe, established themselves at the head of communities of Watch Tower followers which were independent both of the Nyasa-trained migrants and of the W.T.B.T.S. These leaders were converted at the village level, rather than on the mine compound, and although the evidence is unclear, do not appear to have been mission attenders. The local leaders who emerged at this time were James Mfula (with a following at Mansa and Katata), Sosteni Mutungu (Mporokoso), Sam Mubanga (Kazembe's village), Abraham Kapamba (Mununga), and Abraham Kapatwa (Lukupwa's village).[1]

Despite the emergence of these groupings, the appeal of the Watch Tower movement declined rapidly over the remainder of the decade, and the repudiation by Dawson of the independent elements, which led to a suspension of the free flow of religious tracts, coincided with and assisted the fall-off in activism. As is argued below, for such village communities, significantly exposed to new ideas and new social pressures by the migrant labour system, but remote from the centres of development, the Watch Tower possibly appealed as much through its promise of literacy and education as it did on the basis of prophetism.[2] With none of Rutherford's pamphlets to distribute, the appeal of the prophet was substantially lessened.

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[1] ZA 1/10/1, Report on Watch Tower preachers at Kawambwa, October 1924; also interviews with Thompson Kangale and others, Mansa, 2 Sept. 1969.

[2] Cf. below, pp. 450-453.

This period of the Watch Tower in the Luapula valley should be distinguished from the activities of other followers of Napoleon - sometimes referred to as the banapoleoni[1] - in the Katanga, where the Kitawala movement, as it came to be called, developed along lines somewhat similar to those of the Watch Tower movement on the mine compounds of Southern Rhodesia in the 1920's.[2] After the initial emotional phase, the rural movements relapsed into quietism, and it is possible that but for the combined circumstances of Katangan and Northern Rhodesian labour policies and the effects of the depression, the pattern of development of the movement would have been similar to that in North-Eastern Rhodesia, where a few communities under charismatic leaders continued in quiet isolation until the death of the leader or their absorption into the Jehovah's Witnesses in the post-war period. However, it was the banapoleoni Watch Tower members who returned to the valley in the early 1930's and re-established the movement on a mass basis.

The second phase of the migrant labour system may be said to have begun for Luapulans with the effective closing of the Luapula-Katanga border, the slump in the mines, and the restriction of labour opportunities by the B.S.A. Co.'s migrant system. The copperbelt was, like the Katanga, physically adjacent to the dense population centres of the valley, and a two-way flow of migration and local trading was readily established. The Native Labour Association founded in 1930 by the B.S.A. Co. in order to recruit within the territory soon realised that labour

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[1] Cf. below, pp. 406-409.

[2] Cf. above, p. 125.

was sufficiently abundant for recruitment to be unnecessary. It consequently limited its activities to promoting transport facilities and - somewhat paradoxically for a recruiting agency - to enforcing the 'repatriation' of unwanted, dismissed and disabled workers to their village of origin.[1] This was the general policy amongst southern African mining companies, of regarding urban areas as white areas, black workers as tribesmen temporarily resident for the purpose of earning tax and blanket money, and detribalisation - the supposed necessary consequence of a settled African labour force - as 'a highly dangerous process liable to unsettle the native mind if allowed to get under way'.[2]

Indeed, the problem for the administration with the closure of the copper mines as a result of the world depression was how to prevent Africans flooding into the towns rather than how to attract them from the villages. It was probably easier for Luapulan migrants to return to their villages than for many other Northern Rhodesian peoples: the fish and cassava economy was capable of being sustained in the absence of a high proportion of male adults, and thus to provide subsistence for the many returning migrants; there was a strong sense of community in the fishing villages - particularly in the central Lunda area; and there were bars, small shops, and some of the attractions of city life.[3] Nevertheless, labour migrants were also faced

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[1] ZA 1/9/18/36/3, Report of the Native Labour Association, 1931.

[2] SEC/LAB/77, Report of the National Industrial Labour Association Board, Ndola, December 1925.

[3] Cunnison, The Luapula Peoples, pp. 27 et seq.

with the difficulties of re-integration into the local social system, having made new friends in the towns and generally become accustomed to an urban, industrial culture. Many of those who returned to the Luapula valley in the early 1930's had already undergone a secondary stage of introduction to Watch Tower ideas on the mine compounds. The third stage of the development of the movement in the Luapula took place when returning migrants adapted the beliefs and structures of the urban movement to fit the new conditions of rural life.

The most prominent leader amongst these Watch Tower adherents was Pearson Musonda, also known as Piala, a follower of Napoleon, who - having served a sentence of 9 months' imprisonment in the Congo for subversion[1] - was deported to the Luapula with several others, amongst them Fred Kabombo, Pearson Sandoke, and Petro Kela.[2] Their arrival in the valley coincided with the effects of the slump, and regenerated the Watch Tower into a widely popular movement. In the Kawambwa district, over 60 villages were described as being Watch Tower centres, in spite of the hostility towards the movement of the Lunda chiefs.[3] The ideology of the movement, according to the Commissioner at Kawambwa's report, was a much more specific indictment of white rule than had been the case in the earlier phase, and it held out the promise of Africans attaining industrial skills - a claim of particular attractiveness, perhaps, to those turned away from the mines:

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[1] Cf. below, p. 407.

[2] SEC/NAT/312, D.C., Kawambwa, to P.C., Fort Rosebery, 6 June 1931.

[3] Ibid.

> The recrudescence was led by people who have been absent for long periods in the south or the Belgian Congo. They say the Americans are coming in the dry season to drive out the Europeans, and tax will be suspended for four years.... The Americans will teach the Africans "mechanical arts" to raise them to the European standard.[1]

In June, 1934, another 40 Watch Tower adherents were expelled from the Katanga to Kawambwa.[2] It is probable, however, that this action reflected the policy of discouraging Luapulan labour as much as it did the anxiety over the Watch Tower movement. It is true that considerable pressure was being placed on the Belgian administration at this time over the movement. Their policy of banishing religious and political radicals to concentration camps in remote parts of the country had helped the movement to spread, rather than hindered it,[3] and missionaries were also agitating for effective action. 'With Satanic malignity the Kitawalans are planning a mass uprising', declared the Protestant Missionary Conference in Elizabethville in 1934, while the White Fathers made representations to the Vatican to secure the banning of the movement by both N.R.G. and the Belgians.[4] Nevertheless, the actions taken at this time suggest that the control of the Watch Tower movement in the Katanga also served as a cloak for preventing Luapulan labour from seeking work. Immediately following the expulsions, an attempt was made to shift the mass of the population living west of Lake Mweru through village relocation, and to create a cordon sanitaire between the Katanga

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[1] SEC/NAT/312, D.C., Kawambwa, to P.C., Fort Rosebery, 6 June 1931.

[2] ZA 1/15/M/1, British Vice-consul, Elizabethville, to Sec. Nat. Affairs, 18 Sept. 1934.

[3] Cf. below, pp. 411-412.

[4] Congo Mission News, LXXXVIII, Nov. 1934.

and the Luapula valley so that neither foreign migrants nor subversive influences might infiltrate across the border.[1]

It may be noted that a combination of circumstances - perhaps chiefly the policies of settled labour instituted in the Elizabethville area - had led to the decline of the Watch Tower there at this time. Belgian administrative reports refer constantly in the period 1927-1931 to the activity of the movement in Elizabethville, but very rarely in following years, although there were many followers in the emerging labour centres in north Katanga.[2] This suggests firstly that the major reason for the expulsion of Watch Tower members -- or those alleged to be such - arose from labour policies, and secondly that the degree of labour mobility between village and compound was directly related to the appeal of the movement. For the pattern of development of the Watch Tower movement in the Luapula valley in the 1930's was one in which returning labour migrants were attracted to the movement not only through its criticism of white rule and promises of the end of taxation, but also through the creation of new community structures which could accommodate the new aspirations of the migrant. Particularly in the central Lunda area, chiefs were jealous of their powers, augmented at this time through the implementation of the policy of indirect rule. The dense, ribbon-like development of villages along the borders of the river and the swamps reduced

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[1] ZA 1/15/M/1, British Vice-consul, Elizabethville, to S.N.A., 18 Sept. 1934.

[2] Rapport Annuel sur l'Administration de la Colonie du Congo Belge ... présenté aux Chambres Legislatifs (Brussels), 1927-1945. This work will henceforth be cited as Rapport Annuel.

the opportunities of village segmentation, and in any event villages were usually long-standing and under the leadership of a headman of rank.[1] Access to land and fishing rights depended on village membership, as well.

In the face of the hostility of chiefs and the restrictions placed on commoners, returned labour migrants sought to give expression to their desire for prestige, resulting from their urban status and possibly from their economic advance above the common level as well, through mass separatism, for which the Watch Tower movement provided the cohesive structure. In a survey of Watch Tower adherents who had joined the movement in the period 1925-1935 in the Mwansabombwe district (the seat of the Lunda paramount), it was noticed that a number of community leaders -at Mukolo, Lufubu, Selanga, Chipunka, and Kapesa - were men who had achieved their status through their initial position as heads of Watch Tower groups formed prior to their deportation from the Congo. Through the residential affiliation of other Watch Tower adherents, and natural growth, these section leaders - as they are known today in the bureaucratic hierarchy of the official Jehovah's Witnesses which many of them have joined - have effectively become village headmen.[2] Their villages largely consisted of endogamous clusters on the outskirts of the main centres of population, with the central meeting place next to the leader's hut, rather than some distance away from the village, as is the case with most Jehovah's Witnesses in rural Zambia today.

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[1] Cunnison, The Luapula Peoples, pp. 119-120.

[2] Sholto Cross, 'Jehovah's Witnesses and Socio-Economic Change in the Luapula Province'.

There are marked similarities in this third stage of Watch Tower development in the Luapula to the contemporary formation of Gondwe village, which was also populated by a mixed community of labour migrants and local believers. The Watch Tower villages in the Luapula were on a much larger scale however, and openly hostile towards Europeans. As a Kawambwa Tour Report of 1935 noted, 'The Watch Tower has come to stay.... The leader is a deportee from the Congo, Piala Musonda, who is defiant, refusing to pay tax and be subjected to "slavery".'[1] Not only were local conditions for the Luapulan Watch Tower communities more difficult than in the Lamba area, but also Musonda and his followers appear to have been more concerned with matters of economic exploitation as a basis for their beliefs than with the eradication of witchcraft. It is significant that in the copperbelt disturbances in 1935, of all the Watch Tower leaders who were examined by the police for suspected complicity in the strike, Fred Kabombo alone appears to have been openly active, having organised a group of adherents at the Mufulira mine to preach against the payment of tax, and having themselves refused to pay tax.[2] Most of the Watch Tower leaders on the copperbelt were indeed Luapulans in the 1930's, particularly of course at Kitwe and Mufulira, which were the nearest centres of employment to the valley and thus dominated by Luapulans.

A further stage in the development of the Watch Tower movement may perhaps be seen in the attempt by the Jehovah's

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[1] ZA 1/9/62/1, Kawambwa Tour Report, 1935.

[2] Cf. below, p.387.

Witnesses to purge the independent members in the late 1930's and immediate post-war period, which is discussed below.[1] However by this time the movement had been well established in the valley, and a new corporate structure organised independently of the W.T.B.T.S. - and indeed of non-Luapulan Africans - had emerged. Viewing the extension of the movement to the valley particularly from the perspective of the situation of the labour migrant, then, one may distinguish three main phases. At first in the mid-1920's villagers responded to the millennial prophecies of returning migrants, but the flare of expectancy rapidly died down; and it does not appear as if the missionary factor was of particular significance.[2] This represented the classic means of diffusion of the movement, and its timing was dictated perhaps by external factors such as events at the Wankie colliery rather than by a specific local crisis, such as had occurred in the Abercorn and Fife districts a few years earlier. While particular groups under prophetic leaders persisted for some time after this period,[3] the next major associational growth of the movement amongst Luapulans took place on the mine compounds in Southern Rhodesia and the Katanga. This may be characterised

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[1] Cf. below, pp. 390-392.

[2] Although the 'véritable fanatisme, prêt à toutes les audaces et toutes les violences' of the Watch Tower deportees in 1932 - estimated at a no doubt exaggerated figure of 150,000 - is noted in Chroniques Trimestrielles, ii, 1930-1935, p. 223, there is no earlier mention by the White Fathers of activity in the Luapula in this source. I have been unable to discover any records of the Plymouth Brethren relating to this time and place.

[3] I am informed that James Mfula still has a following of independent Watch Tower members at Katata, Mabukunda, and around Lake Kampolombo, which I was unfortunately unable to visit owing to restrictions on my travelling in these areas.

chiefly perhaps as a movement of solidarity in the face of the regimentation and alienation of life on the compound, which probably had a regional basis of attraction for migrants from the Luapula, just as the Watch Tower communities in Southern Rhodesia had for Nyasalanders. Inasmuch as the ideology of the movement generated a protest against low wages and high taxes, racial discrimination, and ill-treatment by compound bosses, it was specifically a workers' movement. The depression and the rivalry between Northern Rhodesia and the Katanga led to the transplantation of the movement once again to the valley area. Luapulans who were prevented from settling in the urban areas, yet increasingly moving towards a marginal position at the village level by virtue of their new social and political horizons, found a home in the many Watch Tower villages which sprang up in this period. These village communities were closely related to the copperbelt, and the large proportion of Luapulans on the copper mines helped to make the Watch Tower a significant influence in a district which had already been touched by the preaching of Tomo Nyirenda and Jeremiah Gondwe.

The continuing influence of the Watch Tower in the Luapula valley, and its specific connexion with migrant workers, are in sharp distinction to the development of the Watch Tower in other rural areas of central Africa. Generally, the movement played a transitional part, coming to the fore at a time of crisis, and acting as a vehicle for the expression of protest or the desire for change of people who were not necessarily labour migrants. Gondwe's movement and the Watch Tower in

the Luapula valley, both of which developed in rural areas closely connected with the copperbelt in its period of most rapid expansion, provide complimentary perspectives on the appeal of the movement and urban-rural labour mobility. This was a most significant stage of the extension of the Watch Tower ideology in central Africa, as it indicates the existence of a structural relationship between labour migration and the millennial social movement which helps to provide a more precise basis than does the simple diffusionist perspective for delineating the zonal area of its impact. During the 1930's, however, Watch Tower ideas spread west of the line of rail into areas of low migration, where they gave shape to yet further new forms of protest.

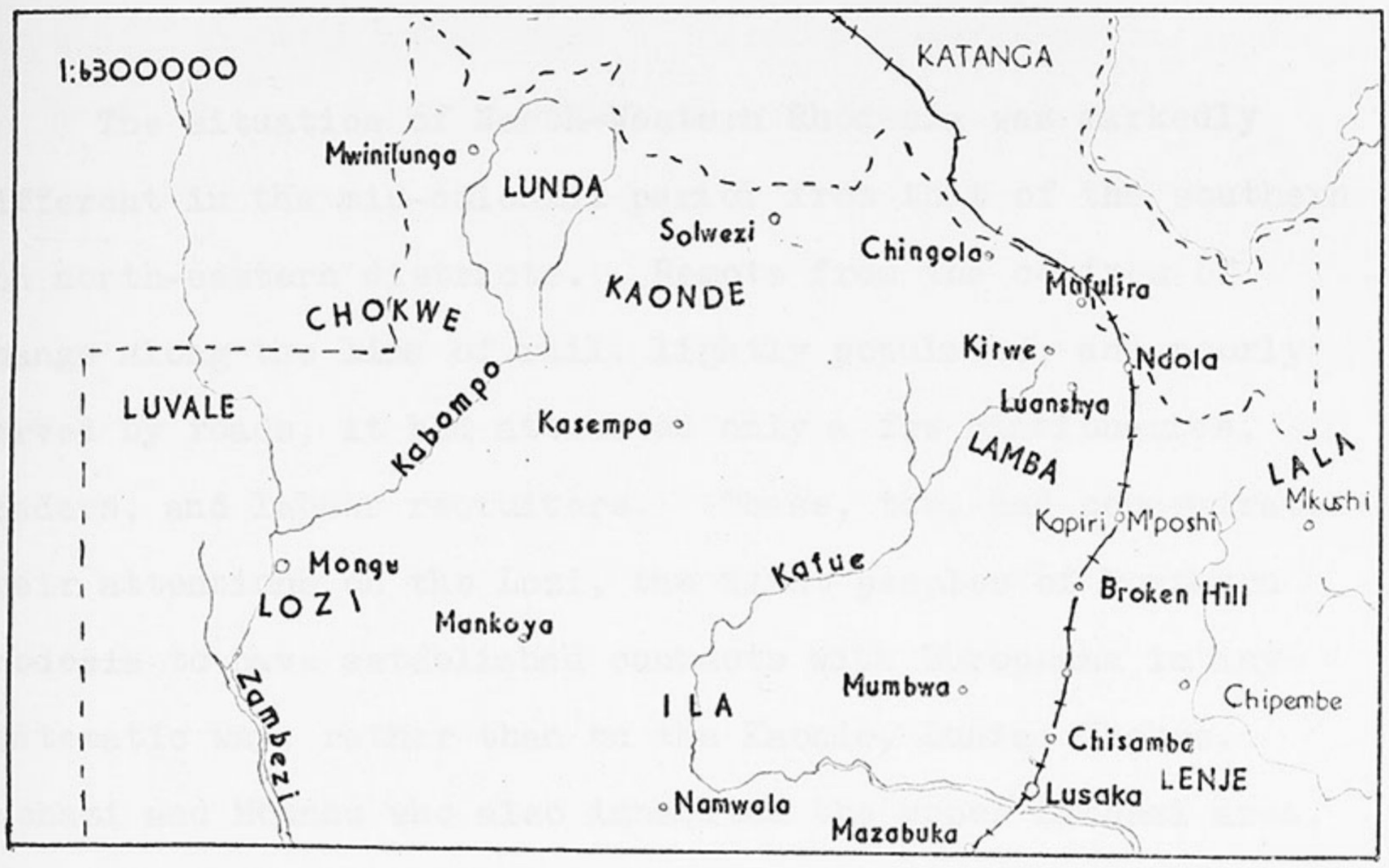
CHAPTER VII

NORTH-WESTERN RHODESIA: RURAL MOVEMENTS IN THE 1930's

1. Watch Tower and the mcapi Movement

2. The Ila Watch Tower Movement

3. Watch Tower in Barotseland



MAP VI. THE COPPERBELT & N-WESTERN RHODESIA

1. Watch Tower and the mcapi Movement

The situation of North-Western Rhodesia was markedly different in the mid-colonial period from that of the southern and north-eastern districts. Remote from the centres of change along the line of rail, lightly populated, and poorly served by roads, it had attracted only a few missionaries, traders, and labour recruiters. These, too, had concentrated their attentions on the Lozi, the first peoples of Northern Rhodesia to have established contacts with Europeans in any systematic way, rather than on the Kaonde, Lunda, Chokwe, Luchazi and Mbundu who also inhabited the upper Zambezi area. The doyen of Zambezian missionaries, Adolphe Jalla of the Paris Evangelical Mission (P.E.M.), only considered extending the services of the mission to the non-Lozi districts of Barotseland on the eve of World War II;[1] amongst the Ila the Primitive Methodist Missionary Society (P.M.M.S.) had struggled for many years almost to no avail and had had little impact on customary Ila beliefs and the strong cattle economy which protected them from the labour market;[2] and at Kalene Hill in the Mwinilunga District Dr Walter Fisher of the Plymouth Brethren had established a medical centre rather than an evangelical or educational undertaking.[3]

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[1] Cf. 'Rapport Annuel de la Mission du Zambèze 1938-1939', Journal des Missions, XII, 2, 1939.

[2] Cf. generally R.J. Fielder, 'The Role of Cattle in the Ila Economy: A Conflict of Views on the Uses of Cattle by the Ila of Namwala', African Social Research, XV, 1973.

[3] Cf. W. Singleton Fisher and J. Hoyte, Africa Looks Ahead (1948), ii, 1906-1938.

This isolation was reflected in one of the major indices of change of the day, the returns for labour migration to the copperbelt. Even as late as 1936, when mineral production was booming, and the percentage of adult males absent from their villages was reported as 50-60 per cent for Fort Jameson, 60 per cent for Sesheke, and as high as 70 per cent for Mporokoso and the northern Luapula valley, the comparable figures for Mwinilunga were 10 per cent, for Balovale 17 per cent, and for Namwala 5 per cent.[1] Nevertheless, the effects of the depression filtered indirectly even to the remotest parts of the country. Thirty years of colonial rule had helped to undermine not only customary social institutions, but also the self-sufficiency of local agriculture. Particularly hard hit were cultivators who depended in any way on the money economy to supplement production, and the additional hazards of drought and locusts which peasants on the upper Zambezi faced at this time reduced many to extreme poverty. In Barotseland, the absence of a local trading community consequent upon the isolation of the area and the low level of migration had led to considerable reliance on European traders and farm stores; the withdrawal of these traders during the depression substantially affected the local economy, and the trade relations between the pastoral Lozi and the cultivators on the margins of the flood plains.[2] When Watch Tower ideas came to North-Western Rhodesia, they did so not so much as a reaction against economic exploitation and

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[1] Report of the Commission appointed to enquire into the Financial and Economic Position of Northern Rhodesia, (Col. no. 145, 1938), p. 36.

[2] Gann, History, p. 296.

white rule, however, as a rebellion against the Lozi by those living in a state of vassalage under them, and in the crisis of witchcraft fears.

These developments were in part similar to and overlapping with the spread of another major social movement in east and central Africa at this time, the mcapi movement, which should be briefly discussed.[1] Mcapi, possibly derived from the Swahili kucapa meaning 'to wash',[2] was a reddish, soapy liquid sold by vendors with the promise that those who surrendered their charms, confessed their evil thoughts, and bought a potion of the medicine, would be free of witchcraft and the suspicion of being witches. Mcapi vendors also preached a doctrine of social rehabilitation comparable to that accompanying witchcraft eradication practices under the auspices of the Watch Tower. There were, however, important differences between the two movements; and a comparison helps to illuminate certain social attitudes of the day. The mcapi movement possibly originated in the Mlanje district of Nyasaland in the late 1920's, and soon became popular in southern Nyasaland, whence it spread during the 1930's into many parts of Tanganyika, Mozambique, Northern and Southern Rhodesia, and the Congo.[3]

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[1] The relation between the Watch Tower and the mcapi movement has been treated in detail elsewhere. Cf. Cross, 'The Watch Tower, Witch-cleansing, and Secret Societies in Central Africa', in S. Cross and T.O. Ranger (eds.), The Problem of Evil in Eastern Africa (forthcoming), where the history of the movement is also surveyed in depth by T.O. Ranger.

[2] Cf. A.T. Lacey, 'Notes on a recent Anti-Witchcraft Movement in Nyasaland', (unpublished B.Litt. thesis, Cambridge, 1934).

[3] R. Arch., Mlanje District Notebook (mf.I), 3 Oct. 1932; ibid., S 235/511, Annual Report for Mtoko, 1933. However cp. S.A. Paliani, Kunadza Mcape, (Lilongwe, Likuni Press, 1963) and Lacey, op. cit., for possible origins in Mozambique. Some accounts give a much earlier date of origin, e.g. ZA 1/15/M/2, D.C., Lundazi, to P.C., Fort Jameson, 21 July 1933. All file references in this chapter are to the Zambian National Archives, unless otherwise stated.

After some debate, the Nyasaland authorities decided to tolerate the movement,[1] and this policy was ultimately adopted in Northern Rhodesia, after an initial hostile reaction.[2] Large areas of North-Eastern Rhodesia received the attention of the mcapi vendors in 1933, particularly Lundazi and Fort Jameson, Chinsali, Mpika, Abercorn and Fife, and by 1934 the movement was popular in Mporokoso, the Luapula valley, and Kalomo.[3]

The mcapi men travelled from one village to the next, as individuals or in bands, relying on chiefs and headmen to bear about their services and invite their presence.[4] Once one village had bought the potion and submitted to the divination and cleansing of the mcapi men, neighbouring communities who did not wish to acquire a bad reputation for witchcraft were strongly inclined to follow suit. This mode of diffusion was facilitated by the ambiguous laws controlling witchcraft - which as a result came under scrutiny and revision at this time[5] - and by the novel methods of the mcapi men, which avoided the excesses of mwana lesa and the finality of the mwabvi ritual, which usually involved swallowing a poisonous liquid.

The mcapi diviners were in fact adept at sailing within the limits of the harsh anti-witchcraft laws; most of the prosecutions of their numbers in the Rhodesias were for fraud rather than for contravention of the Witchcraft Proclamation,

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[1] ZA 1/15/M/2, D.C. Mzimba (Nyasaland), to D.C., Lundazi, 14 Aug. 1933.

[2] Ibid., Minutes of Conference of Provincial Commissioners, Lusaka, 1934.

[3] Ibid.

[4] For a description of this cf. KSC 1/5/4, P.C., Livingstone, to D.C., Livingstone, 10 July 1935.

[5] Notably by F.H. Melland, whose In Witchbound Africa (1923), and unpublished typescripts in U 1/4 provide a full review of the legal position.

and very few deaths resulted from their activities.[1] Indeed, it was the general belief in colonial circles that fraud was the entire motive.[2] Mcapi thus spread as predominantly a rural phenomenon, travelling from east to west along traditional routes and at the behest of chiefs rather than as the innovatory ideology of labour migrants (although these did act as mcapi vendors, of course, as is instanced by their role in the spread of mcapi to Katanga[3]), and consequently may be seen - despite their blending of the new with the old as regards technique - as part of the continuing development of witchcraft eradication movements which had operated regularly among the peoples of central Africa.

It is interesting that in North-Eastern Rhodesia the mcapi proved particularly popular in areas which had shown little response to the Watch Tower movement. Practically every chief in the Kasama district, the Bemba heartland, including chiefs Citimukulu and Mambwa,[4] sent for the mcapi men, as did Paramount Chief Kazembe of the Lunda.[5] Richards has argued that mcapi was popular amongst the Bemba since the customary institutions which normally regulated possible sources of conflict within the society were beginning to be undermined by social and economic changes.[6] This suggests that an

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[1] This aspect is commented on in R. Arch., S 235/457, C.N.C. to all N.C.'s, 9 Mar. 1935.

[2] Cf. e.g. letter of Archdeacon Glossop, East Africa and Rhodesia, 20 July 1933.

[3] Rapport Annuel, (Brussels, 1934), pp. 9, 267.

[4] ZA 1/15/M/2, P.C., Kasama, to Chief Sec., 24 April 1934.

[5] Ibid., D.C., Kawambwa, to P.C., Kasama, 1 Sept. 1934.

[6] A.I. Richards, 'A Modern Movement of Witch-finders', Africa, VIII, 1935, esp.at pp. 456-458.

important factor affecting the responsiveness of the Bemba to new movements was the degree of control which chiefs might exercise over it, and that political communication within the hierarchical system was still sufficiently effective at this stage to prevent the operation of radically innovatory ideologies.[1] This was a stage, perhaps, which the Bemba only reached with the emergence of the Lumpa movement in the 1950's.[2] For the northern districts generally it was noted that adherents of the Watch Tower movement, for example those at Fife, did not participate in the mcapi movement.[3]

A significant difference between Watch Tower and mcapi, then, was that the latter was traditionalist, even when performing a similar social function. 'This is not the power of the government', explained one participant to the Commissioner at Lundazi, 'but the power of the chiefs of the country'.[4] More specifically, the movement was popular amongst those who were not Christians, and in their exhortations to buy the medicine, mcapi men attempted to exploit the differences between Christians and those who had not had the opportunity of attending a mission. Two of the major mcapi vendors in Northern Rhodesia, Gideon Chulu and Fife Jere, were reported by local Nyasa court clerks (themselves Christians) to have appealed particularly to pagans:

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[1] Cf. above, pp. 239-240.

[2] Cf. A.D. Roberts, 'The Lumpa Church of Alice Lenshina and its Antecedents', in A. Mazrui and R.I. Rotberg (eds.), Protest and Power in Black Africa (New York, 1970).

[3] ZA 1/15/M/2, Dr J. Chisholm (Mwenzo mission), to D.C., Fife, 2 Jan. 1934.

[4] Ibid., Court clerk to D.C., Lundazi, 30 June 1933.

> Fife said at the beginning: "Christians must not taste my medicine because Christians say that it is bad and that it kills people, but I want the people who are not Christians and who drink beer to drink muchape....". He first of all took his glass in his hand and examined all the people and found that Christians had not any bad medicine, but those who drink beer and dance the _cinyao_ he found with bad medicine.[1]
>
> Then, having given them Mchape, [Chulu] said: "Stop your old practices. If you return to them you will die. If you take my Mchape you will live happily like Christians." ... All the headmen of all villages and all the people were fond of these Mchapes. But the Christians did not like him. The Christians said: "We must not take his Mchape, it is bad for us".[2]

Making allowance for the defence of fellow Christians which may have distorted this evidence, these statements nevertheless provide interesting testimony that the _mcapi_ movement offered to purge witchcraft fears and rehabilitate traditional values so that recipients would be placed on equal terms with those who had benefited from mission Christianity.

A major difference between _mcapi_ and the Watch Tower was, however, the absence of a mobilising, millennial vision in the prescriptions of the former. It is true that the claim was made that the medicine was of supernatural origin and that the emissaries who sold it had been sent by God to purify and rehabilitate people, but this preaching appears to have been more in the nature of a sanction designed to keep the medicine selling, than any vision of society transformed. _Mcapi_ men also gave advice on keeping the peace and preventing jealousies - 'if a man has two or three wives he must not spend a month in one hut, but must spend two days in one, two days in another'[3] -

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[1] ZA 1/15/M/2, Evidence of Filipo of Kalukomo, July 1933.

[2] _Ibid_., Evidence of Filimon Banda, July 1933.

[3] _Ibid_., Evidence of Filipo of Kalukomo, July 1933.

much in the manner of the traditional diviner. But the mcapi men were essentially travelling salesmen, and their acceptability stemmed from the fact that they were aliens who aimed at the most to reform society, not to change it. The preaching of anti-white doctrines, other than the expression of resentment at the probibition of public divining and against the missionaries, rarely entered their ideology, and then only apparently as a sales technique, as appears from the account of a police informer investigating this aspect of the movement:

> At the beginning of November, 1934, Matthew Isaac Muchape, Swahili from Dar-es-Salaam, was preaching in the Lusaka district against payment of tax - people could escape if put in prison if they drank his medicine.... and the European population were leaving.[1]

Off the line of rail, and outside the northern and eastern districts where the Watch Tower had made headway in Northern Rhodesia during the 1920's, when the Watch Tower movement broke new ground in the Kasempa, Solwezi, and Mwinilunga districts, it was widely confused with the mcapi movement. While commencing as a modernised witchcraft eradication movement, however, new community structures emerged together with a rejection of many aspects of customary society which clearly distinguish this phase of the spread of social movements in Northern Rhodesia from the mcapi movement. Watch Tower operations in North-Western Rhodesia outside Barotseland indeed commenced very much as a type of mcapi movement. A prominent witch-finder, Yohan Amini Piri, was arrested at

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[1] Ibid., Report of C.I.D., Mazabuka, 7 Dec. 1934.

Solwezi in July, 1933, after villagers had attempted to self-administer the mwabvi poison ordeal after listening to his preaching. Piri, like many of the mcapi vendors, hailed from Dedza in Nyasaland, and was able to show the Provincial Commissioner letters dating from 1932 received from various headmen, and from Chiefs Musele and Matebo, requesting him to cleanse their districts.[1] However, unlike the mcapi men, Piri stayed to be caught; he and his helpmate, Jacob Nkunda, were only found out because a Nyasa evangelist on a temporary visit, Sam Mwase, who was attached to the African Methodist Episcopal Church (A.M.E.C.), (and himself under some suspicion because he was a subscriber to the Garvey newspaper), was displaced in Piri's favour by the local headman.[2] While Piri used the Watch Tower technique of baptism by immersion as a means of testing for sorcery, his preaching - at a time when the massive efflux of Europeans from the copperbelt had coincided with an invasion of locusts at Solwezi to reinforce the standard Watch Tower prophecies - emphasized the necessary exclusiveness of the believers, if they wished the protection from witchcraft to be effective, rather than the hostile and anti-white elements. Indeed, a Solwezi chief, admittedly described as 'an old man ... of the more old-fashioned and unsophisticated type', went so far as to approach the District Commissioner in an attempt to secure the services of a Watch Tower preacher for his people.[3]

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[1] KDD 1/4/1, Solwezi Tour Report, July, 1933.

[2] SEC/NAT/314, Solwezi Tour Report, January, 1933.

[3] Ibid.

Jacob Nkunda secured a remarkable success as a witch-finder in the Kasempa district. This was an area in which a number of chiefs had passed orders forbidding 'any assembly, dance or ceremony subversive to authority or public morals'; for some this was no more than a diplomatic move, however, as there was a tradition of welcome by Kaonde chiefs to witch-finders of Nkunda's calibre, most of whom however came from Angola rather than from the east. 'I cannot think of a single Witchdoctor', said the Kasempa Commissioner at Nkunda's trial, 'who has made trouble in the district and might be described as a pure-blooded Kaonde, Kasempa-born...any sort of charlatan from any other district can command a large and appreciative audience'.[1] Chief Ingwe, indeed, a prominent Kaonde chief, actively helped Jacob Nkunda to operate in his country and concealed the resultant death of an old woman. Together with Chiefs Nyoka and Chibanza of the Kasempa district, who concealed the whereabouts of another preacher, one Swanampanga, from the boma, Ingwe was subsequently deposed.[2] Nkunda was sentenced to 18 months' imprisonment for his part in the killing of suspected witches.

The killing of witches was not, however, a typical feature of Watch Tower witchcraft eradication at this stage. Just as the mcapi movement had progressed beyond the rigours of the poison ordeal, so Piri and Nkunda had improved on the methods of mwana lesa by attempting to adapt baptism, the collection of charms, and the drinking of preventive medicine in such a way

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[1] ACC. 57/5, Kasempa Tour Report, January, 1934.

[2] SEC/NAT/393, Report on the Suspension of Chief Ingwe, n.d. (1933?).

as to sidestep the harsh injunctions of the witchcraft laws. Like the mcapi men, their rites introduced the novel suggestion that witches could be purged and rehabilitated by submitting to their tests.[1] However the major distinction between Piri and Nkunda and the mcapi vendors was that they attempted to establish communities of people thus cleansed. Their ready acceptance by the local chiefs suggests, however, that neither possessed a sufficient prophetic aura to lead their following out of traditional ways more than temporarily, and their arrest led to the swift demise of the movement in the areas of Kasempa and Solwezi.

At Mwinilunga, however, the Watch Tower witch-finding movement proved to be more than transitory, and Watch Tower villages appeared which, while not lasting as holy villages, nevertheless indicated that an attempt at establishing settled communities of believers purified of witchcraft fears was made. The Mwinilunga district was perhaps the most remote in Northern Rhodesia, comprising, in the words of the local District Commissioner, '10,000 square miles in area with a population of 18,000 - wild, woolly, and shifting'.[2] It had proved impossible to extend the system of indirect rule in this area, not only because of the absence of roads, the shifting population and the lack of contact, but also because of the loose political structure of the (Ndembu) Lunda. In 1933-1934 when Watch Tower preachers penetrated into the area, it was a one man station,

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[1] This aspect had not escaped administrative attention. For further discussion cf. C.M.N. White, 'Divination amongst the Lunda and Lwena with some suggestions as to modern trends', p. 10, in Balovale District Notebook, pp. 50-68.

[2] SEC/NAT/314, Mwinilunga Tour Report, 1933.

and all attempts at enforcing administration had virtually ceased. Poverty was extreme, and in the southern portion of Kangombe's district where the Watch Tower came to be particularly strong, tax had not been enforced since 1932. The Congo and Angola borders provided a ready refuge for preachers, too, and although the early stages of Watch Tower activity are unclear, it seems probable that it arrived in the guise of a witchcraft eradication movement, and soon became widely popular.

By June, 1934, a separate community of 'baptisers, hymn-singers and witch-finders' had emerged at Mombelo village, on the confluence of the Lunga and Kabompo rivers. The touring District Commissioner was struck by the many departures from traditional village life; dancing, beer-drinking, and traditional forms of greeting were outlawed, and new burial techniques had been adopted. It was the prominence of these graves along the paths leading to the village, rather than in the traditional place within the village, in fact, which drew the Commissioner's attention to the new beliefs. The dead had been placed in bark coffins under mounds imitating tombstones, and the tradition of enclosing worldly goods in the grave had ceased. Daily life was also conducted in such a way that there was the minimum of contact between believers and non-believers. The latter were not given water to wash in, and husbands who were non-members were refused any redress on the grounds of the intimacy of their wives with Watch Tower adherents. The most striking ritual reported was a system of passwords designed to ensure the exclusiveness of the elect:

> When a member of the sect approaches a village he does not enter forthwith but calls out, from the perimeter of the village, the Watch Tower password "Galatia" [?] or - if the traveller is a pastor, "Cilinto" [?]. If there are Watch Tower converts in the village the reply is "Alleluiah". The traveller then enters and shakes hands with the other converts in the village.... A Watch Tower convert will not shake hands with one not baptised.[1]

Hymn-singing rather than preaching appears to have been the major vehicle of the new ideas, which may well have been because of the absence of W.T.B.T.S. literature, and the apparently reduced prophetic role of the Watch Tower preachers. No mention is made in reports of the names of prominent individuals, although of course given the low level of administrative surveillance, this is not strong evidence. Nevertheless, with the emphasis on ritual purity, and participant hymn-singing as the major liturgy, local men established communities in which an expected perpetual witchcraft eradication function seems to have been hoped for through adherence to Watch Tower rituals and beliefs, rather than other millennial goals such as the repossession of the land from the white man or the arrival of liberating American negroes.

As much as the absence of strongly charismatic figures supplied with Bibles and luridly coloured tracts, this ideology also perhaps reflects the lack of definition of the white presence in bringing about social change in areas so far removed from white settlement. While hostility towards whites accompanied the Watch Tower belief - the Commissioner remarked on 'the sullen and negative attitude of the taxable males at Mombelo's'[2] - this aspect does not seem to have been elaborated

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[1] ZA 1/9/62/1, Mwinilunga Tour Report, June, 1934.

[2] Ibid.

in the ideology of the Mwinilunga Watch Tower. The community was rather organised to maintain ritual purity from the dangers within, and a consequent adoption of European techniques, as in the matter of burials, took place. However, while the reception of the Watch Tower was less transient than that of mcapi, the movement nevertheless faded fairly rapidly; settlements such as at Mombelo village apparently did not retain their Watch Tower organisation and rituals for more than a year or two. The Mwinilunga Watch Tower movement, then, developed further than the activities at Solwezi and Kasempa, perhaps as much because in attempting to change the social structure of a village it was not so entangled in the restrictions of indirect rule, as because of differences in ideology or the position of chiefs and missionaries. Yet its very isolation also contributed to the lack of dynamic factors which might have sustained the movement.

2. The Ila Watch Tower Movement

The reception of Watch Tower amongst the Ila in 1934-1935, inherited from the Kaonde to the north-west, provides a fuller picture of the movement as a fully-fledged mcapi movement, which to some extent parallels the occurrences at Mwinilunga. While it was chiefly the poverty-stricken sections of the Ila in the western Namwala district who adopted Watch Tower, its success nevertheless surprised most observers, who regarded the Ila as too backward, too uninterested in white culture, and too stable a society to want to have anything to do with the Watch Tower

movement. 'Though the Missions have been in the district a long time, they have had practically no influence on the Balla', stated a local boma clerk, who had advised the Commissioner that the Ila would reject the Watch Tower. 'They have never taken any of the manners and customs of the various tribes by whom they are surrounded'.[1]

The Ila had indeed earned an early reputation for fierceness by their attacks on European venturers such as F.C. Selous and Emil Holub, and in the early days of company rule were even credited with planning an uprising, thereby causing all the Europeans in the area to withdraw to Broken Hill.[2] Possibly much of this xenophobia derived from the fact that the Ila were among the earliest settled inhabitants of the Zambezi region, and their recent history had been one not of migrations and conquest but of the struggle to maintain a cohesive and settled pastoral society in the face of Kololo, Ndebele, and Mambari invasions - 'mostly a ghastly story of war and rapine', was the comment on Ila nineteenth century history of their ethnographers E.W. Smith and A.M. Dale.[3] Company rule brought an end to the sporadic raiding and regulated the movement of white traders, but did not however materially affect Ila society. Unlike the neighbouring Lozi, the Ila found missionaries of little use in their dealings with crown and company, and their resistance to innovatory change is well demonstrated by their repulse of the Methodist missionaries, who struggled until well

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[1] SEC/NAT/314, Statement by Lamek Banda, 26 Sept. 1935.

[2] For an account of this episode with pictures of the stockade, cf. J.M. Moubray, In Central Africa (1912), pp. 72-82.

[3] E.W. Smith and A.M. Dale, The Ila-speaking Peoples of Northern Rhodesia (1920), i, 22.

into the modern period to gain only a few converts.[1]

Although there may at one time have been a paramount chief, during the colonial period Ila society was organised in a cluster of some 80 communes, ruled by headmen and chiefs, the latter being appointed not so much according to strict kinship rules as 'on the principle of the good of the community'.[2] This democratic quality in traditional political institutions militated against the imposition of indirect rule, which came to be regarded as a failure among the Ila, as they showed no inclination to amalgamate under designated authorities.[3] At the same time the relatively prosperous cattle economy allowed considerable social mobility through the acquisition of cattle wealth; it restricted the necessity of labour migration and thus contributed to the isolation from the currents of thought channelled through the compounds; and it provided a bulwark against the modernising effects of the cash economy (cattle auctions were a post-war phenomenon).[4] Cultivators in the poorer areas were less isolated from the effects of the depression, but nevertheless looked equally in times of crisis to the operation of traditional institutions for the resolution of fears and uncertainties. The position and attitudes of chiefs consequently came to be crucial when the Watch Tower began to gain popularity as a witchcraft eradication movement.

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[1] Cf. A. Baldwin, A Missionary Outpost in Central Africa (1914).

[2] M.A. Jaspan, The Ila-Tonga Peoples of North-Western Rhodesia (1953), p. 36.

[3] SEC/NAT/274, Sec. Nat. Affairs to Chief Sec., 7 Dec. 1931.

[4] Cp. E. Colson, 'The role of cattle ownership among the valley Tonga', Human Problems in British Central Africa, XI, 1951.

Smith and Dale have fortunately provided detailed information concerning witchcraft practices relating to this period. Amongst the wide range of duties of the chief it was explicitly his role to consult with the musonzhi, or diviner, in the interests of ridding the community of supposed witches, individuals through whom the power of evil was believed to work, either unconsciously or malevolently, thus bringing about private quarrels and public calamity. The selection and function of the Ila chief, indeed, was intimately bound up with witchcraft belief in that he acquired the mantle of legitimacy through his possession of musamo, protective charms, which enabled him to stand pre-eminent in the community, and he buttressed his chiefly powers, so it was believed, through the malevolent use of witchcraft powers in the form of musamo wa bulozhi.[1] The chief thus had something of a monopoly of the powers of witchcraft, yet the operation of the anti-witchcraft laws and the attempts to implement indirect rule had increasingly weaned the chiefs away from their responsibilities to the community in this regard.

The institutions of divination and prophecy supplemented this responsibility, and at times surpassed it. The prophets, bashinshimi or baami, may be distinguished from the diviner, musonzhi, who performed merely an oracular role at the inter-personal level, in that they prescribed remedial action at the societal level, and generally were charismatic figures who arose in times of crisis. Smith and Dale go so far as to say of these prophets that 'as the mouthpieces of the divinities, they

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[1] E.W. Smith, 'Inzuikizi', Africa, VIII, 1935, pp. 477-478.

are the legislators of the community'.[1] In the period of the first contacts between the Ila and white invaders a number of such prophets emerged who preached a message of redemption, and of the departure of the white man, suggesting that the indigenous messianic tradition was a strong one. The first recorded instance of these was that of a mwana lesa, or son of God, who aroused great enthusiasm at the time of the rinderpest scourge in 1895 with his vision of an abundance of cattle and grain to come, and who appears to have pre-dated the missionary influence.[2] A subsequent prophet, Chilenga, announced in 1909 that he would eliminate a crop-destroying beetle, and promised to 'turn the sun black for six days, destroy the bridge over the Kafue, tear up the railway, and cause all the Europeans to leave the country.' In order that this should come about people should kill their cattle.[3] Chilenga's preaching enjoyed a brief but destructive success amongst the Ila before he was jailed on a charge of sedition. Even more relevant to the events of the 1930's, perhaps, was the career of Mupumani the leper, whose message denouncing witchcraft was received far beyond the boundaries of Ila country. Mupumani was a notably successful prophet welcomed both by chiefs for his anti-sorcery activities, and at a popular level for sanctioning a move away from widely resented customs such as the mass slaughter of cattle at funeral ceremonies.[4]

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[1] Smith and Dale, The Ila-speaking Peoples, ii, 141.

[2] Diary of Rev. A. Baldwin, 7 Aug. 1895, cited ibid., pp. 146-147.

[3] Smith and Dale, The Ila-speaking Peoples, ii, 143-144.

[4] Ibid., pp. 148-152; cf. also Livingstone Mail, 6 Feb. 1914.

Such prophets and witchcraft eradicators may well have introduced something of the Christian millennial tradition into their remedial prescriptions against hard times, but as with the Lala their role was a traditional one. The subsequent activities of Watch Tower prophets may thus be seen not so much as a radical innovation but as a specific adaptation of an existing institution. Kamboni Wankilongo, the Watch Tower prophet among the Ila, may be compared in this regard with Tomo Nyirenda, the Lala mwana lesa. Just as amongst the Lala, however, those chiefs who welcomed Watch Tower figures as baami found themselves in a difficult position.

Wankilongo, a Kaonde from the Kasempa district, introduced the Watch Tower in an area west of Namwala in mid 1934 as a witchcraft eradication cult, and rapidly achieved a large following. At first the headmen attempted to keep the movement a secret from boma officials, but reports filtered through in November, 1934, and chiefs were immediately called upon to stamp it out. Such was the popular clamour for the Watch Tower, however, that chiefs, anxious to maintain their delicately balanced mediatory role, were forced into duplicity through agreeing to ban the Watch Tower while at the same time secretly sending letters or invitation to Wankilongo.[1] Of the 15 chiefs in Namwala, only 7 responded at all to a circular from the District Commissioner, and only one consistently opposed the Watch Tower and punished all those who joined.[2] An informant, ex-chief Shaaloba, states that few chiefs at the time really approved of the Watch Tower, however,[3] and it was also recorded

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[1] SEC/NAT/312, Encls. 125 and 154, Reports on the Watch Tower Movement in Namwala District, 1934-5.

[2] SEC/NAT/314, D.C., Namwala, to P.C., Lusaka, 28 Mar. 1935.

[3] Interview with Shaaloba, Lusaka, 17-18 May, 1969.

subsequently that

> The attitude of the chiefs over the matter of the Watch Tower has been one of "wobble". Where the Watch Tower people have been, the chiefs have at first tried to carry out the wishes of the government, but public opinion has been too strong for them.[1]

Partly this was because through freeing people from witchcraft fears, the Watch Tower enabled its following to challenge unpopular authority without running the believed risk of chiefly curses, and partly it was because the structure of organisation which accompanied it - despite the traditional nature of its witch-finding - involved a radical departure from the normal course of village life. Where the organisation took root, alternative channels of authority and social norms governed behaviour in such a way that even popular chiefs found their authority eroded. The chiefs themselves refused to be immersed, explained Shaaloba, since they were particularly vulnerable to witchcraft once they had disposed of their protective medicines. Yet villagers demanded the opportunity to submit to Watch Tower baptism, and where a chief banned it, his people were liable to leave in search of the preacher.

By mid 1935, the Watch Tower was widely popular in Ila country between Namwala and Mumbwa, and local traders were reporting a great sale of white calico to be worn by those baptised.[2] Just as with the mcapi movement, the desire to be publicly exorcised was the compelling initial attraction of the Watch Tower. Wankilongo sent his many messengers - locally

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[1] Namwala Boma Arch., Namwala Tour Report, March 1935.

[2] SEC/NAT/314, Statement by Rev. W. Harrison, 26 Sept. 1935.

recruited young men - to summon villagers to a river, bringing all their charms, and after a night of hymn-singing, the immersion ceremony would take place the next morning:

> Each person is taken by the shoulders and pressed down into the pool. Then Kamboni asks God to clear the country of all bad things. If the person went right into the water, everyone shouted "Alleluya!". If the man did not ... they sang "Angels above!". Kamboni asked the person to disclose his medicines not given up during the singing, dipped him again, and allowed him to join the rest. If he still did not dip, Kamboni took a little water in a dish and a Bible in Chingoni and put them on top of the person's head and prayed, "Our Father in heaven, God above, look after your child, and take away all evil from his heart".[1]

An informant who was baptised at the time described the rituals performed over those who would not submerge (or were not allowed to).[2] These candidates were interrogated by makonkosha, investigators, as to whether they had not only submitted all their charms, but had also made full confessions of even minor wrong-doings, such as trampling a neighbour's garden, or killing his dog. This reflects the divinatory aspect of the Watch Tower baptist. Immersion was withheld from those who were popularly suspected of anti-social behaviour, and it was not so much the makonkosha as the surrounding candidates who became the silent accusers. Those from whom final immersion was withheld were set aside on the river bank in chankwakwa, the place of the unclean. Special songs to induce confession were sung over these by Wankilongo's helpers, and those who ultimately would not confess and were not ritually purified by immersion were shunned as siadoma - ritually unclean - and regarded as

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[1] Ibid., Description of a Watch Tower Dipping by Mwambaya of Namoye.

[2] Interview with Eleazar Shimantabe, Lusaka, 17-18 May 1969.

ilomba - snakes and outcasts. The names of those who had been successfully dipped were written down, and tickets marked with a biblical text were issued.[1]

However, such was the nature of the Watch Tower millennial promise which attached to these rites that the ensuing ostracism of the unclean by the dipped went far beyond the normal inter-personal suspicions arising from witchcraft fears. Firstly, there was an element of ambiguity in the promise that led to considerable hostility between the two groups; come the day, it was believed, the unclean would perish, yet their refusal to join also threatened its arrival. A Watch Tower hymn translated by the Namwala Commissioner suggests this relationship between the expected millennium and witchcraft fears:

> We do not want to be unclean when the trumpet sounds,
> When the Day of Judgment comes, those who have not been dipped
> Will bite trees.[2]

Secondly, the millennial dream had an anti-white content which alarmed chiefs and traditionalists, whose minds were far from rebellion. 'First in power were the Matabele, then the Mrosi [Lozi], then the European Government - it is now the turn of the Watch Tower', reported a police informer of the Watch Tower preaching. Hostility towards the missions also was general, exacerbated by the refusal of members at Nanzhila to join the movement.[3] Thirdly, adoption of Watch Tower ideas occurred

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[1] Being asked [after the cleansing of the ten lepers] by the Pharisees when the kingdom of God was coming, he answered them, "The kingdom of God is not coming with signs to be observed; nor will they say, Lo, here it is, or There!, for behold, the kingdom of God is in the midst of you." Luke, xvii, 20-21.

[2] SEC/NAT/314, D.C., Namwala, to P.C., Lusaka, 28 Mar. 1935.

[3] Ibid., Statement by Rev. W. Harrison, 26 Sept. 1935.

particularly amongst young men, women, commoners, and the poor, groups which had an interest in an upheaval in social patterns. Participation in the Watch Tower communities which emerged following on the rites of baptism enabled them to channel their resentment against patriarchs, elders, the rich, chiefs and traditionalists. The impact of the movement was consequently a powerful one, as the Namwala Commissioner noted:

> The general effect of the Watch Tower in this district has been to upset the public tranquillity and it has caused feelings of ill-will and hostility between those who have been dipped and those who have not, and in my opinion is very nearly if not quite seditious. Men dipped refuse to have anything to do with wives undipped. Villagers refuse to mix or visit with those undipped.[1]

As at Mwinilunga, and in distinction to the mcapi, separate communities emerged in which innovations in the conduct of daily life took place which gave a tangible form to the new expectancy. Both traditional activities such as brewing and drinking beer, dancing, and drumming, as well as the non-traditional payment of tax and attendance at mission schools were condemned; Watch Tower villages were maintained in a state of elaborate tidiness; and the repeated accusations of sexual orgies made against the followers probably reflected the emergence of new codes of inter-personal conduct within the Watch Tower groups.

Again one of the striking features was the new mode of burial, which reflected an attempt at Christianising traditional rites. At Chinkuli's village, for example, the touring Commissioner noticed the construction of a new cemetery:

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[1] Ibid.

About ten graves were seen. In all cases they had been made in the middle of carefully cleared and swept places about twenty yards square and several hundred yards from the village. A good wide path usually led to them. The tomb consisted of a rectangular slab of smooth ant-heap with a few steps all round it. A rough wooden cross was erected at one end with words burnt on the crosspiece. In one case they read as follows:- "Christo Matteyo 17, 20: Name: Wankie Longa, I.B.S.A.".[1]

The same informant explained that this new graveyard symbolism was accompanied by new methods of preparing and burying the deceased. The old Ila custom of wrapping the body in skins prior to burial in a foetal position in a deep hole was discarded in favour of a new method which appears to have emphasised the hope of immediate resurrection. The body was buried face upwards in a shallow-stepped grave, resting on logs, while hymns expressing the new hopes were sung:

Nanga tuye tuyee bu salama,
Kazuba ndi ka bala shale ni mutende mayo,
Mayo shale ni mutende mayo kawela.

(Even if we go [die], we go lying on our backs, [facing heaven]
When the sun is hot, remain in peace, mother,
Mother, remain in peace, mother you will come back [be resurrected].)

The centrality of ancestor worship in Ila religious belief may in part explain these actions, as it was considered that neglect of the dead could well be a cause of misfortune, and certainly the idea of the resurrection of the ancestors was one which belonged to the indigenous messianic tradition, and in this respect was an attitude common to other independent religious

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[1] Namwala Boma Archives, Tour Report, June, 1935. Matthew, xvii, 20, reads "...for truly, I say to you, if you have faith as a grain of mustard seed, you will say to this mountain, 'Move hence to yonder place', and it will move; and nothing will be impossible to you." I.B.S.A. was the International Bible Students Association, which published the W.T.B.T.S. material in England.

movements such as the Vapostori among the neighbouring Shona.[1] However, while the Watch Tower was no doubt syncretic, these practices rather suggest a millennial hope of salvation which mark a break with tradition. Just as with the Shona Watch Tower, the idea of purification from witchcraft accompanied hopes for a social renewal. While Ila Watch Tower adherents appear to have sought more than a continuing eradication of witchcraft in the movement, however, there was no clear vision of a transformed society.

Indeed, what was remarkable about the Ila Watch Tower movement was the rapidity with which these communities disappeared. Once a mass movement, it faded within the year, except amongst the poorest people in the western Namwala district. To some extent this may have resulted from the absence of the chief prophet, and the setting in of disillusionment. Wankilongo was jailed for witchcraft offences in mid 1935, and no local prophets arose in his place, while a series of deaths following an immersion in the Lubwe district crowned the failure of expectations, and signalled the demise of popular belief. 'What is known as the Watch Tower movement', the Secretary for Native Affairs was able to report in 1935,

> has made practically no headway in the province, in fact in the Mumbwa district where it was the natives' main preoccupation during 1934, it has to a very large extent died out, its exponents have for the most part vanished, and the activities of its remaining adherents are said to be limited almost entirely to hymn-singing.[2]

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[1] Cp. Marshall W. Murphree, Christianity and the Shona (1969), p. 108.

[2] Northern Rhodesia: Report upon Native Affairs for the year 1935 (Lusaka, 1936), p. 27.

Similar reports were made for Namwala, and the resuscitation of traditional drumming and dancing, once banned by the Watch Tower, was noted. When the official representative of the Jehovah's Witnesses came to visit Mumbwa in August, 1936, enthusiasm had waned to such an extent that only 11 followers appeared to meet him. A Mumbwa headman allowed a Kingdom Hall, the meeting place of the Witnesses, to be built in his village, but otherwise the only permanent feature of the year's Watch Tower enthusiasm was the general relocation of cemeteries, which assisted in the establishment of settled rather than shifting villages.[1]

However, there are further considerations which help to explain why the Watch Tower, having succeeded as a baptising movement, should not have proceeded to the further stage of continuing Watch Tower communities. Primarily, perhaps, this was because the doctrines accompanying the ritual lacked specificity and any detailed elaboration of a new world. Wankilongo's preaching contained neither the ingenious intellectual explanations of a man like Joseph Sibakwe,[2] or the political consciousness of a prophet such as Jeremiah Gondwe.[3] Doubtless this was partly because the desire for literacy was not particularly high amongst the Ila, and W.T.B.T.S. literature not in evidence, and partly because the white presence had made only few inroads into Ila country. Also, as ex-chief Shaaloba stated when trying to explain why so popular a movement should have disappeared so promptly, 'people thought the Watch Tower

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[1] SEC/NAT/314, Mumbwa Tour Report, July, 1935.

[2] Cf. below, pp. 361-362.

[3] Cf. above, pp. 271-284.

was sent by God, but herbs were stronger than Watch Tower ideas'.[1] In other words, traditional forms triumphed over the new vision. For all its Christian elements and forward-looking ideas, the millennial element was grounded in the traditional notion of witchcraft eradication, and this was an insufficient basis for the vision of construction of a new society.

Also, the Ila may be contrasted with the people of the Luapula valley, where returned migrants who could not find satisfactory positions of status, prestige, and accommodation for their new styles of life sought to live in separate communities, legitimated by their adherence to the Watch Tower. For Ila society, where in any event there were very few returned migrants, social advancement within the customary order was more possible. It is significant that it was only amongst the poorest Ila in the western Namwala area that the Watch Tower was really established, and while there is no clear evidence on this point, it is possible that the majority of adherents were cultivators rather than cattle-owners. But generally once the immediate causes of the crisis - and the prophet himself - had disappeared, the capacity for internal social mobility of Ila society helped to remove some of the pressures which might have led to the formation of a sect.

Finally, there is the consideration that even if viewed as a fully-fledged version of the mcapi movement, the response of the Ila to witchcraft eradication differed substantially from the reception of this type of movement by, say, the Bemba.

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[1] Cf. p. 321 , n. 3.

Apart from the factors already discussed, two further points stand out in the light of this comparison. Firstly, it may be argued that like the Lala the Ila were particularly susceptible to the millennial ideas which were attached to witchcraft eradication - in however vague and non-specific a fashion - by virtue of the strong tradition of prophetic movements amongst them, which had periodically occurred. It is significant that no local leaders emerged to develop the movement upon the arrest of Wankilongo, as was frequently the case in other areas of Watch Tower activity, which suggests that Wankilongo, despite the novelty of his techniques, conformed to the role of the baami. And these figures, unlike the religious advisers of the Bemba chiefs, were important political communicators in their own right, through prophecy and prediction. Secondly, like the Bemba chiefs, Ila chiefs recognised the need to cleanse the country of witchcraft, a need which reflected the growing inability of customary institutions to regulate certain types of social conflict. Ila chiefs were insufficiently autocratic, however, to control the upheaval in social relationships which the supra-traditional elements of witch-finding under the auspices of the Watch Tower ideology brought into being amongst certain sections of the Ila. Yet it was perhaps this very democratic quality in Ila institutions which contributed to the demise of the movement. Thus the particular features of Ila social organisation appear to have been crucial determinants in the brief emergence of the Watch Tower movement there.

3. Watch Tower in Barotseland

While the Watch Tower movement west of the line of rail in the 1930's took the form of a witchcraft eradication movement, in Barotseland itself it appeared as an overt movement of protest. The Lozi constituted the power élite of North-Western Rhodesia.[1] They were distinguished from other Zambian peoples both by their complex, hierarchical state system and by their wide-ranging connexions with the white rulers of Southern Africa. The Kololo invasion in the nineteenth century had led to the formation of a conquest state on the upper Zambezi which extended its control over heterogeneous groups of migrants from Angola and the Congo, and had become a centre of ethnic consolidation under the rule of a political bureaucracy based at the paramount chief's capital at Lealui. Under company and then colonial rule, the Lozi attempted to expand this system into a 'sub-imperialism', by tightening their control over the outlying districts such as Mankoya and Balovale. Their accommodation to European rule did not prevent them from continuing attempts to exercise their power and retain control over those they considered as their vassal people.[2]

The southern origin of the Kololo, too, made it possible for David Livingstone to pave the way into Zambezia for a number of missionaries and explorers on his journey to Barotseland in 1853-1856 at the head of a Kololo-speaking deputation.

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[1] Generally, cf. G. Caplan, The Elites of Barotseland (1970).

[2] Cf. T.O. Ranger, 'Nationality and Nationalism: the Case of Barotseland', Journal of the Historical Society of Nigeria, IV, 1968.

Livingstone was followed by F.S. Arnot of the Plymouth Brethren, who moved north, however, to Msidi's capital in the Katanga, and by Francois Coillard of the P.E.M., who stayed to become an influential adviser of Lewanika, the paramount chief, in his dealings with Cecil Rhodes and in negotiations with the conflicting imperial interests of Britain, Germany and Portugal in the area of Lozi hegemony between northern Bechuanaland and south-eastern Angola. Through the mediation of Coillard, Lewanika relinquished to Rhodes the mineral rights of what was to become North-Western Rhodesia, and by 1900 the B.S.A. Co. had taken over the administration of Barotseland.[1] The power of the paramount and the Lozi élite was left at least nominally intact, however, when Barotseland became a protectorate under the crown; and consequently through ceding rights to the B.S.A. Co. outside their own direct sphere of interest, the Lozi remained a powerful, if anomalous, island in the rising tide of European expansion. By virtue of this special position, however, the Lozi reaped the mixed rewards of isolationism.

On the one hand, the indigenous political structure maintained its position during the early colonial period, despite the whittling away of administrative powers - particularly after the accession of the new paramount in 1916[2] - and was an obvious case for the extension of indirect rule in the 1930's, while on the other Barotseland remained a provincial backwater, remote from the benefits, however meagre, which

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[1] Gann, History, pp. 79-81.

[2] Cf. E. Stokes, 'Barotseland: Survival of an African State', in E. Stokes and R. Brown (eds.), The Zambesian Past (1966), pp. 261-301.

accompanied the development of new towns. The Lozi were a modernising bureaucracy, however, and if they sought to restore the power of the Lozi nation they did so - at least in the early period of colonial rule - in a forward-looking way. Thus at an early stage, Lewanika, aided by his connexions with the south, was able to experiment with independent religious movements in an attempt to develop the potentialities of the Lozi nation through the technique of education, first introduced by the missionaries. For Lewanika not only had a low opinion of the Paris mission schools, but also objected to outside control of what he saw as an important modernisinng agency, and so invited a representative of the budding Ethiopian church from South Africa. The success of the Ethiopian church under the Sotho evangelist, Willie Mokalapa, in providing a series of small schools - despite Coillard's protests - at Lealui, indicates the receptivity which the Lozi were prepared to give to such institutions which could dilute colonial authority.[1]

Interestingly, it was in this way that the Lozi first encountered Watch Tower ideas, according to a report by Joseph Booth in 1909:

> King Lenanika [sic] and the Prince Letitia, his son, and their Prime Minister, from 600 miles north of the Pretoria Falls [sic], have sent highly educated Christian representatives for the whole 6 volumes. They wish this message to be fully studied and proclaimed throughout their country, and throughout that of their friends, the Basulu of Basululand [Basutuland].[2]

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[1] T.O. Ranger, 'The Ethiopian Episode in Barotseland 1900-1905', African Social Research, XXXVII, 1965. For the A.M.E.C. in Barotseland, cf. p. 357 below.

[2] Joseph Booth, 'The Good Tidings Spreading in Africa', Zion's Watch Tower, XXX, 13, 1909.

Russell's writings probably had little currency in Barotseland at this time, however. The first two decades of the century saw a concentration on royal family politics among the Lozi, to the exclusion of these more radical, Africanist currents; and although there was a fair emigration to the mines of the Rand and Southern Rhodesia - indeed in 1923 'a considerable number of Barotse natives were baptised into the Watch Tower', according to the Wankie Commissioner[1] - it was the A.M.E.C. which recommended itself to the paramount. The establishment of the Barotse national school was also an important factor in providing a channel for the aspirations of the mission trained. In the 1920's, when Watch Tower was making rapid strides in many other parts of the country, some 4,000 children were in attendance, and despite a special enquiry, there appeared to be no trace of Watch Tower teaching at all in Barotseland.[2] Missionaries and sympathetic administrators, moreover, joined in favouring the Lozi at the expense of their subjects, particularly those in the remote north and to the west of the Zambezi. Thus when the second wave of religious independency occurred in Barotseland it was directed against the Lozi rather than by them, and was not so much a sophisticated exercise in foreign policy, as a vehicle for the defiance of Lozi rule by these neglected subjects.

By the early 1930's, the Lozi dream of modernisation was beginning to fade, and the constituent parts of their empire began to slip from their grasp. Isolationism had not only

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[1] R. Arch., S235/501, Annual Report for Wankie, 1923.

[2] KDE 2/16/3, Report on the Watch Tower in Barotseland, 1926-1928.

delayed social and economic change, but had also created conditions of resentment against Lozi rule amongst the Luchazi, Mbunda and Chokwe (the Wiko, or westerners, as they were termed by the Lozi) and by the Lunda, and the Luvale, such that the growing disputes led to the intervention of the Colonial Office and the substantial dismemberment of the old empire in the early 1940's.[1] The basis of much of this hostility in the 1930's was the change in trade relationships between agriculturalists and pastoralists, and between the central Lozi and the outlying provinces, consequent upon the increasing rate of migrant labour and the introduction of the cash economy. Traditionally, cultivators in the Barotse valley had acquired favourable terms of trade for their produce, and a certain status vis-à-vis the cattle-owners, but with the settlement of Europeans on the edge of the plain, the Lozi increasingly established 'margin' gardens themselves to exploit this new market, to the detriment of the valley producers.[2] Moreover, with the introduction of indirect rule, the system of money taxation replaced more fully than previously the system of tribute in kind and unpaid labour, which was in any event frowned on by the administration. Whereas tribute had previously at least brought gifts from the capital, however, the benefits of government were increasingly felt by the vassal people to be limited to the central Lozi area, as taxation replaced the traditional system.

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[1] Gann, History, pp. 297-298.

[2] M. Gluckman, 'The Economy of the Central Barotse Plain', Rhodes-Livingstone Papers, VII, 1941.

For the Lunda and Luvale, the attempts made by the Lozi to consolidate their rule by the erection of a khotla, or court, at Balovale in 1932 served as a starting point for a series of protests, led by Lunda and Luvale chiefs, over the Lozi control of fishing, hunting and land rights, and the supersession of their tribal customs, which ultimately led to the removal of the Lunda and Luvale from Barotse rule in 1941. For the Wiko, however, who had become 'Lozi-ised' through inter-marriage, there were no such means of channelling their protest. The migration of these people from the west had been dictated not only by the gravitational pull of the settler economies of the Rhodesias - as 'part of the general drift of peoples towards the central railway line which forms the back-bone of modern Central Africa'[1] - but may also be seen in the broader historical context of the southward and eastward expansion of the Lunda and Luba peoples. More immediately, however, main waves of migration had taken place during the 1920's as a result of the Luchazi-Mbunda rising in Angola and the Chokwe attack on Vila Luozo (Moxico). These resulted in Portuguese reprisals which, as was the case with the Nsenga in Mozambique, drove many into British territory.[2]

In Barotseland, the Wiko accepted Lozi overlordship, learnt Silozi, and acquiesced in the replacement of the formal powers of their chiefs by Lozi induna, or resident administrators.

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[1] M. Gluckman, 'The Lozi of Barotseland in North-Western Rhodesia', in M. Gluckman and E. Colson (eds.), Seven Tribes of British Central Africa (1951), p. 6.

[2] M. McCulloch, The Southern Lunda and Related Peoples (Ethnographic Survey, I.A.I., 1951), pp. 14, 34.

Nevertheless, they maintained much of their tribal identity and customs, despite considerable inter-marriage, by living in coherent family groups rather than in scattered settlements. This was not only a natural consequence of their immigrant status, but also a system of residence favoured by the Lozi, as centralisation facilitated their control. It may be noted that while Lozi public law was enforced, the induna's courts were rarely used for regulating domestic matters. Indeed, the Lozi regarded the Wiko with some contempt, while accepting them as common subjects of the paramount.[1] Thus the Wiko, following on their experience of the harshness of Portuguese rule against which many had rebelled, found themselves living under a system of native imperialism without even the benefits of their own traditional leadership. The extension of more formal powers to the Lozi political élite in the early 1930's, and the inroads which the cash economy made on what little security and prestige the predominantly agriculturalist Wiko had, led to a critical situation for them. Consequently when Watch Tower ideas were introduced into Barotseland, its revolutionary millenialist ideology made a direct appeal to the Wiko, as well as to the poorer Luvale peasants, and it mobilised them not so much against the whites as against the more visible rulers, the Lozi.

The first Watch Tower preacher in Barotseland was Joseph Mulemwa, himself a Lozi, a striking figure with long hair, a gold-topped cane, and a Bible, who at first concentrated his preaching in the evangelised area around Mongu. He achieved some success, and by November, 1931, rumours were prevalent

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[1] Ibid.

that liberating Americans were on their way, who would beat all those who did not join the Watch Tower. There was no mention of any witch-finding. Those who responded at this stage - at Ikabako, Sefula and Mabumbu - seem predominantly to have been those who were excluded from the mission stations at these villages. The attention of the Paris missionaries was drawn by Chief Sikwa, himself a Christian, of Ikabako, who demanded that they and the Barotse Council intervene lest he and his church fall into disrepute. Adolphe Jalla of the P.E.M. sought out Mulemwa, and after a long interview with him and his followers came to the conclusion that these notions and the slander of the missions did not arise with him, and that what was being preached was the Christian gospel of love, hospitality and the return of the Lord:

> Nous nous sépârâmes en bons termes. Il dit qu'il priait pour moi, je lui dis que je le fais pour lui. Je crois à la sincérité de cet homme qui sent que Dieu lui a donné un message et qu'il doit le proclamer.[1]

This is interesting evidence that initially at least Mulemwa was not concerned with preaching a revolutionary message; indeed for many the appeal of the Watch Tower was that it appeared to be a new and more liberal mission - the movement was known under the name Keleki ya Mulemwa, Mulemwa's church, rather than as Watch Tower - at a time when a drastic cutback in credit had forced the P.E.M. to close some outstations and reduce its intake, and there were murmurings even among loyal mission followers, notably at Sefula and Mabumbu, that perhaps the Watch Tower was a better bet after all.[2]

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[1] Adolphe Jalla, 'La Réligion de Mulemwa', Journal des Missions, V, 3, 1932, pp. 84-85; cf. also Mme. Mercoiret-Besson, 'Chrétiens Egarés', ibid., pp. 205-206.

[2] Ibid., pp. 560-561, 570; also 'Rapport Annuel de la Mission du Zambèze, 1932-1933', Journal des Missions, VI, 4, 1933, pp. 631-632.

However when Mulemwa extended his preaching into northern Barotseland early in 1932 he attracted a following who interpreted the message in a very different way from those deprived of the benefits of mission work. 'The followers of Mulemwa', noted a touring Commissioner, 'are recent immigrants from Portuguese West Africa between whom and the more settled people there is a little feeling'.[1] In response to this new popular appeal, Mulemwa offered a far more radical prescription:

> I have come to abolish everything. There will be no more taxation, nor carrying work, no more arrests, no more dying. Everybody will be baptised at the Jordan river.[2]

It has been argued that taxation was resented by the Wiko on the grounds that it was a subsidy of the Lozi bureaucracy which offered little in return. Transport work and law enforcement were similarly also under the direction of the Lozi, rather than of the District Commissioners. Such was the enthusiasm for Mulemwa's millennial claims that cattle were killed and crops torn up in the expectation of a new dispensation where the power of the Lozi, the missionaries, and the boma would be of no account. In September, 1932, Mulemwa was summoned to appear before the Barotse council in Lealui, and arrived, to the alarm of the paramount, with 300 followers, shouting their grievances, and was subsequently jailed for sedition.[3]

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[1] SEC/NAT/312, Barotseland Tour Report, January 1932.

[2] Ibid., and SEC/NAT/393, Report of the Trial of Mulemwa, 1932.

[3] Ibid.

Out of Mulemwa's fervent millennial preaching, however, there arose a more direct revolutionary Watch Tower ideology which seems to have been taken up by a number of local leaders, chief of whom were Josias Nyanga and Nalungwana. The first stage of Nalungwana's career before he, too, was jailed for sedition was equally short-lived, but it is clear that the emphasis had now changed from doctrines regarding the end of the world to those which described and identified the enemy. Preaching largely to the poorer peasants in the Balovale district, Nalungwana dwelt particularly on the ill-treatment of villagers by oppressive authorities, the local headman and the District Commissioner, who were styled satani, or devils, and called on his followers to knock down the jail and burn the khotla.[1] Any such attempts were foiled by the speedy arrest of Nalungwana, however, and the movement died down in his absence. But on his release from jail in 1934, Nalungwana returned 'more astute and wary' to the south-east Mongu-Lealui district, where by August, 1935, the movement was reported to have reached mass proportions among the Wiko and Luvale, and a local headman was forcibly deposed by the converts.[2] With variations of emphasis, the central theme of opposition to the Lozi and their supporters, the missionaries and the boma, spread through Barotseland in 1935. The Watch Tower preachers appear all to have been local men, and it is likely that the activity of many of them in the remoter areas went unrecorded. The ideology which emerged among the Wiko and Luvale nevertheless successfully mobilised a large number

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[1] ZA 1/9/62/1, D.C., Lealui, to P.C., Mongu, 4 Oct. 1934.

[2] SEC/NAT/312, Watch Tower in Barotseland, 1935.

to express their resentment against the Lozi rulers. Some of the ideas current among the Watch Tower adherents appear in the Secretary for Native Affairs' report on the repression of the movement which followed this spread:

> By the rigorous action of the local khotla's and chiefs the propagandists were expelled from the Mankoya and Sesheke districts, while in Senanga and Mongu-Lealui, where they were more noxious than elsewhere, their activities have been successfully repressed. In the latter district they advocated passive resistance to the local laws, in Senanga they preached the familiar crusade against the missions, and at Mankoya they advanced the argument that the withdrawal of South African silver presaged the advent of American negroes. A local flavour was given to their discourse when it was asserted that Armageddon, which was declared to be imminent, would quickly obliterate the Paramount Chief.[1]

It may be remarked that witch-finding played no part in Watch Tower activities in Barotseland, although an outbreak of witch-killings had taken place in the Balovale district while mwana lesa was active amongst the Lala. In 1934 a mcapi witch-finder, one Petulo, a Chewa from Nyasaland, used baptism as a trial by immersion to point out three witches at Kambole village, Balovale, and divined 'with the aid of a small magnifying glass and a Bible'. Although Petulo expressed certain Watch Tower ideas such as forbidding traditional dancing, as well as using their techniques, he made no mention of local grievances, and the transience of his success was marked compared with the Watch Tower notions of resistance and rejection of local authority, which persisted despite the repression.[2]

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[1] Northern Rhodesia: Annual Report upon Native Affairs for the year 1935 (Lusaka, 1936), p. 83.

[2] ZA 1/9/62/1, Rex v. Petulo (45 of 1934, Balovale).

Indeed, the continuing adoption of an expressive, politico-religious language by the Wiko to formulate their opposition to the Lozi aristocracy led to a reaction which called into question the balance of power between the central government and the paramount. In spite of the policy of tolerance and the moves towards recognition of the movement, the District Commissioners at Lealui and Mongu supported the Lozi in their attempts to eradicate the Watch Tower. While there was sympathy from the administration for the position of the Lunda and Luvale, whose protests were communicated along the orthodox channels of deputations of chiefs, there was no such recognition for the claims of the Wiko and of the poorer Lozi, too, who, with the growing cleavage between aristocracy and commoners and the absence of traditional leadership, turned to the Watch Tower as an alternative mode of expressing their opposition. Consequently when Yeta III, who saw the Watch Tower as a direct challenge to the jealously guarded authority and unity of the Lozi aristocracy, took steps to stamp it out, these were permitted by _boma_ officials. Yeta not only outlawed Watch Tower preaching generally, but also issued an order:

> _Indunas_ into whose areas Watch Tower preachers come and preach are empowered to remove them. If they do not do so, they are liable to be fined £2 by the _Khotla_.[1]

This order recognised that some _induna_ had bowed to the popular demand to join the _keleki ya Mulemwa_. By forcing the _induna_ to challenge a populist movement, however, the paramount chief not only ran counter to the policy of watchful tolerance

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[1] SEC/NAT/317, _Khotla_ Ordinance 18 of 1935.

but also raised the whole question of the relationship of native authorities to the people, at a time when the Barotseland Native Authority Ordinance was extending, albeit cautiously, new judicial and local powers to chiefs and headmen. The local District Commissioners connived at this, however; and it was not until the official representative of the W.T.B.T.S. in Lusaka, L.V. Phillips, called attention to the repression of Watch Tower followers in 1936 that the matter came to the attention of the central government.[1] Although the situation of the Watch Tower in Barotseland by this stage is not entirely clear, it would seem to reflect the variety of the stages through which the movement had passed. The P.E.M. noted that it was still an obstructive influence to them around Mongu, and separate communities may well have developed there, although the influence of the keleki ya Mulemwa was fading.[2] The Sesheke and Kalabo districts were reported to be entirely free, and it was not until the 1940's that the movement reached these outposts, while in Balovale and Mankoya the only reported activity was hymn-singing, and the adherents were mainly women. Around Senanga, however, groups of Wiko had established Watch Tower communities which, while still independent of the Jehovah's Witnesses who were by this time organising along the line of rail, nevertheless were in receipt of their literature, and were not clearly distinguished from them by contemporary observers.[3] Indeed, it was the claims of the Wiko Watch Tower

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[1] Ibid.; cf. also 'A Pathetic Letter from One Oppressed', 17 Oct. 1935, in The Golden Age (sub-titled 'Roman Catholic Watch Tower in Northern Rhodesia'), (W.T.B.T.S., Brooklyn, New York), January, 1936. On Phillips, cf. pp. 389-392.

[2] Rapport Annuel de la Mission du Zambèze, 1934-1935, Journal des Missions, V, 6, 1935, pp. 688-689.

[3] SEC/NAT/317, Report on the Watch Tower in Barotseland, 1937.

to belong to a broader movement that enabled them to continue the defiance of the Lozi chiefs, through enlisting the support of L.V. Phillips.

Early in 1937, Chief Mwanawina of Mankoya arrested 48 followers for breaking the khotla law against preaching, encouraged to do so no doubt by the waning popularity of the movement. However, at this time, Fred Kabombo - an early Luapulan convert who, was very active on the copperbelt[1] - was touring Barotseland to find out what was happening to the Watch Tower followers. His report to Phillips led to an agitation over Mwanawina's actions which brought the matter to the attention of the Executive Council, which in June, 1938, required Yeta's order to be revoked. It was usual that Barotse law and custom, except where repugnant to morality or justice, be allowed to stand; the Council's action appears to have arisen more out of sympathy for Wiko political aspirations, however, than in deference to the spirit of religious tolerance. Nevertheless, the chiefs maintained their position by passing a new law requiring that permission be obtained to hold public meetings, and under this ordinance the ceremonies of the small Watch Tower groups were finally outlawed in March, 1940. The government objected, but the chiefs stood firm, arguing that the Watch Tower demands were not religious in the sense they understood it - Phillips' latest representative, one Masumbu Kayunyi, did not know what the real nature of the local Watch Tower was, was 'not a European, baptised too readily, and provided no education'. The real grievance, however, was that

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[1] Cf. pp. 294, 387.

the Wiko were using their membership in defence of their refusal to give the traditional royal salute by way of bowing and handclapping. Once again Phillips protested to the Secretary for Native Affairs, stating that

> No true Christian can indulge in the practice of bowing down or falling down on the knees accompanied by handclapping, or crawling on the ground like a lame dog, striking himself on the buttocks, or otherwise grovel at the feet of another creature.[1]

Phillips also sought an audience with the paramount dief, and explained his attempts to bring the independent Watch Tower following within the fold of the Jehovah's Witnesses. The paramount, realising that the quietism and discipline of the Witnesses did not extend to the keleki ya Mulemwa, and that Phillips was by no means au fait with the political nature of the Wiko opposition, reiterated the ban, and the Executive Council decided not to interfere, since with the onset of war the pacifist tone of the Jehovah's Witnesses had brought them once more into strong disfavour. Consequently it was not until the general proscription on tracts and pamphlets published by the Scciety was lifted after the war that the activities of the Watch Tower were again officially tolerated in Barotseland.[2]

Independent Watch Tower preaching continued amongst the Wiko, however, throughout the war years, and the new grievances of war measures caused the movement to spread to the western boundary of Barotseland. In March, 1944, matters came to a head in the Kalabo district when Wiko adherents preached against

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[1] SEC/NAT/318, L.V. Phillips to Sec. Nat. Affairs, 11 Mar. 1938.

[2] SEC/NAT/317, Report onm the Watch Tower in Barotseland, 1945.

the collection of wild rubber, which was imposed under the direction of the induna in order to assist the war effort. The induna were insulted and abused, and their attempts to fine the adherents were forcibly resisted. The chiefs consequently attempted a final solution of this continued flouting of their authority by denying the Wiko land rights, thereby ensuring that they would have to leave Barotseland. But once again, however, the Wiko Watch Tower followers were able to use the offices of one Moffat Simbamba, a member of the Lusaka Jehovah's Witnesses, to invite the successful intervention of Phillips at a higher administrative level against the chiefs' proposal.[1]

The Watch Tower movement amongst the Wiko was thus instrumental in developing their political consciousness, in that it provided the language and ideas in which protest against Lozi rule could be expressed. It was an important predisposing factor that they were recent immigrants in Barotseland, who had been unsettled not only by the difficulties of re-establishing their communities under the control of the indunas, but also by the rebellions against Portuguese rule in eastern Angola which had accelerated their migration. Their situation was made particularly difficult in the early 1930's by the combined effects of Lozi attempts to consolidate their rule under the new policies extending indirect rule to them, and of the consequences of the depression. The prophet, Mulemwa, brought the millennial vision to the Wiko, but it was local men who sprang up in his footsteps to elaborate a mobilising ideology and

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[1] Ibid.

provide the organisation for the continuing operation of the movement. The goal of the movement was not the control of witchcraft, but independence from the Lozi, in the way in which the Lunda and Luvale, by very different means, had achieved it. In this, of course, it was not successful. But adherence to Watch Tower ideas and institutions did lead to the expression of protest against Lozi rule and forced labour practices lasting over a decade or more, which brought the dispute to the attention of N.R.G., and called into question the nature of the powers which the Lozi enjoyed.

Looking at North-Western Rhodesia as a whole, it is clear that the economic depression was signally important in preparing the ground for the extension of social movements there. Pressure for change had been building up slowly before this - although much less rapidly than in the rural areas east of the line of rail - but the sudden intensification of a variety of factors led to a situation where both Watch Tower prophets and mcapi diviners were welcomed. The desire for an effective means of controlling witchcraft, held to be responsible for social conflict and tension, was widespread throughout North-Western Rhodesia in the early 1930's.

It would appear that in this regard the Watch Tower movement took over where the farthest tide of the mcapi movement, spreading from the east, began to ebb. There was not only a geographical dividing line between them, however. The mcapi men appealed particularly to the chiefs and tribesmen with little experience of literacy or mission Christianity; they were rehabilitatory rather than socially revolutionary;

and despite the modernisation of customary techniques their movement lacked an ideological content. Conditions were particularly favourable for them where traditional institutions had remained relatively intact, and there had been only a trickle of labour migration. The Watch Tower movement was often confused with mcapi as their techniques of divination were not dissimilar, but witchcraft eradication under its auspices seems particularly to have occurred amongst fragmented or loosely politically structured societies. Also, the isolation of the area generally meant that even if chiefs were not particularly powerful, nevertheless they were effective, in the sense that tribal custom reasserted itself once the initial excitement over the new movement had died down. The scarcity of missions which might have popularised elementary biblical concepts, the low level if not indeed the absence of literacy, and the remoteness of this part of the country from the usual routes of migration, all militated against the acceptance of the millennial vision. Where communities of adherents did emerge, their solidarity seems to have been engendered by an attempt to maintain a state of ritual purity rather than through any common revolutionary, millennial aims.

The Ila proved an exception to this general pattern, in that certain millennial concepts were associated with freedom from witchcraft fears in the Watch Tower communities amongst them. It has been argued that their own strong messianic tradition helps to explain their readiness to respond to Watch Tower prophecies in this way. But generally witchcraft eradication, although the conditions for its operation were

created by economic and social crises, was not a movement of revolutionary millennial protest.

In Barotseland the Watch Tower movement provided the radical vision which served as a mobilising agency for the Wiko and elements of the depressed Lozi and Luvale people to stage a millennial revolt against the power of the khotla. The confrontation with a ruling authority which the movement engendered was closer in nature to the operation of the movement in rural areas outside North-Western Rhodesia, but this was not the normal black against white or implicitly pan-Africanist ideological perspective which developed amongst the Tonga, Shona, Mambwe-Lungu, and Luapulan adherents, or amongst those in the eastern province. It is particularly interesting in fact that despite the origins of the movement as an ideology expressly designed to further the idea of Africa for the Africans in its Kamwanaist stage, it should have been capable of adaption in an inter-African context. From this point of view, the Wiko Watch Tower movement bears comparison with the Nyabingi movement in eastern Uganda with which it was more or less contemporary.[1] As with Nyabingi, the Wiko Watch Tower developed in a context in which a fragmented and subordinated people of no great ethnic homogeneity sought to resist the oppression of a rigid bureaucratic state, which permitted them no political mobility within it. Thus it would be inaccurate to state that the political thrust of

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[1] Cf. J.E.T. Philipps, 'The Nabingi: An Anti-European Secret Society in Africa in British Ruanda, Ndorwa and the Congo (Kivu)', Congo, IX, 1928; and E. Hopkins, 'The Nyabingi cult of Southwestern Uganda', in R.I. Rotberg and A. Mazrui (eds.), Protest and Power in Black Africa (New York, 1970).

the Watch Tower movement was entirely an anti-white one: since political cleavages ran predominantly along racial lines, it was of course chiefly this, but more importantly, perhaps, it was a movement of the oppressed, and this was a category which included not only racial groups but sub-national entities and emerging classes as well.

CHAPTER VIII

NORTHERN RHODESIA: THE URBAN WATCH TOWER MOVEMENT, 1930-1945

1. The W.T.B.T.S. and the African Watch Tower Church

2. The Copperbelt Disturbances and the Aftermath

1. The W.T.B.T.S. and the African Watch Tower Church

The end of the 1920's in Northern Rhodesia was a period which marked the watershed between its early days as a farming colony on the furthest frontier of European expansion north from the Cape, and its beginnings as a mining colony. The rapid development of towns and service industries along the line of rail and the copperbelt, and the flood of new settlers, transformed the railway belt into a conurbation which dominated the rest of the colony. From this time, it was increasingly urban rather than rural problems which exercised the administration, and as regards native policy, this meant coming to terms with the reality of an urban African population settled in all the major centres.

The slump, coming only a few years after the major phase of mining development, revealed clearly the existence of Africans who regarded the urban compound rather than the village as their homes. Between 1930 and 1932, employment on the mines was cut from 30,000 to 7,000, and the departure of over a third of the European settler population in the years 1930-1935 also drastically reduced employment opportunities in domestic and agricultural service.[1] As has been stated, the wave of returning migrants which hit the countryside in this period was most important in reawakening interest in the Watch Tower movement, and indeed it was widely believed that this was the major, if not the sole cause of the resuscitation of the movement in the

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[1] Northern Rhodesia: Leg. Co. Debates, 15 Feb. 1932 et seq.

Luapula valley and North-Western Rhodesia.[1] But many of the unemployed chose to stay in the towns. For many, their village economies had stagnated with the withdrawal of male labour; some had their families in town, usually in an illegal squatter compound; and the crowded compounds, such as the notorious Ndola compound and the Maramba compound in Livingstone, had replaced the village as the focal point of community living.[2] Just as in Southern Rhodesia, a regrouping of African religious associations took place in these urban shanties at this time, which particularly affected the Watch Tower movement.

Just as in the rural areas, the urban movement was moving into a new phase, after lying dormant for a few years following the mwana lesa affair.[3] In 1931 the W.T.B.T.S., having changed their name to Jehovah's Witnesses, in order to distinguish the members from the many minor movements which had splintered from it after the death of Charles Russell, began a new drive for expansion under the leadership of Joseph Rutherford.[4] Rutherford, somewhat in the manner of Russell with his Studies in the Scriptures, published a lengthy work entitled Vindication - a study of the books of Ezekiel, Zechariah, and Haggai - and shorter works on the books of Ruth and Esther, Light, and Preservation, in which he publicised his own version of the millennial theocracy to come.[5] These formed the basis of a

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[1] Cf. above, pp. 288, 292, 300, 304; also SEC/NAT/312, D.C., Kawambwa, to P.C., Fort Rosebery, 6 June 1931. Unless otherwise stated all files referred to in this chapter are in the Zambian National Archives.

[2] Cf. Report of the Government Unemployment Committee, 1932 (Lusaka, 1933).

[3] Cf. above, pp. 240-266.

[4] A. Rogerson, Millions Now Living Will Never Die (1969), pp. 56-57.

[5] J.F. Rutherford, Vindication (W.T.B.T.S., Brooklyn, New York), 3 vols., 1931-1932; Light, 2 vols., 1930; Preservation, 1932.

renewed outpouring of literature in the form of cheap pamphlets, magazines and annotated Bibles, which spread to many parts of the world, if the rapidly mounting statistics in the W.T.B.T.S. annual yearbooks for the period 1931-1937 may be relied on.[1] A new organisational impetus came to the W.T.B.T.S. in South Africa with new personnel and a hierarchical bureaucratic structure replacing the old system of congregations.[2] This renewed activity had an important influence in stimulating the African Watch Tower movement in the urban centres of central Africa, whose relationship with the official sect remained a floating and ambiguous one, to establish the movement on a wider footing. The extension of links between urban African Watch Tower groups, both across the country and with the W.T.B.T.S., and the quietist ideology which most displayed, led once again to renewed pressure for the official recognition of the movement. The new policies concerning African education and rule which were being considered at this time, the rural movements under independent prophets, and stereotyped thinking about independent African religions, all affected the decision whether or not to attempt to bring the Watch Tower movement to heel by allowing European control. Thus one of the main concerns affecting the development of the Watch Tower in the urban centres in the 1930's was the degree to which it was not only tolerated, but officially recognised.

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[1] Annual Yearbook of Jehovah's Witnesses, (W.T.B.T.S., Brooklyn, New York), 1931-1937, statistical appendices.

[2] Rogerson, loc. cit.

In the urban centres south of the copperbelt, an indigenous African Watch Tower church was being organised which may be clearly distinguished from the Watch Tower movements which continued to exercise influence in the rural areas. While these groups did still serve as the base for individuals who chose to spread a gospel of millennial rebellion in nearby rural localities, primarily they were carrying out a significantly different social function from the prophetic movements among the settled migrants of the towns. This was the organisation of a movement of prayer, Bible study, and worship with a branch structure linking communities in different centres, whose corporate composition suggests that it was very much an ecclesiastical movement. A large number of the active members were Nyasa migrants, who occupied most of the responsible jobs open to Africans at the time, although local migrants, particularly Luapulans, were becoming increasingly prominent in this.

A clear example of the attempts being made at this time to achieve a new, respectable status for a Watch Tower church was the approach made to the District Commissioner at Mazabuka in August, 1931, by Benali Banda and Salumo Banda from Nyasaland, Harry Ngarandi Chilonga, an Nsenga from Petauke, and three local elders of the Watch Tower, for preaching certificates. They gave an undertaking to obey both chiefs and the boma, and described their proposed activity:

> And we are not like those of the past, who were preaching to the people bad things, in the years 1924 and 1925. But we have started in 1923 up to this year 1931, and please, sirs, we let you know about our preaching, we say: "Every Christian should not steal or commit adultery or use by means of witchcraft any medicine or poison to kill people - it is a bad thing.... Also that

> Christians should not drink beer to be drunk or make quarrels or marry two wives, such things are bad.... And that this teaching is all over Southern Rhodesia, Nyasaland, and here in Northern Rhodesia..."[1]

These preachers had similar origins to the more fervent prophets: Benali Banda, originally from Lilongwe, was a boss-boy at Wankie, Chilonga had been active at Shamva and at Petauke in 1925, and Salumo Banda, also from Wankie, had a following of 40 in the Maramba compound at Livingstone where Lot Mumbi was also a preacher.[2] While certain anti-witchcraft elements are still apparent, the anti-European part of the doctrine was screened out by the urban preachers. Although permission was withheld, the application was noted with sympathy.

In part, this new sympathy was based on the assessment by the newly appointed Director of Native Education of the record of other independent African churches which the urban Watch Tower was growing to resemble.[3] In the early 1920's such groupings as the Ethiopian Catholic Church in Zion (E.C.C.Z.), for example, were regarded with deep suspicion. The leader of the E.C.C.Z., George Bernard Shaw Kumwembe, a Yao from Zomba employed by the D.R.C. as an evangelist in their Lusaka school, had attracted a number of the early followers of Kamwana to his church, although most educated Nyasas shunned Kumwembe, 'remembering Elliott Kamwana's trouble in [Tonga] country, and also John Chilembwe's trouble in the Yao's country'.[4] Operations of the E.C.C.Z. ceased in 1922 owing to the hostility of these

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[1]KDB 1/5/11, Report of the C.I.D., Livingstone, 13 Jan. 1932.

[2]ACC 57/5, Report on the Control of African Preachers, 1931.

[3]SEC/NAT/312, Director of Native Education, Mazabuka, to Chief Sec., 15 Aug. 1931.

[4]B 1/1/A/499, Report on the E.C.C.Z., December, 1921.

Nyasa D.R.C. converts, and Kumwembe returned to the south where the church, under the American negro leader John George Phillips and the Sotho 'archbishop', S.J. Brander, was more freely tolerated. The attempts to establish a church of the Zion Apostolic Church by Samuel Moyo at Fort Jameson in 1922 met a similar fate.[1] However, the example of the African Methodist Episcopal Church (A.M.E.C.) and the new Apostolic Church, which were not strictly speaking breakaway churches, eventually convinced the administration that not all African initiatives towards religious independency were necessarily subversive.

Hancock Phiri, from Kasungu in Nyasaland - where the A.M.E.C. was officially recognised - applied in November, 1925, to build a church for the A.M.E.C. at Chilepa, Fort Jameson, but permission was refused on the grounds of the large Watch Tower following in the Kunda reserve, and the suspicion of Garveyism which attached to the A.M.E.C.[2] The first successful initiative of the A.M.E.C. in Northern Rhodesia came not from Nyasaland, however, but from Southern Rhodesia where it had been established since 1902.[3] Z.C. Mtshwelo visited Barotse-land from Bulawayo in 1930, by invitation of Lewanika, the paramount chief, claimed a following of 400, and largely on the grounds of Lewanika's invitation to establish the church in Barotseland, secured administrative approval. In 1931 the A.M.E.C. opened a branch in Ndola, under the leadership of

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[1] Ibid.

[2] ZA 1/9/1/1, Report on the A.M.E.C., 1932.

[3] Cf. R. Arch., NB 4/1/1, C.N.C. to all N.C.'s, 7 April 1903.

Ernest Muwamba, and soon spread to Livingstone and Broken Hill, where Hanock Phiri became leader in 1933.[1] The A.M.E.C. was joined by the New Apostolic Church, under the leadership of a Ngoni from Livingstonia, George Henwood, which was also active in the Maramba compound in Livingstone, and both groups received the approval of the Secretary of Native Affairs, J. Moffat Thomson, who saw in these movements a harmless answer to African desires for religious independency and prestige, and a possible counterweight to mission Christianity.[2]

The similarity of these churches to the urban Watch Tower groups was clearly demonstrated by the mushroom growth in the Maramba compound of the New Apostolic Watch Tower Church, which drew its following both from Salumo Banda's Watch Tower adherents and from Henwood's following.[3] This itself soon foundered as well, following disputes over positions of office and money. It seems indeed as if an inherent limiting factor on the ability of such groups to expand was the scarcity of resources which they might dispose of. Those attracted to the urban Watch Tower sought particularly for literacy and positions of office, and these desires led to a willingness to turn towards the W.T.B.T.S. This in itself was a further cause of schism, as is revealed by a further split in the Watch Tower group in the Maramba compound, between those who sought after European control and began to call themselves Jehovah's Witnesses - described by the C.I.D. as 'of the houseboy type' -

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[1] ZA 1/9/1/1, S.N.A. to Chief Sec., 2 Feb. 1933.

[2] Northern Rhodesia: Report upon Native Affairs for the year 1930, p. 29.

[3] KDB 1/5/11, Report of the C.I.D., Livingstone, 9 July 1932.

and those who refused to change the name or send money to Cape Town.[1]

Kamwana himself, in exile at South Mahe in the Seychelles, was not unaware of the new directions being followed by some Watch Tower adherents. In a letter to Harry Chilonga in 1935 - which incidentally shows that correspondence was flowing both ways between Kamwana and his followers in central Africa - he called on Chilonga to join the W.T.B.T.S., and to cease from confronting chiefs and magistrates, and instructed him: 'Do not preach in the old way because it is finished'.[2] Kamwana was in receipt of Nyanja tracts from the W.T.B.T.S. resident in Zomba, R.A. McLuckie; while Kamwana later demonstrated his independence from the Jehovah's Witnesses by founding the Watchman Healing Mission, it is nevertheless significant that he should encourage the respectable elements in this way.

The W.T.B.T.S. in Cape Town, indeed, was now undertaking a considerable campaign to re-establish itself in the Rhodesias. Two Europeans, R.V. Snashall and J. Nisbett, toured the southern line of rail before being deported, while the free despatch of literature, notably the Nyanja booklet Mbendera Ya Anthu (The Voice of the People), and the wide distribution of letters calling for a special effort to all those known to be associated with the Watch Tower, including such people as Hanoc Sindano, was undertaken.[3] In 1931 an application by one Nehemiah Mumba

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[1] ZA 1/9/62/1, C.I.D., Livingstone, to C.I.D., Lusaka, 5 Nov. 1934.

[2] SEC/NAT/312, Elliott Achirwa to D.H.N. Chilonga, 26 Feb. 1935, encl. in D.C., Petauke, to P.C., Fort Jameson, 15 May 1935. For further letters from Kamwana to his followers in Northern Rhodesia, containing standard W.T.B.T.S. propaganda, see SEC/NAT/313, five enclosures from the Governor, Seychelles, variously dated November-December 1934.

[3] SEC/NAT/312, Report on the Watch Tower Movement, Lusaka, 1932.

for permission to preach the Watch Tower in Lusaka revealed to the District Commissioner the growing extent of this organisation: 'Once a quarter I write a report to Cape Town headquarters', explained Mumba, 'and headquarters occasionally send a native named Gilbert Mbewe from Bulawayo to supervise our work'.[1]

However it was the reversion to the radical doctrines of the early Kamwana by certain preachers on the copperbelt and in Lusaka which finally impelled Moffat Thomson to re-establish communications with the W.T.B.T.S., with a view to controlling the movement. While Gondwe had returned to his Lamba following at about this time without causing undue excitement, a new Watch Tower prophet emerged at Ndola, one Andrew Kasambala, who was reported to be spreading rumours of the impending arrival of American negroes and millennial ideas particularly directed against the exclusive practices of white racialism:

> We natives will soon be mixing with the Europeans, sitting down and eating food at the same table, and they will shake us by the hand. The white men who refuse to mix with us will be told to go home.[2]

While this view departs somewhat from the early Watch Tower interpretation of the European as an absolute intruder in Africa, it perhaps particularly reflects a dominant aspect of the relationship between black and white on the copperbelt, namely the colour bar, the tenet of faith of white artisans recruited from South Africa, and a continuing source of frustration and anger for Africans in the mine compounds. Kasambala's

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[1] SEC/NAT/393, Statement by Nehemiah Mumba, 13 May 1931.

[2] ACC. 57/5, Statement of Native Detective Izaac Nguluwe, Ndola, 12 Oct. 1931.

appeal was directed particularly at those who wished to participate fully in the new culture, but were prevented by law and convention from doing so. The urban Watch Tower adherents at this time, it was remarked, were pre-eminently those who wore European dress, used tables and chairs in their huts, owned bicycles, and frequented Bible classes rather than the beerhalls.[1] They were at the forefront of the 'detribalised class of native' that had emerged on the copperbelt which was to become the subject of a growing debate between settlers, administrators and the mining companies,[2] and bore the brunt of the racialist abuse and social exclusivism which typified colonial behaviour towards socially aspirant Africans. Kasambala's preaching - which referred directly to Kamwana as the source - embraced a vision which corresponded to the private fears of many settlers, and the Ndola Commissioner swiftly secured his arrest.[3]

The most radical preacher at this time, however, was Joseph Sibakwe, one of the Namwanga converts from Fife, whose preaching was heard in 1931 and 1932 at Lusaka, Broken Hill and Mkushi. He was in contact with Benali Banda at Mazabuka, and was a key figure in the emerging local organisation. 'To all intents and purposes he is the biggest Watch Tower man in Northern Rhodesia today', reported the C.I.D. at Broken Hill,

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[1] Northern Rhodesia: Leg. Co. Debates, 11 May 1936.

[2] Cf. G. Wilson, 'An Essay on the Economics of Detribalisation in Northern Rhodesia', Rhodes-Livingstone Papers, V-VI, 1941-2.

[3] ACC. 57/5, C.I.D., Ndola, to C.I.D., Livingstone, 13 Oct. 1931.

'he is in constant communication with the head office at Cape Town and with the Wankie leaders, he is a good speaker, and holds his audience in spite of openly preaching sedition'.[1] Sibakwe's preaching was an ingenious political explanation of the lowly position of Africans. Because King George had been stealing the African's wealth by means of imposing taxes, a new and entirely African government was to be formed which would take over after a great war had been fought. England and Germany were about to renew hostilities, and in this great combat the blacks would fight against the whites; members of the Watch Tower would fight but not die, and they alone would escape the subsequent wrath of God, as they were protected by a book which contained the secrets of the equality of black men and white men, which had been deliberately hidden by the missionaries. 'The country belongs to the natives, what are the white men doing here?', he asked.[2] It was estimated by police informers, no doubt wildly, that three-quarters of Lusaka's African population believed in the foretold event of war, and had enrolled. Sibakwe was promptly arrested and sentenced to six months' hard labour on a charge of sedition.

The pamphlet The Final War must certainly have provided Sibakwe with some of his ideas, containing as it did a picture of and direct attack on George V.[3] It is also probable that Sibakwe derived these ideas from the preaching of Sindano in his home district.[4] It was a constant theme of Watch Tower

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[1] SEC/NAT/312, C.I.D., Broken Hill, to C.I.D., Livingstone, 20 April 1932.

[2] Ibid., Report of Native Detective Petros Mukamba, Broken Hill, 15 April 1932.

[3] W.T.B.T.S., New York, 1929 (?).

[4] Cf. above, pp. 208-210.

teaching at this stage to seize on contemporary events and provide a plausible interpretation which bolstered Watch Tower predictions, and attributed the roles of thieves, cheats and expoiters to the white man. Thus the extension of the Lusaka railway was heralded as enabling the white man to leave, and technological changes and everyday events - the movement of the regiment from Kasama, the building of the Imperial Airways strip at Serenje, changes in currency - were widely interpreted in this way. It was particularly to the settled migrants that the illusion of understanding the many and confusing technological innovations following on the discovery of Northern Rhodesia's massive copper deposits proved particularly appealing, and it was these members of the Watch Tower who were assiduous in acquiring the cheap (2d or 3d a copy), well-illustrated, W.T.B.T.S. pamphlets which dwelt on international events in terms of stereotyped images of kings and rulers, bishops and capitalists. Both Kasambala and Sibakwe were found to be in possession of large quantities of this literature, and while the Native Affairs Department was caused to reflect on the inadequacy of the education services and the provision of vernacular literature other than the Bible for Africans, it was the banning of the Society's literature, together with official recognition so that this ban could be enforced, rather than more positive policies regarding African education, that came to be considered.

The question of the Watch Tower movement as a source of literature and self-education is a most important one, as much of its appeal undoubtedly lay, particularly in this period, in

its position as a 'religion of the book', and the provider of the bulk of reading matter for Africans in Northern Rhodesia. A perceptive missionary and educationist, A. Victor Murray, who had travelled widely in central and southern Africa, wrote at this time,

> It is, I believe, largely through unfamiliarity with writing and through the absence of literature and the material means of producing it, that so many deep experiences of the spirit among native peoples find expression in weird forms of action and organization, such as the Watch Tower movement.[1]

Not only were there only a very few mission presses in Northern Rhodesia, but there was a complete absence of reading materials published for Africans by N.R.G. The field was wide open for the vernacular pamphlets published by the W.T.B.T.S. A further reason, and which perhaps helps to explain why the Watch Tower was so dominant in central Africa compared with other independent churches, was that the written word was especially venerated in its doctrines. Power, truth, and total understanding resided in the Bible, God's own written words, for those who could interpret it. Apart from the social ends to which various interpretations lent themselves, this in itself was appealing. Literacy was generally regarded as the primary means of social advancement, and the obvious dependence of the colonial bureaucracy on the written word reinforced notions of the primacy of literacy.

This feature of the appeal of the Watch Tower was generally recognised in administrative circles, particularly as a result of a commission of enquiry held after the visit of delegates who

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[1] A. Victor Murray, The School in the Bush (1929), p. 151.

had attended the 1926 missionary conference at Le Zoute on the supply of literature in Africa.[1] A move to publish an African newspaper, specifically at first in order to combat the Watch Tower, began to gather way in 1930, but was strenuously opposed by Leopold Moore, a representative of settler interests in the Legislative Council, and the owner and publisher of the colony's only newspaper, the Livingstone Mail.[2] Moore's opposition and the apathy and shortage of funds of N.R.G. allowed the proposed newspaper to be placed in abeyance for five years, until the involvement of the Watch Tower movement with the disturbances on the copperbelt reawakened interest in the idea.[3] Consequently in 1936 the first number of Mutende (peace, greetings) was produced. It was based on a news-sheet which had been produced at the Serenje boma for a few years which had also been specifically designed as a substitute for the reading of W.T.B.T.S. pamphlets, and borrowed much of its material from African newspapers in the surrounding territories, which had been produced for a number of years - Inkanyizi Ya-Bantu in Southern Rhodesia, Nganga in the Belgian Congo, Mambo Leo in Tanganyika, and Zo Ona in Nyasaland. In a specimen first number, a long attack was made on the Watch Tower movement, and a special section devoted to the affairs of the A.M.E.C.; however, as it was point out, 'the natives really consider the Watch Tower much more their own church than the A.M.E.C.', and both articles were withdrawn in the first published number.[4] The lateness of its appearance

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[1] Cf. M. Wrong, Africa and the Making of Books (1934).

[2] SEC/NAT/370, Report on Native Newspapers, 1935.

[3] SEC/LAB/69, Young to Sec. State Col., 23 Oct. 1935.

[4] SEC/NAT/370, D.C., Mumbwa, to P.C., Livingstone, 26 Dec. 1935; Mutende No. 1, (Lusaka, March 1936).

and the smallness of its circulation ensured that Mutende had very little effect on African opinion in the crucial 1930's, however. Up until the war, the staple reading materials of Africans in the compounds and villages of large parts of south central Africa were the biblical commentaries prepared by Joseph Rutherford.

With the hope, then, of establishing the Watch Tower movement as a controllable independent church, Moffat Thomson entered into correspondence with the W.T.B.T.S., complaining over their connexion with Sibakwe and the supply of their literature to Northern Rhodesia, which was in breach of their undertaking in 1926 to relinquish the field.[1] The W.T.B.T.S. in Cape Town was at this stage under the leadership of men far more resourceful and dynamic than had been Walder and Dawson, however. The brothers George and Llewellyn V. Phillips expressed a determination to respond to 'the Macedonian call of "come over and help us" which we cannot possibly ignore' from the many Africans who were in receipt of their material in central Africa, and requested immediate admission to the territory.[2] Despite the refusal of Southern Rhodesia to admit them on the grounds of 'the crimes, illegalities and irreligious acts' for which they were held responsible, the two Phillips continued to press Thomson and the Colonial Office with voluminous and eloquent assurances that only through the recognition of the W.T.B.T.S. could the seditious aspects of splinter groups be contained.[3]

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[1] B 1/4/ED/2, Thomson (Sec. Nat. Affairs), to W.T.B.T.S., 13 June 1932.

[2] Ibid., W.T.B.T.S. to Chief Sec., Livingstone, 12 Oct. 1932.

[3] Ibid., W.T.B.T.S. to C.N.C., Salisbury, 14 Sept. 1932.

This reasoning accorded with the administrative thinking of the time, and the interesting comparison was drawn between the W.T.B.T.S. and the position of the Churches of Christ Mission in Nyasaland, which, having been forced out after the Chilembwe rising, returned to find their African pastors so securely entrenched that they could not be brought under European control.[1] It was also hoped that once W.T.B.T.S. officials were in Lusaka, they could be persuaded not to publicise those booklets which contained specific attacks on the British Empire. Consequently in 1932 N.R.G. decided to allow a representative of the W.T.B.T.S. to enter the country, with a view to establishing their work - particularly the provision of literature - under strict supervision. The man whom the W.T.B.T.S. sent, however, could hardly have been a more unfortunate choice, from the administration's point of view. Petrus Johannes de Jager, described in a later report as 'a fanatical South African of mixed origin', was at this time supervising the attempts of the Jehovah's Witnesses to make headway in east and central Africa. De Jager was informed that he had been allowed into the country on the strict condition that he should not attempt to meet African followers of the movement. However de Jager, while spending most of his time visiting the Afrikaans railway gangers interested in the W.T.B.T.S., almost certainly did arrange secret meetings with members of the African Watch Tower communities on the copperbelt.[2] Following de Jager's visit, the supply of literature to Northern Rhodesia substantially increased in volume, and the debate over

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[1] B 1/4/ED/2, Director of Native Education, Mazabuka, to Chief Sec., 9 Nov. 1932.

[2] Ibid., Exec. Co. Memorandum: Recognition of the W.T.B.T.S., 1932.

the advantages and disadvantages of allowing the W.T.B.T.S. to establish itself continued.[1] Arguments against the granting of full recognition, however, won the day. In the next few years, pressure was maintained not only by missionaries, Africans of the welfare associations, and other territorial administrations hostile to the movement, but also by certain District Commissioners. The extension of indirect rule was to be the lynch-pin of native policy at a time when the effects of the slump were making themselves felt through reduced administrative budgets, and it was agreed that the reversal of the policy of non-recognition might undermine the position of chiefs who had consistently opposed it.[2] This was particularly true in Barotseland, traditionally an area of especial administrative concern, where the Watch Tower was making headway as much for its anti-Lozi doctrines as for its impeachment of white rule. Confusion over the ambiguous relationship between the W.T.B.T.S. and the various elements of the African Watch Tower was also an underlying reason for non-recognition at this stage. The W.T.B.T.S. was held to be talking with two voices - 'sweet reason to the Administration, and a farrago of abuse of organised religion and established government to their followers.'[3]

The popularity of the movement in the Ndola district and the Luapula valley and the continual infiltration of Watch Tower ideas into the Belgian Congo led also to a considerable agitation

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[1] B 1/4/ED/2, Exec. Co. Memorandum: Recognition of the W.T.B.T.S., 1932.

[2] P.R.O., C.O. 795/57, 5507, Minute by T.L. Rowan, Dept. Col. Sec., 13 Feb. 1933.

[3] B 1/4/ED/2, Minute of Exec. Co., Feb. 1933.

by the Belgian authorities and both Protestant and Roman Catholic missionaries that the Northern Rhodesian government should stamp the movement out.[1] Even the Vatican was moved to voice complaints to the Colonial Office on the depredations of Kitawala, which had 'had a deplorable effect on the natives, who have been taught Bolshevik doctrines and Communist songs, and thrown into a state of considerable excitement'.[2] The White Fathers at Petauke in particular had also lost a large number of adherents to the Watch Tower, and submitted numerous alarmist reports on the Watch Tower preaching of imminent war to the local Commissioner. The pragmatic White Fathers eventually reached a compromise whereby Watch Tower members agreed not to preach in villages where the headman preferred the Catholics, in return for their being unmolested in villages where they were not opposed.[3] But a number of other missions, fearful that the new enthusiasm for Watch Tower would not prove to be a transitory one as in 1924-1925, complained constantly over the lack of control. The White Fathers at Lufubu, near Kawambwa, were particularly bitter, as the recent deportations from the Congo had caused a drastic fall-off in attendance at their mission.[4]

But the most important consideration was the relationship between Watch Tower adherents and the chiefs. Indigenous authorities had, of course, been utilised during the period of

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[1] Cf. above, p. 295.

[2] B 1/4/ED/2, Minute of Exec. Co., Aug. 1934.

[3] SEC/NAT/314, Petauke Tour Reports, 1933 and 1934.

[4] Cf. above, pp. 294-295.

company rule but very much on an informal and intermittent basis. Under the direction of the Colonial Office, and with the introduction of the Lugard system in neighbouring Tanganyika as an example, administrators in Northern Rhodesia came to consider in the late 1920's the introduction of indirect rule, which was formally implemented on April 1st, 1930. The extension of the system was slow and piecemeal, however; the onset of the slump, the different calibre of various tribal authorities, and the reluctance of the District Commissioners to yield any financial responsibility to native authorities, led to a situation where, with the possible exception of Barotseland, the newly designated authorities enjoyed very little substance of power.[1] The theory of indirect rule, however, lent credence to the notions of imperial trusteeship; and it was hoped that the delegation of some apparent judicial powers and the trappings of local government to tribal authorities would act as some compensation for the de facto treatment of the line of rail as a colony of settlement, where European rather than African interests were paramount. Consequently, rural District Commissioners in the 1930's were at some pains to support the orders and bolster the authority of their chiefs, even though they retained the power of the veto over orders and court decisions, and undertook as before the lion's share of executive functions.

Moreover, since the period of collective punishment following the mwana lesa affair, a deliberate policy of encouraging chiefs and headmen to stamp out Watch Tower activity in their districts had been undertaken. In most instances

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[1] SEC/NAT/274, Sec. Nat. Affairs to Chief Sec., 7 Dec. 1931.

Watch Tower preaching was directed strongly against traditional authorities, and leaders who succeeded in creating communities outside the tribal system undermined the respect due to such authorities. Also, Watch Tower preachers were in the habit of telling chiefs that their activities were sanctioned by the boma, which reflected the reluctance of some administrators to prosecute unless there was clear evidence of anti-witchcraft activity. With their accession to new powers, chiefs consequently were generally not slow to act. In November, 1933, chiefs in the Serenje district called a public meeting where they castigated the Watch Tower for causing a public nuisance, withholding children from school, spreading disturbing rumours, and abrogating traditional custom and morality, and framed an order that 'no native, not bearing a certificate from Government or an authorised Mission, shall conduct services or religious rites in a village, without first reporting to the headman and obtaining his consent'.[1] Similar orders came before District Commissioners for approval in Luangwa, Kasempa and Barotseland, where Watch Tower adherents were becoming active for the first time. In areas such as Petauke, where there was a tradition of Watch Tower activity, the lack of obvious appointees had led to the arbitrary selection of chiefs. This was particularly resented by the many immigrants from Mozambique, and a new wave of Watch Tower popularity occurred in which members refused to assist in public duties assigned by chiefs, and went out of their way, it was reported, to offer 'studied discourtesy' to the native authorities, which resulted in a

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[1] SEC/NAT/393, D.C., Serenje, to P.C., Kasama, 21 Nov. 1933.

number of prosecutions.[1]

However, while these considerations led to a postponement of the recognition of the W.T.B.T.S., pressure to regularise the Watch Tower movement continued. District Commissioners in whose areas the movement had settled into quietist communities supported the tolerant view, and were becoming less impressed by the reports of consternation among those native authorities who had been supported in the widespread banning of Watch Tower ceremonies.[2] It was at this time, however, that the mcapi witchcraft eradication movement, which became widespread in east and central Africa during the 1930's, became popular in Northern Rhodesia. E.H. Jalland, then acting Secretary for Native Affairs, who was an ardent supporter of indirect rule and bitterly opposed to recognition of the Watch Tower, saw in the mcapi the possibility of another mwana lesa affair.[3] In this he was assisted by a Watch Tower witch-finding incident in Mwinilunga, where three aged women, indicted as witches, were beaten, tied up and scorched in front of a bonfire while villagers danced and sang Watch Tower hymns, and subsequently committed suicide.[4] The revival of the rural Watch Tower in North-Western Rhodesia and new fears of anti-witchcraft activity again caused the administration to hesitate in seizing the nettle.

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[1] SEC/NAT/312, Petauke Tour Report, January 1935.

[2] ZA 1/9/62/1, P.C., Fort Jameson, to Sec. Nat. Affairs, 17 April 1934.

[3] Ibid., Sec. Nat. Affairs to Chief Sec., 30 April 1934.

[4] Ibid., Rex v. Aroni (137/1934, Mwinilunga).

In 1934, the issue of recognition was once more brought up by the W.T.B.T.S., however, who were prompted by the annual report on African education which stated that the work of a number of mission schools had been brought to a halt by uncontrolled Watch Tower teaching. As a prelude the W.T.B.T.S. mounted a campaign to distinguish itself from the 'so-called native Watch Tower sect', and vehemently defended the Jehovah's Witnesses against any connexion with the notorious mwana lesa.[1] A new note of the persecution by government, related to this reluctance to admit the W.T.B.T.S. representatives, entered into their correspondence with their followers in the Rhodesias, and the provision of literature was stepped up such that reports flowed in to the Secretary for Native Affairs from many parts of the country that a flood of magazines, Bibles, booklets and illustrated tracts was passing to African members and were widely distributed. A request to District Commissioners to report every occurrence of Watch Tower preaching also brought home to the administration just how widespread the doctrines were, spreading from the Ila and Lozi in the south and west to the furthest Tanganyika border, while magistrates were also remarking on the number of cases of Watch Tower leaders acting as witch-finders. The administration responded by prohibiting the import of 'seditious literature', and renewed the pressure on chiefs and headmen to combat the movement, and, concluding that the advantages of recognition might outweigh the disadvantages, decided to consult the practice of other territories in handling the Watch Tower movement.[2]

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[1] B 1/4/ED/2, Circular from the W.T.B.T.S., Cape Town, to 'Jehovah's Witnesses in Rhodesia', 31 July 1934; cf. also Cape Times, 21 Nov. 1934.

[2] SEC/NAT/312, Exec. Co. Minute, 19 July 1934.

At the conference of Provincial Commissioners in June, 1935, the Northern Rhodesian governor, Sir Hubert Young - previously governor of Nyasaland - remarked on the policy in Nyasaland, where recognition of the W.T.B.T.S. in April, 1924, had enabled a close surveillance to be kept on adherents. Literature was submitted for censorship before distribution by the European representative in Zomba, and the independent movement was felt to be successfully under control. Of course the quietism in Nyasaland derived from many factors other than administrative control, but such was the importance attached to the climate of opinion among the inheritors of John Chilembwe's tradition, that this become a persuasive argument. Ironically, it was not so much the rural areas, where previously the most rebellious expressions of the movement had taken place (and were erupting amongst the Wiko in Barotseland), as the copperbelt that caused the administration the most apprehension. By the mid 1930's, the copperbelt had attracted a large and to all intents and purposes settled labour force, and the knowledge was disquieting that intensive proselitisation was being carried out in the economic heartland of the country. With the awareness that an indigenous organisation was springing up among the urban Watch Tower communities, then, and estimating that over half the African population of Northern Rhodesia had come under the influence of Watch Tower preaching, the administration extended an invitation to the W.T.B.T.S. in June, 1935, to send an official representative who, it was hoped, would repudiate all the exotic and seditious variations, and bring the regular adherents under strict control.[1] At the same time

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[1] Ibid.

it was proposed to censor all the publications of the W.T.B.T.S. as a condition of permission to operate within the country, which - at 2d or 3d per booklet - had become the staple reading materials of the vast proportion of literate and would-be literate Africans, and only to recognise the movement officially when it conformed with the provisions of the Native Schools Ordinance.[1]

European Jehovah's Witnesses had been sporadically active in Northern Rhodesia since the visitation of Walder and Dawson, but with minimal effect. Apart from the unsuccessful mission of Snashall and Nisbett, and de Jager's brief visit in 1932, there was a certain amount of interest in the sect amongst white railway workers and copper-miners.[2] One of these, Paul Briesch, had established contact with the local African Watch Tower, and had held meetings in the Nkana and Mufulira mine compounds, but was promptly charged with 'promoting ill-will between sections of the population'. It transpired that outside the mine compounds, however, Briesch had received little attention, and a visit paid to Gondwe village was a conspicuous failure, according to the Ndola Commsisioner who commented:

> I did not get the impression that [Briesch's] activities were particularly welcome, even to the faithful - the movement has become part and parcel of native life, and European interference, either for or against, is not wanted.[3]

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[1] SEC/NAT/312, Sec. Nat. Affairs to W.T.B.T.S., Cape Town, 24 June 1935.

[2] Evidence Taken by the Commission Appointed to Enquire into the Disturbances in the Copperbelt, Northern Rhodesia, July-September 1935 (Lusaka, 1935, 2 Vols.), ii, 601. This will be henceforth cited as 'Evidence ... Disturbances in the Copperbelt'.

[3] ZA 1/9/62/1, Ndola Tour Report, May 1934.

Indeed, the organisational initiative for urban adherents lay with African members themselves at this stage, despite the growing links with the Society, and by the time the W.T.B.T.S. representative arrived, a considerable network had already been established. The most important leader who had emerged by this time was a Kunda from Chief Mkanya's district, Fort Jameson, Manasseh Nkoma, who, having joined the movement there in 1924, moved to Lusaka, where he had made repeated requests for his group of followers to be recognised as a church.[1] Nkoma was a dedicated organiser, and by 1933 his efforts had resulted in the centralisation in Lusaka of a network of urban Watch Tower groups from Livingstone to the Copperbelt. It is interesting to note that the positions allotted by Nkoma to urban Watch Tower adherents were those of secretary, assistant secretary, judge, assistant judge, baptiser, assistant baptiser, evangelist, deacon, and preacher. This hierarchy contains some of the posts of the new organisational structure of the W.T.B.T.S., and some purely African.[2]

While at this stage the organisation seems to have consisted in little beyond the settling of disputes over the ranking of members, by 1935 Nkoma was undertaking the mass importation of W.T.B.T.S. literature, and had succeeded in organising a countrywide conference of Watch Tower adherents. This, coming as it did on the eve of the copperbelt strike in May, 1935, led to new accusations of rebellious conspiracy.

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[1] SEC/NAT/393, C.I.D., Fort Jameson, to P.C., Fort Jameson, 12 Mar. 1930.

[2] SEC/NAT/393, 'Notice to the Members of the Ndola, Luanshya, and Nkana mine', from Peter Mwimba of the Lusaka Watch Tower, 12 June 1933, encl. in C.I.D., Luanshya, to C.I.D., Livingstone, 14 June 1933.

Further details of Manasseh Nkoma's career and the nature and purpose of the Lusaka conference of Watch Tower leaders appear from a police report prepared after the copperbelt riots, which may be quoted at length as it indicates the extent and organisation of the independent urban African Watch Tower movement at this time:

> During September of [1933], Menasseh Nkoma was deported to this territory from Southern Rhodesia. He arrived in Livingstone with over 150 volumes of Watch Tower literature which he immediately exposed for sale and has since replaced with further supplies from Cape Town. Despite being twice prosecuted for hawking without a licence, he continued to sell the literature at a considerable profit. He returned to Southern Rhodesia, was arrested and sentenced to three months imprisonment and finally re-deported to Northern Rhodesia. Activity increased during 1934.... Menasseh Nkoma had by this time established himself in Northern Rhodesia as the leader of the movement. Although he was again prosecuted for preaching without a licence, he enjoyed the utmost freedom. Despite accusations of certain officials in the movement to the contrary, members then and now were and are unhindered. Action was only taken in cases where sedition could be proved beyond doubt. 1935 opened with intense activity on the part of members throughout the country. Representatives of the movement commenced correspondence one with another and it became obvious that the movement was being organised as a whole. This activity culminated in a meeting at Lusaka during May, at which representatives from all over Northern and certain parts of Southern Rhodesia attended. At this meeting Menasseh Nkoma was appointed President and brethren named to act as officers and perform baptisms in the following districts: Livingstone, Mazabuka, Lusaka, Broken Hill, Ndola, Malundu, Fort Jameson, Malambo, Petauke, Serenje, and Kasama. Service directors, secretaries and chairman were also appointed in the following districts: Livingstone, Mazabuka, Kafue, Chipongwe, Lusaka, Broken Hill, Chitanda's country, Ndola, Mufulira, Luanshya, Malundu, Mumbwa, Petauke, Sichawa, Mukuwe, Fort Jameson, Mumbwa,Kapandula, Sikongo, Mwepa, Litati, Serenje, Ntsamba, Chimye, Kayangala, Lukanga, Nkana, Mukabuyunge, Moyoyo, Malete and Matala mine.... No intimation has been received from the Watch Tower headquarters in Cape Town that this organisation is in any way connected with the movement proper, or that it is the result of concerted action between Menasseh Nkoma and themselves.[1]

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[1] ZP 10/2/4, 'The Watch Tower Bible and Tract Society' by T.R. Ward-Roper, Ndola Police, 27 July 1935; on the independence of this initiative from the W.T.B.T.S., cf. SEC/NAT/312, G.R. Phillips to Chief Sec., 1 July 1935.

Consequently by the time the official representative arrived, some 370 Watch Tower leaders had already established an organisational grid across the country, laid plans for the collection of subscriptions, and under the leadership of Nkoma had formed a de facto independent African church.[1]

The representative of the W.T.B.T.S. who eventually arrived in Lusaka in August, 1935, was once again Johannes de Jager. By the time of his arrival the Watch Tower movement stood accused of rebellious conspiracy for its alleged part in inciting the copperbelt strikes in May and June which had shaken settlers much as the Chilembwe rising had in its day, and which had led to the flying in of troops from Salisbury and Pretoria.[2] De Jager was immediately prohibited from undertaking any organisational work until he had prepared a report on all the W.T.B.T.S. literature 'calculated to cause the natives to disrespect Government, Christian Mission Societies, or large industrial concerns'.[3] De Jager refused to accept that his activities should be limited to preparing a report, and took the opportunity provided by the Commission of Enquiry into the disturbances to give evidence on behalf of the W.T.B.T.S., and meet Watch Tower adherents on the copperbelt.[4] After meetings with such men as Lot Mumbi, Lefati Mwambula, Fred Kabombo, and Salumo Banda, de Jager began to display some of the characteristics of the ideological fervour, sympathy for the African

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[1] Cf. ibid., Minute of the D.C., Fort Jameson, 18 June 1935, for an interesting acknowledgement of this.

[2] Cf. below, pp. 382-383.

[3] SEC/NAT/312, Sec. Nat. Affairs to Chief Sec., 5 Aug. 1935.

[4] Ibid., De Jager to Sec. Nat. Affairs, 21 Aug. 1935.

cause, and hostility towards the colonial bureaucracy which had distinguished Joseph Booth. Paying little attention to the differences between the urban, rural and prophetic sections which called themselves the Watch Tower, but were nevertheless considerably removed from each other, de Jager sought out instances of the persecution of members of the movement. In the Ndola district he intervened on behalf of followers who had been charged with disobedience to the chiefs, poured ridicule on the procedure of these courts in lengthy letters to the Secretary for Native Affairs, and tried personally to investigate rumours that the Watch Tower movement was a cover for secret societies of sexual licence in the Luanshya and Kasempa areas.[1] He also published scathing attacks on the government and the mining companies in the local press, and insisted on giving voluminous evidence to the Commission of Enquiry. His presence finally became intolerable to N.R.G. when he assaulted a policeman who tried to prevent him talking to African Watch Tower followers, and it was learnt that he had distributed copies of his evidence to the Commission amongst Africans.[2] A deputation of the white citizens of Ndola formally protested to the Governor at his presence, and in mid-September, 1935, de Jager was asked to leave the country.[3] The question of the recognition of the Watch Tower was once more in abeyance.

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[1] SEC/NAT/312, De Jager to Sec. Nat. Affairs, 29, 31 Aug., 4 Sept. 1935; cf. below, p. 394.

[2] Ibid., P.C., Livingstone, to Chief Sec., 10 Sept. 1935.

[3] Ibid., Chief Sec. to W.T.B.T.S., 23 Sept. 1935.

As regards the urban groupings, de Jager's advocacy of a totally passivist millennialism accorded well with their own inclinations. He called upon true followers of the Jehovah's Witnesses to withdraw from all other associations, refuse to take part in strikes or political movements, and quietly await the coming of the Lord.[1] Generally, the social function of Watch Tower communities on the mine compounds was at this time not so much the expression of grievances or the promotion of a regional or tribal sense of identity, as the provision of a home for those who had broken away from customary life and aspired towards urban living and its industrial culture. The congregations at Ndola, Nkana and Mufulira were heterogeneous groups of Bemba-speaking peoples from many parts of the northern provinces (in which Luapulans predominated), and included people from Nyasaland, Fort Jameson, Kasempa and Solwezi. For these, de Jager's visit helped to harden the boundaries between their sect and the Watch Tower movement in the rural areas. Thus by the end of 1935, a group of Watch Tower communities had emerged in the towns of Northern Rhodesia which were fast becoming branches of the sectarian Jehovah's Witnesses. The initial organisation of these, however, took place under the leadership of Africans who drew largely on their experience of the independent Watch Tower movement. There was still confusion over which was which, as the name Watch Tower was commonly used, and the radically anti-European preaching associated with the movement at an earlier stage was still occasionally to be heard. But a distinction between these and

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[1] SEC/NAT/312, De Jager to Sec. Nat. Affairs, 21 Aug. 1935; cf. also The Golden Age, August, 1935.

the old Watch Tower movement was clearly emerging, not only as a result of the closer administrative surveillance which was possible in the towns and their accessibility to the W.T.B.T.S., but also because the movement was once again being adapted to new ends. It is possible that in the absence of representatives of the W.T.B.T.S. and the pressure towards bureaucratisation and isolation which these brought to bear, the urban Watch Tower might well have developed along the lines of a church movement such as the A.M.E.C. But even though official recognition of the movement had been perpetually postponed, the links between African groups in the towns and the W.T.B.T.S. in South Africa were strengthening rapidly. The strikes on the copperbelt interrupted this process, but did not materially affect it. The question arises, however, to what extent were these urban groupings involved in the strikes, and whether as part of the accommodation towards urban living which the Watch Tower communities were promoting, they also helped to develop a proletarian consciousness.

2. The Copperbelt Disturbances and the Aftermath

The strikes on the northern Rhodesian copperbelt were the major political event of the 1930's. They marked the beginning of the era of African trade union politics, rather than one-sided negotiations between the companies and the chiefs, and led to new moves by the settlers to amalgamate with the south.[1] Following the recovery from the slump, labour had

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[1] I. Henderson, 'The Disturbances on the Zambian Copperbelt, 1935 and 1940', (University of Zambia unpublished paper, May, 1969).

flooded back to the mines and production was rapidly increasing. But even more than in 1930, the refusal of the administration and the companies to recognise that there was a settled urban African population led to a build-up of grievances. Wages were held at a pre-slump level, while taxes were being increased, partly in order to compensate for holding rural tax levels constant; advancement to skilled jobs was prevented by the industrial colour bar; and influx control through the Registration of Natives Ordinance was widely resented. In particular, living conditions in the compounds were very bad, as these were over-crowded, insanitary, and managed by European compound bosses who habitually ill-treated and abused African workers.[1] When the strikes broke out, spreading from one mine to another, they were more in the nature of spontaneous protests than of industrial disputes, however. Nevertheless, an organisational dimension developed as the strikes spread.

The immediate cause of the strikes was a decision to raise taxes, which was announced by compound policemen who ran around shouting out the news. The first strike was organised at Mufulira on 20-22nd May by surface workers and members of the mbeni dance society, whence it spread to the Nkana smelter at Kitwe on 27 May. Bemba elders called a strike meeting at the Luanshya mine two days later, and with mbeni officials acting as pickets the strikes became general. Troops were summoned from South Africa and Southern Rhodesia, and when negotiations broke down, the strikers were fired on, six killed, and the strike broken.[2] The immediate outcry against the action

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[1] ZP 10/3/1, Report of J.L. Keith, D.C., Ndola, on the Strike on the Mines, June 1935.

[2] Evidence....Disturbances in the Copperbelt, i, 18, and passim; the strikes have been extensively analysed by Henderson, op. cit., and a clear account is given by Gann, History, pp. 300-302.

taken to quell the strike and the publicity given to the treatment of African workers which had caused them to protest, led to the appointment of a Commission of Enquiry, headed by a judge from east Africa, Alison Russell, which reported in October, 1935. Among its conclusions the Russell Commission found that the Watch Tower movement was 'an important predisposing cause of the recent disturbances'.[1] Insofar as it is possible without a detailed analysis of industrial conditions at the time, this conclusion should be assessed, as it reflects interestingly on the role of the Watch Tower as a workers' movement, which has previously been discussed for Southern Rhodesia.[2]

It is hard to escape the conclusion that the Russell Commission treated the Watch Tower movement as a scapegoat for the malpractices of the mining companies, by placing the blame on it. The general tenor of their enquiry was to establish whether the literature of the W.T.B.T.S. was subversive of law and order rather than whether individual members had been involved in actively preparing the strikes. For instance, the Commission was particularly struck by the Nyanja pamphlet Pulumukirani ku Ufumu (Escape to the Kingdom) which had an illustrated cover depicting flames, explosions and smoke surrounding four Europeans who had been cut down by a bloodied sword.[3] Passages from Rutherford's writings were put to de Jager, Lefati Mwambula, Fred Kabombo, and others, which attacked

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[1] Report of the Commission appointed to enquire into the Disturbances in the Copperbelt, Northern Rhodesia, October, 1935 (Cmd. 5009), p. 51.

[2] Cf. above, pp. 141-142.

[3] Evidence....Disturbances in the Copperbelt, i, 134 and passim.

missionaries and likened the British Empire to the beast of the apocalypse, and questions asked how these should be interpreted politically.[1] The Commission, which recommended that all W.T.B.T.S. literature be banned, appears to have primarily based its conclusions on Watch Tower complicity on the 'subversive' nature of its literature.

Secondly, the Commission heard evidence concerning the long list of Watch Tower illegalities dating from 1917, which included extensive details of the mwana lesa affair, the more recent killing of witches at Mwinilunga, the preaching of Joseph Sibakwe, and Manasseh Nkoma's meeting in Lusaka on May 12th, which, coming as it did shortly before the strikes broke out, was taken to infer that there had been a deep-laid conspiracy of revolt.[2] More than just the Watch Tower urban communities, the whole movement was on trial, and District Commissioners testified to the trouble it had caused them in the past. The evidence of Keith, the Ndola District Commissioner, was typical:

> The Watch Tower movement has inculcated disrespect for the European Officers of Government, the Chiefs, and native custom by teaching that Government is in itself a thing of evil, transitory and contemptible.... The natives have seen that Government is apparently powerless to stop the movement.[3]

One of the features of the strike was that the committees of tribal elders had been supplanted in the organisation of the strike and representation of grievances by ad hoc committees of surface workers, who maintained that the elders were unable

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[1] Evidence....Disturbances in the Copperbelt, i, 192, 209-211, 215-224.

[2] Ibid., i, 18, 153, 352-355, and passim.

[3] ZP 10/3/1, Report of J.L. Keith, June, 1935.

to represent them. The past history of the Watch Tower as a major subversive influence against the power and authority of the chiefs led it to be held guilty on this score as well.

The Commission, of course, did not distinguish between the new development of groups of Jehovah's Witnesses on the copperbelt, and the old Watch Tower, although evidence was given on the differences between the various sections of the movement at this stage by de Jager, Mwambula and others.[1] This was justifiable from their point of view that the W.T.B.T.S. was ultimately responsible for all actions undertaken by those in receipt of their literature, or had preached in their name. However, of the handful of Watch Tower members who were arrested on charges of incitement, only Fred Kabombo was found guilty of advocating that tax should not be paid; no evidence of the direct complicity of any adherent in the organisation or leadership of the strikes was found; and those who had been arrested (including Jeremiah Gondwe) were eventually released without being charged.[2] Thus, although it was clear from the evidence that the Bemba had played a major role in its organisation, and the mbeni society's associational structure had been the crucial means whereby it spread from one mine to the next, the Commission laid much of the blame for the strikes on the Watch Tower movement. The Commission does not, however, appear to have arrived at this conclusion in any very clear or satisfactory manner.

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[1] Evidence....Disturbances in the Copperbelt, i, 134 et seq.

[2] SEC/NAT/312, Minute of the Exec. Co., 29 July 1935.

Nevertheless, it may be argued on the basis of the evidence presented to the Commission and police reports of the time that the Watch Tower movement was indeed a predisposing cause of the strikes, in the sense that certain individuals were instrumental in promoting the idea of a confrontation with the authorities, and that the climate of ideas and social attitudes which enabled a protest movement to be generated were congenial for the adoption of millennial thinking.

The first notice that was received of the possibility of a strike was an anonymous note pinned on the door of the beer-hall at Nkana compound, which complained against the high rate of tax, and was headed 'B.M.R. Americas'. It appears from reports of police informers that this much discussed note[1] was the work of one Willisoni Banguela, the leader of the Watch Tower group in the Nkana compound. His followers were all arrested in August, 1935, but Banguela himself escaped.[2] It is suggestive that the word 'American' should have appeared in the heading of this poster; the Watch Tower was often referred to as 'Merik', or 'BaMerikani', and the idea of liberating American negroes, associated with Watch Tower preaching, was a common one. A number of Watch Tower adherents were also in the forefront of opposing the high rate of taxation and the low wages at this time. The example of Henry Chibangwa, of Mporokoso, is indicative that the Watch Tower movement was seen by some as an effective means of expressing workers' grievances. Chibangwa, a clerk and interpreter at Luanshya, founded an association of Bemba workers in 1933, which collected £5 to

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[1] Cf. e.g. R.I. Rotberg, The Rise of Nationalism in Northern Rhodesia and Nyasaland (Harvard, 1966), pp. 161-162.

[2] SEC/LAB/69, Young to Sec. State Col., 23 Oct. 1935.

send him to Livingstone to protest against the reduction of wages and unemployment during the depression. Chibangwa was bluntly told that he should return to his village of origin.[1] Subsequently, Chibangwa joined the Watch Tower movement at Luanshya, and began to preach that he possessed secret powers; travelling from mine to mine, and meeting other Watch Tower leaders such as Mwambula, Chibangwa advocated that workers should receive the wages they had had before the depression.[2] Particularly these Watch Tower adherents who had been at Shamva mine in Southern Rhodesia - where there had been a strike in 1927[3] - seem to have been active in making demands in their preaching that tax should be cut and wages raised. Prominent amongst these were Isaac Ngumbo,[4] Lefati Mwambula[5], and Joseph Kasembe[6] - all of whom had been deported from Southern Rhodesia in 1927 - and deportees from the Congo, such as Fred Kabombo, who openly called upon his followers at Mufulira mine to cease paying tax.[7] There is some evidence, also, to suggest that Nyasa clerks and capitaos who were adherents of the Watch Tower movement were also involved in spreading the idea that people should refuse to pay their tax.[8] This, of course, accords very

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[1] Gann, History, p. 254.

[2] Evidence....Disturbances in the Copperbelt, ii, 753 et seq.

[3] Cf. above, p. 133.

[4] Evidence....Disturbances in the Copperbelt, ii, 757.

[5] Ibid., i, 134, 192 et seq.

[6] Ibid., i, 209.

[7] Ibid., i, 243, 351.

[8] Ibid., i, 485-487.

much with the attitude taken by Gondwe and other Watch Tower leaders in the short-lived strike at Broken Hill in 1924.[1] Thus individual Watch Tower preachers at least helped to popularise the idea that the authorities should be confronted over the payment of taxes.

From a broader point of view, the apocalyptic ideas which Watch Tower preachers spread in the compounds were functional in creating an atmosphere of excitement and unrest which helped the strike to catch on in several areas. In the Luanshya compound, in particular, which had a number of followers from nearby Gondwe village, and whose local Watch Tower group was led by Lefati Mwambula, preachers circulated with the news that Armageddon had arrived, when details of the strikes at other mines came to be known. The atmosphere of rumour and confusion which was thus created probably contributed substantially to the readiness of workers to protest.[2] Apart from a few individuals, however, the adherents in the urban communities generally took no part in the strikes. In the later industrial disputes of the 1940's, there was no mention of the Watch Tower movement, which was totally supplanted in the expression of grievances by workers' committees. In the transitional associational stage to trades unions, however, the Watch Tower on the copperbelt had an important function in that it generated ideas of confrontation, and a vocabulary of protest. As a movement which had been particularly adapted by migrant workers, its ideology was attuned to their especial grievances - the restrictions on the freedom of movement and

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[1] Cf. above, pp. 273-275.

[2] Evidence....Disturbances in the Copperbelt, i, 286.

settlement, the tax rate, and the blockage of job mobility by the industrial colour bar. There was a millennial expectation of the overthrow of white power, it is true, rather than an active struggle against colonial authority; but this vision of change in itself, given the peculiar conditions of the compounds and the level of consciousness at the time, had a substantial impact on the readiness to protest.

Following the strikes, Watch Tower preachers in many parts of the country hailed these events as indicative that the final battle was at hand.[1] This renewed activity and the findings of the Russell Commission led N.R.G. in November, 1935, to issue a ban on the possession of W.T.B.T.S. pamphlets.[2] L.V. Phillips wrote a series of vehement letters denying any connexion between his sect and the African Watch Tower, and unsuccessfully challenged the ban in the Northern Rhodesian high court.[3] Rutherford published 'An Open Letter to the Alison Russell Commission' in The Golden Age magazine in which details of the drawn-out negotiations over the recognition of the W.T.B.T.S. were given.[4] Whether there was pressure on N.R.G. from the Colonial Office following this lobbying, or whether it was recognised that it was useless placing a ban on literature without at the same time establishing a means of enforcing it, is unclear. But in July, 1936, Phillips and

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[1] SEC/NAT/312, Chief Sec. to C.N.C., Salisbury, 8 Aug. 1935; Evidence....Disturbances in the Copperbelt, i, 776.

[2] SEC/NAT/313, Chief Sec. to W.T.B.T.S., 23 Nov. 1935.

[3] SEC/NAT/312, Phillips to Chief Sec., 2 Oct., 11 Dec. 1935; SEC/NAT/315, Motion of Appeal, December, 1935.

[4] The Golden Age, January, 1936.

de Jager were allowed to establish a branch headquarters of the W.T.B.T.S. in Lusaka.[1] This was a turning point in the development of the Watch Tower movement in Northern Rhodesia.

While de Jager soon left, Phillips was to spend many years in Northern Rhodesia. He was an energetic and forceful man, who had little sympathy for African political demands or traditional culture. Everything was to be subordinated to the precisely detailed orthodoxy of the Jehovah's Witnesses. As he wrote a few years later to his brother,

> My firm belief, so often expressed, that with the African slow progress alone will succeed is borne out by my experience.... It is so easy to attract the head and not the heart of these men and to produce a veneer which, at the slightest provocation, wears off and leaves a savagery which is hardly believable, and this applies to almost all Africans.[2]

Phillips' main concern was to separate the 'sheep' from the 'goats' - that is, orthodox Jehovah's Witnesses from independent Watch Tower members. To this end, he appointed a number of copperbelt adherents to visit various districts and make reports on the nature of the local communities, and he himself went on a countrywide tour in August-October, 1936, visiting Watch Tower groups at Mumbwa, Broken Hill, Kapiri M'poshi, Ndola, Luanshya, Nkana, Mufulira, Fort Rosebery, Kawambwa, Abercorn, Kasama, Mpika and Serenje.[3]

While Phillips succeeded in drawing a firmer boundary between the Jehovah's Witnesses and the independent Watch Tower movement than had previously been the case, he made little

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[1] SEC/NAT/312, Chief Sec. to W.T.B.T.S., 11 Aug. 1936.

[2] SEC/NAT/314, L.V. Phillips to G.R. Phillips, 8 Nov. 1943.

[3] KSU 1/10, Sec. Nat. Affairs to D.C., Mporokoso, 27 Sept. 1936.

impact on the independent movement. In particular, Phillips aimed to depoliticise Watch Tower adherents by dissuading them from confronting chiefs, missionaries, and boma officials. This was not only part of the quietist doctrines of the W.T.B.T.S. but also necessary for Phillips since he was still very much on probation, from the administration's point of view. Much of the appeal of the rural Watch Tower movement was precisely that it did confront an unpopular local authority structure, for a variety of reasons. The rural Watch Tower embraced a wide spectrum of activities from that of witchcraft eradication to political resistance and communities practising free love; all were in opposition. In particular, Phillips made little headway where the local Watch Tower had consolidated under the leadership of men such as Hanoc Sindano, James Mfula, and Jeremiah Gondwe.

Phillips' tour of the Luapula valley was particularly unsuccessful. At Fort Rosebery he delivered his usual admonitions on the importance of respectability, mild behaviour, cleanliness, and orderly meetings, and was immediately opposed by the local leader, Seti Nkandu, of whom the District Commissioner wrote:

> This man is one who will always make trouble... He is the leader of the old branch of Watch Tower adherents in this district and I do not believe his influence is for good.... Mr Phillips' branch of the Watch Tower will only be tolerated here if Seti Nkandu wills it.[1]

Phillips met a similar reception in Kawambwa[2] and Mporokoso.[3] In Serenje, 'the address was not enthusiastically received, in

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[1] SEC/NAT/314, D.C., Fort Rosebery, to P.C., Kasama, 3 Feb. 1937.

[2] Ibid., Kawambwa Tour Report, December, 1936.

[3] KSU 1/10, Mporokoso Tour Report, December, 1936.

fact a cold silence prevailed, and after the meeting a note was handed to Mr Phillips stating that the interpreter was very bad and that they had not understood his words'.[1] In Mufulira, those who disagreed with the new directions being taken by the Jehovah's Witnesses 'sent a message to Chinteche asking one Elliott Kenani Kamwanga [sic] to return here to settle the dispute... Kenani is said to have been deported many years ago'.[2] This is interesting evidence that the independent Watch Tower movement was looking back to its early origins in Nyasaland for legitimate support in its attempts to maintain its independence.

One of the points of dispute at Mufulira was whether 'women believers were common property'.[3] This reflects a development within the Watch Tower movement which should be discussed. During the period 1935-1945 there is evidence to suggest that certain Watch Tower communities, chiefly in the rural areas, acted as secret societies in which copulatory dances, the changing of wives, and various other forms of sexual licence took place. Allegations of this sort had been made against the Watch Tower since its inception by those who were hostile to it. Much of the suspicion probably derived from the fact that within the Watch Tower communities women were able to escape some of the constraints of the patriarchal system: monogamous unions were favoured, succession and inheritance passed via the patrilineal rather than the matrilineal

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[1] SEC/NAT/314, Serenje Tour Report, March 1937.

[2] SEC/NAT/318, D.C., Mufulira, to P.C., Ndola, 24 Feb. 1940.

[3] Ibid.

line, women could occupy positions of prestige and status, and the communal economic system tended to protect women from being treated as a separate economic class.[1] Yet the evidence suggesting that such communities had developed is considerable, even if from hostile sources. E.A. Muwamba, for example, reported that amongst the Lamba in Chief Shibuchinga's area a small Watch Tower group had formed themselves into a movement called chisamaliya (the woman of Samaria, referring to the belief that Christ seduced her[2]), or chonaule (translated by Muwamba as meaning incestuous sexual intercourse). Old men had joined to take advantage of the sexual freedom available. The central rite was the shonongo dance, in which men and women engaged in orgiastic practices.[3] More details of incest and 'free love' emerged in a murder trial held in the Ndola native court, which resulted in the issue of a general order calling on all chiefs to forbid much practices.[4] Fred Kabombo provided similar details of a 'free love Watch Tower' at Mofwe, Lake Mweru, in a report to Phillips, which led to a number of trials at Kawambwa in May, 1944.[5] The defence in these cases was that the scriptures provided a sanction for such actions,[6] and it

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[1] Cf. Griffith Quick, 'Some Aspects of the African Watch Tower Movement in Northern Rhodesia', International Review of Missions, XXIX, 1940.

[2] SEC/NAT/312, Muwamba to D.C., Ndola, January, 1935.

[3] SEC/NAT/312, Muwamba to D.C., Ndola, January, 1935.

[4] SEC/NAT/314, Rex v. Balashi, 1944.

[5] Ibid., Kawambwa Tour Report, June, 1944.

[6] Cf. Isaiah lv, i., 'Ho, everyone that thirsteth, come to the waters; and he who has no money, come, buy and eat! Come, buy wine and milk without money and without price.'

is interesting to note that in 1935 de Jager had written a long and earnest examination of the levirate, rebutting the idea that the Old Testament provided a justification for wife-changing and incest.[1]

The similarities of such developments amongst certain rural Watch Tower communities to the butwa society are striking. Butwa was a secret society prevalent in the northern districts of Northern Rhodesia, which was proscribed in 1911, and gradually declined in popularity thereafter. From the confused and often contradictory accounts of butwa, a picture emerges of a secret society with arcane initiatory rituals dedicated to sexual entertainment.[2] The comparison between butwa and the Watch Tower is one which has often been drawn, usually on the basis that both legitimated sexual practices which contravened customary norms, and were guarded from society by secret localities, language and rituals.[3] There is a further comparison which may be made, however. In the accounts of butwa there is some suggestion that it was a witchcraft eradication cult, designed to protect its members from evil and bring them good luck. In this way it closely resembles the origins of much rural Watch Tower activity. The development of these into free love movements may consequently perhaps be characterised as a functional change away from their original roles, which involves

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[1] The Golden Age, August, 1935; ACC. 57/5, de Jager to Mwambula, 16 May 1936.

[2] Cf. Dugald Campbell, In the Heart of Bantuland (1922), pp. 96, 106, 240-241; and 'Notes on Butwa, an African Secret Society', NADA, XXV, 1948; R.P. Colle, 'Le Butwa', La Revue Congolaise, III, 1912, pp. 195-199; W.F.P. Burton, Luba Religion and Magic in Custom and Belief (Tervuren, 1961), p. 157; V. de Moor, Leur Combat (Paris, Gabriel Beauchesne et Fils, 1937), pp. 108-114; Abercorn District Notebook.

[3] E.g., I. Cunnison, The Luapula Peoples, p. 207; Evidence.... Disturbances in the Copperbelt, i, 78.

their decay into clubs for sexual entertainment. As Douglas has suggested, sexual rites which contravened taboos concerning incest were believed to generate a ritual power of importance for protective charms.[1] With the passing of the demand for the services of the cult, these forms degenerated in their function. Just like butwa, the Watch Tower free love groups gradually disappeared; while allegations against the independent movement of sexual irregularities continued, there is no evidence of the continuance of the chonaule movement in the post-war period.

The advent of World War II in 1939 caused N.R.G. once more to impose bans and restrictions on the Jehovah's Witnesses, which had the effect of further delaying the extension of their control over the independent Watch Tower. The Witnesses preached pacifism, equated Roman Catholicism with fascism, and interpreted the war as further evidence of the imminent downfall of temporal authority.[2] Consequently, with the assumption of emergency powers by N.R.G., all W.T.B.T.S. publications were banned in 1940, and Phillips and other Witnesses called up for military service. After serving a short sentence for refusing to serve in the army, Phillips was jailed in 1941 and again in 1942 on the grounds of his possessing illegal literature.[3] This ban was to remain in effect until the late 1940's. Generally, the picture for African Jehovah's Witnesses during

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[1] Cf. M. Douglas, Purity and Danger (1966).

[2] SEC/NAT/313, Report on the Watch Tower Movement, December, 1940.

[3] SEC/JUS/44, Rex. v. Phillips, 1941, 1942.

the war years was one in which they were tolerated by the administration, but regarded with hostility in particular by the chiefs, who in many instances refused to allow them to build meeting places or settle in their villages.[1] The control by the W.T.B.T.S. was strongest on the copperbelt, where its doctrines and organisation seem to have accorded most closely with the social attitudes and demands of the adherents there. With the death of Joseph Rutherford in 1942, and the accession to the leadership of the world-wide movement by Nathan Knorr, the W.T.B.T.S. once again underwent a significant change in its organisation, doctrines, and techniques of expansion.[2] After 1945, the Jehovah's Witnesses developed rapidly in Northern Rhodesia, becoming one of the most important religious movements in the country.[3]

The war years, however, spelt the decline of the independent movement. It was not so much the actions of the Jehovah's Witnesses which purged their numbers during this period, as the socio-economic changes which were taking place. Trades unions and welfare associations provided the channels for the representation of interests, employment rates were high, and there had been some developments in the provision of African education and reading materials. It may also be argued that after some 40 years of colonial rule, the ideological accommodation to the new industrial culture which was the basis of much of the Watch Tower movement's appeal had by and large taken place. Sporadic

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[1] KSU 1/10, Report on the Watch Tower Movement, March 1946.

[2] Cf. Rogerson, Millions Now Living Will Never Die (1969), p. 171.

[3] Cf. J.V. Taylor and D. Lehmann, Christians of the Copperbelt (1961), pp. 100-112, 183-185, 214-216, 227-238, and passim.

activity continued amongst the Wiko of Barotseland, and the settled communities under leaders such as Jeremiah Gondwe and Hanoc Sindano persisted, but the widespread appeal of its ideas of the 1920's and 1930's was past. Having made its contribution to the transformation of social and political ideas, the Watch Tower movement reverted from a movement to a sect, and even though it continued to be known as the 'Watch Tower', in the post-war period this term generally referred to the Jehovah's Witnesses.

In distinction to Nyasaland and Southern Rhodesia, then, the Watch Tower in Northern Rhodesia was a movement of country-wide influence which persisted over time, from its beginnings in the upheaval created by von Lettow Vorbeck's military campaigns in 1918 to the early days of the Central African Federation in the 1950's, when it was largely brought under the control of the global sect, the Jehovah's Witnesses. It had a far greater variety of form, lending itself to witchcraft eradication, millennial rebellion, workers' protests, and to attempts to organise an independent African church. The modern organisational techniques of conferences, correspondence by letter, and the appointment of adherents to specific functions, and the branch and cell structure which leaders such as Manassch Nkoma wished to institutionalise, were also more fully developed than in neighbouring territories. This impact of the Watch Tower perhaps reflects on the peculiar nature of social change in colonial Northern Rhodesia. As a company colony it acted in the early days as a labour reservoir for the south, with little internal economic development and only very few of the

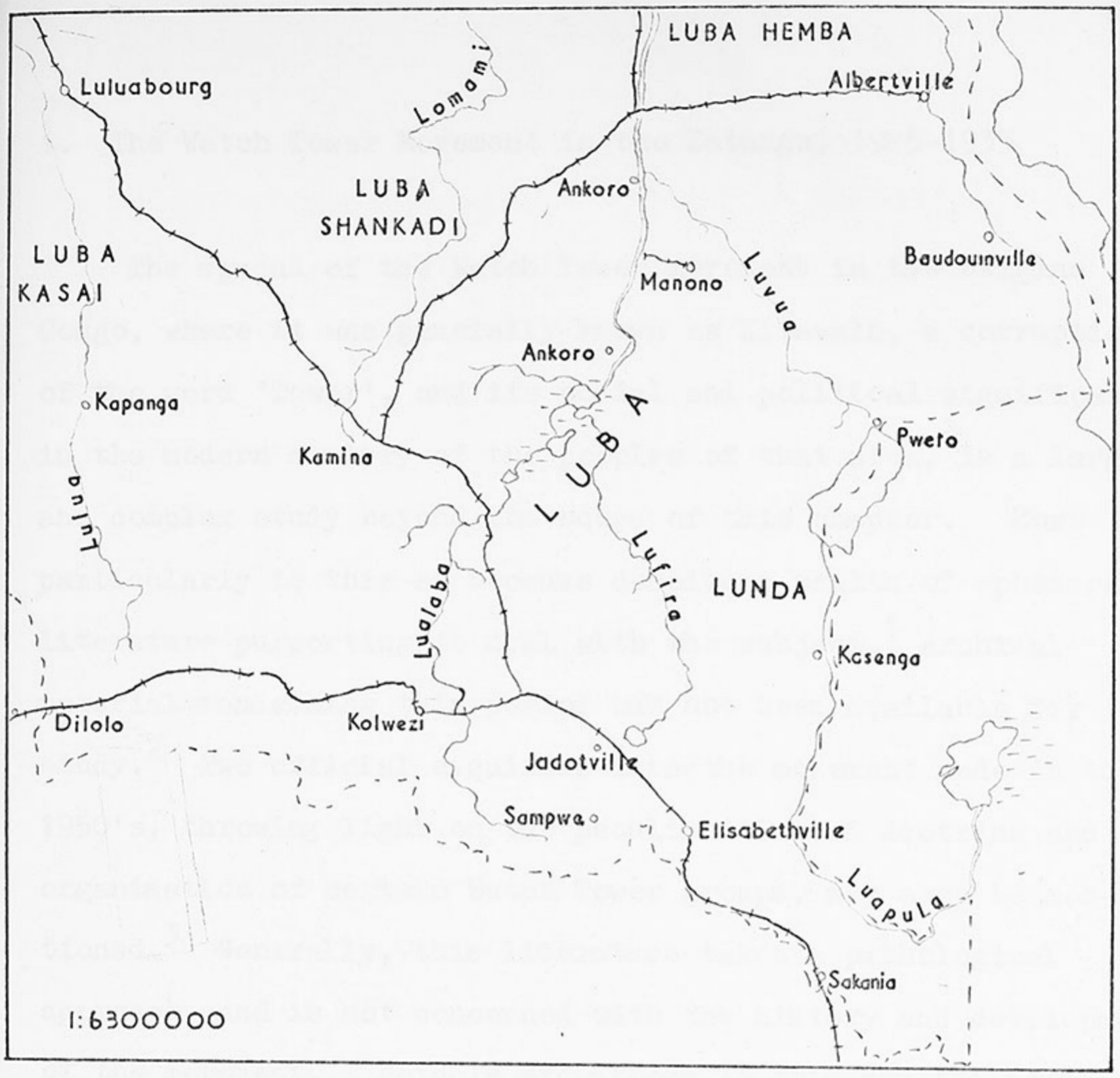
mission undertakings on a similar scale to that of the U.F.C. in Nyasaland. The extension of colonial administration was far more superficial than in Southern Rhodesia, and the isolation from developments in South Africa greater. As a region of continuing immigration the relationships between tribal societies was an uneven and changing one; and the sudden and extremely rapid development of company towns following on the mineral discoveries in the late 1920's - after a hesitant start as a result of the world depression - brought about sharp social distortions. The urban enclaves were a different world from the countryside, where migrants were regimented by compound discipline, faced a strange economic technology, and encountered other Africans from different areas of origin. While it was unsympathetic towards African organisations, N.R.G. was both more restrained by Colonial Office policy than were the Southern Rhodesians in acting against them, and less capable of policing the population. The Watch Tower may thus be said to have developed as a mass social movement which embraced the functions of, and met the need for, the wide variety of associations which arose in other colonial territories in the 1920's and 1930's.

CHAPTER IX

THE WATCH TOWER MOVEMENT IN THE BELGIAN CONGO

1. The Watch Tower Movement in the Katanga, 1925-1935

2. Watch Tower Rebellions.



MAP VII. KATANGA PROVINCE

1. The Watch Tower Movement in the Katanga, 1925-1935

The spread of the Watch Tower movement in the Belgian Congo, where it was generally known as Kitawala, a corruption of the word 'Tower', and its social and political significance in the modern history of the peoples of that area, is a large and complex study beyond the scope of this chapter. More particularly is this so because despite a wealth of ephemeral literature purporting to deal with the subject,[1] archival material concerning this period has not been available for study.[2] Two official enquiries into the movement made in the 1950's, throwing light on the peculiarities of doctrine and organisation of certain Watch Tower groups, may also be mentioned.[3] Generally, this literature takes a pathological approach, and is not concerned with the history and development of the movement. Notable exceptions to this are the studies by Biebuyck of the reaction to the movement of the Kumu,

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[1] Cf. e.g. R. Wauthion, 'Le Mouvement Kitawala au Congo Belge', Problèmes d'Afrique Centrale, III, 1950; J. Labrique, 'Etude du Mouvement Kitawala', and P. Lebeer, 'Watch Tower et Syndicalisme', Belcopresse, III, 1956; P. Lebeer, 'Panorama du Kitawala au Congo', Belcopresse, IV, 1956; Deaubechies, 'Le Kitawala', Tendances du Temps, XIX, 1961; La Revue Coloniale Belge, VIII, 1 Feb. 1946; l'Avenir Colonial Belge, 1-3 Aug. 1948; l'Informateur, 28 May, 12 Aug. 1947; l'Essor Colonial et Maritime, 6, 13 Sept., 8 Oct. 1936; Le Matin du Congo, 1 June 1936; La Libre Belgique, 31 May, 8 July 1956; Le Courrier d'Afrique, 10 Feb. 1956; Le Soir, 5 Feb. 1956; l'Echo du Katanga, 24 Feb. 1957.

[2] On the recently discovered Rapport de Synthèse sur le mouvement Kitawala cf. pp. xiv-xv.

[3] J.-P. Paulus, 'Le Kitawala au Congo Belge', Revue de l'Institute de Sociologie, II-III, 1956; P.-E. Joset, 'Le Kitawala', Pourquoi Pas?, 6 Dec. 1957.

discussed below,[1] the theological study by Gérard,[2] and the discussion of the movement to be found in the writings of Balandier, Merlier, Comhaire, Andersson and others,[3] which do not however aim to treat the movement in any systematic fashion.

Two themes only will be studied here, namely the manner of the diffusion of Watch Tower ideas in the Congo, and some instances of millennial rebellions which these helped to inspire. These are of particular comparative importance to the approach which seeks to map out the zonal area of influence of this body of ideas, and to set the movement in a broadly political perspective. It should be noted that although the spread of the Watch Tower from the Katanga to Orientale province was its main area of diffusion, this was not its only occurrence in the Congo basin area; its influence has been reported as far north as the French Congo, and in some instances it has been noted as merging with that other major religious movement in the Belgian Congo, Kimbanguism, predominant in the western part of the country.[4] Acts of hostility

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[1] D. Biebuyck, 'La Société Kumu face au Kitawala', Zaïre, XI, 1957; cf. below, pp. 419-420.

[2] J.E. Gérard, Les Fondements Syncrétiques du Kitawala (Etudes Africains, C.R.I.S.P., 1969).

[3] G. Balandier, 'Messianisme et Nationalisme en Afrique Noire', Cahiers Internationaux de Sociologie, XIV, 1953; Sociologie Actuelle de l'Afrique Noire (Paris, 1955), pp. 420-421; M. Merlier, Le Congo de la Colonisation Belge à l'Indépendence (Paris, 1962), pp. 231-234, 245, 249; J. Comhaire, 'Sociétés Secrètes et Mouvements Prophétiques au Congo Belge', Africa, XXV, 1955; E. Andersson, Messianic Popular Movements in the Lower Congo (Studia Ethnographica, Uppsala, 1958), pp. 247-250, and passim.

[4] Cf. Paulus, op. cit., p. 76; Rapport Annuel, 1945-1946, p. 9, 1949, p. 84, 1950, p. 88; generally on this point cf. Andersson, op. cit., pp. 247-248.

against colonial authority under the auspices of the Watch Tower movement have been noted for the Rhodesias, but no where did the movement develop into a millennial revolt. The risings at Manono in 1941 and Masisi in 1944 - one in the setting of a mine compound, the other rural - provide interesting further evidence on this aspect of the movement. This chapter, then, is more by way of an addendum to the material presented on Nyasaland, and Northern and Southern Rhodesia, than a contribution to the social history of Zaïre.

The extension of the Watch Tower movement from Northern Rhodesia into the Congo clearly illustrates the three main methods whereby the ideology spread across south central Africa. These are the traditional process or cult diffusion, labour migration, and the unintended consequence of administrative repression. The Katanga and the eastern belt of the Congo of course formed part of a common historical, cultural, and migratory zone with the neighbouring territories to the south; and trading, kinship and political relationships between Luba and Lunda continued during the colonial period to link the populations divided by the territorial boundary along the Luapula river. Lala and Lamba chieftaincies also straddled the copperbelt and the Congo pedicle. And these contacts were maintained through the early development of the mines in the Katanga, which depended until the late 1920's largely on labour migration from Northern Rhodesia.[1] The colonial boundary, however, was not without significance. While the rapid development of mining centres and squatter

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[1] Cf. above, pp. 286-287.

compounds created similar social conditions in the two urban belts, and men and ideas moved freely between them, the different spheres of administration were clearly demarcated. The Belgians, suspicious of N.R.G. and its approach to African administration, did not cooperate closely with their opposite numbers, except in the matter of notorious criminals such as mwana lesa; with the rising demand for labour, each administration was attempting to secure exclusive control over their populations; and while N.R.G. was prepared to experiment with policies of tolerance towards religious independency, the Belgians - subject to strong pressure from the Roman Catholic church - aimed to suppress it. Such Watch Tower leaders as Jeremiah Gondwe benefited from this absence of collusion, in that from his base in the Ndola district he was able to evangelise the neighbouring Sakania district in 1927,[1] and despite the constant deportation of his followers and complaints by the Belgians,[2] able to establish an external base of continuing importance for the development of the Watch Tower movement in the Katanga.[3]

The first infiltration of Watch Tower ideas into the Congo took place in the guise of a witchcraft eradication movement under the leadership of the mwana lesa, Tomo Nyirenda, as has been noted.[4] It is interesting to note that Nyirenda's

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[1] SEC/NAT/312, Directeur d'Administration du Katanga to Governor Northern Rhodesia, 18 July 1929; cf. also above, p. 278. All files referred to in this chapter are in the Zambia National Archives unless otherwise stated.

[2] Rapport Annuel, 1927, p. 113.

[3] Cf. Cross, 'Prophet Not Without Honour', op. cit.

[4] Cf. above, pp. 252-253.

movement was preceded by only a few years by similar but apparently unrelated movements. In November 1923 a prophet of the Tjesa (= lesa?) cult preached to villagers in the Tshinsenda district that in the ensuing month it would rain fish, and that shelters should be built lest these fall inside huts, that tax should no longer be paid, and that the whites were going to be destroyed.[1] Burton, in his study of Luba custom, also records for this period a number of movements containing elements similar to those associated with Watch Tower preaching. Ntambwe bwanga (protection against witch-craft) gave European titles to its members in the manner of the mbeni societies, divined with the aid of a Swahili Bible, and made millennial claims about the disappearance of Belgian rule - 'all the mining, trading and railway towns of the Katanga are honeycombed with it'.[2] Maleka bwanga (American medicine), promising material success through the intervention of American negroes, also suggests that there was a widespread demand for innovatory cults which both offered an explanation of the changing times and hopes of renewal and resistance.[3] The Watch Tower was thus partly a movement which infused a customary form with a more explicit ideology, extending from village to village in the traditional manner of the cult, as noted by Douglas.[4] And at this level, taking 'l'aspect d'une campagne

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[1] 'Crimes et Superstitions Indigènes', Revue de Droit, II, 1926, p. 27.

[2] W.F.P. Burton, Luba Religion and Magic in Custom and Belief, (first published 1939-1940, this edn. Tervuren, 1961), pp.173-174.

[3] Ibid., p. 178.

[4] M. Douglas, The Lele of the Kasaï (Oxford, 1963), pp. 244-245.

contre la sorcellerie', Watch Tower ideas spread through the Katanga, mingling with the operations of mcapi vendors, and removing witchcraft fears in a far less drastic form than had the mwana lesa variant.[1]

The discovery of the witch-killings in the pedicle in 1926 and the defeat of the askaris sent to arrest Nyirenda, led to an operation militaire along the Muniengashi river and the outlawing of the practice of witchcraft accusation, which had until that time been tolerated in southern Katanga.[2] After Nyirenda's flight and arrest, Watch Tower witchcraft eradicators continued their operations, however. One Ephraim Kabaso, a follower of Jeremiah Gondwe, was arrested at Sakania in the belief that he was mwana lesa, and other Northern Rhodesian Watch Tower adherents who moved across the border at Ndola were similarly treated.[3] The Belgian repression of the Watch Tower movement was only partially successful, however; as has been noted, followers of Jeremiah Gondwe continued in the late 1920's to preach the Watch Tower gospel in the rural areas of the Katanga mining belt, but such was the aftermath of Nyirenda's activities that it was recorded that 'Mufumbi's and Mopala's, the areas of Mwana Lesa's activities in 1925, seem hostile to the intrusion of catechists of this sect'.[4]

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[1] Rapport Annuel, 1934, pp. 9, 267.

[2] 'Crimes et Superstitions Indigènes', Revue de Droit, II, 1926, p. 201.

[3] ZA 1/10/1, 'Chirupula' Stephenson to E.S.B. Tagart, 2 Feb. 1926; Ndola Patrol Report, 24 Nov. 1925.

[4] SEC/NAT/312, Vice-Gouverneur Général du Katanga to Governor, Northern Rhodesia, 9 Sept. 1929.

The most important source of Watch Tower ideas in the Katanga was, however, not so much the Ndola area as one of the major sources of Katangan labour, the Luapula valley. Luapulans had come into contact with the Watch Tower movement both on the early Northern Rhodesian mines - Ndola, Bwana Mkubwa, Kansanshi - and, from 1924, in the valley itself.[1] The emergence of the Watch Tower movement on the Katanga mines amongst expatriate Northern Rhodesian workers was consequently of a different order from the visiting evangelism of Gondwe and Nyirenda. Attitudes and organisational structures which had arisen locally were, very much as amongst the lakeside Tonga, transported to the setting of the mine compound. Indeed the first leaders of the Watch Tower in Elizabethville were men who had risen to prominence within the Watch Tower in the Luapula valley - Jacob Napoleon Mumbwa and Pearson Musomba - whose followers were known as the banopoleoni.[2] In some respects conditions on the Katanga mining belt were similar to those on Northern Rhodesian mines in this period. The demand for labour was far higher than the local centres of population could meet, with the result that a dense concentration of many different peoples in an initially sparsely populated area was established. In 1931, a time of large scale Watch Tower activity on the mines, some 20,000 foreign Africans were employed in the Katanga, the majority from Northern Rhodesia, but also including Angolans, Tanganyikans and Nyasalanders. The majority of Northern

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[1] Cf. above, p. 292.

[2] Cf. J. Ragoen, 'De Watch-Towers of Kitawala in Kongo', Nieuw Afrika, LXII, 7, 1956, p. 298.

Rhodesians were from the Bemba-speaking districts.[1] This mixed tribal milieu was, as has been suggested for both the Southern and Northern Rhodesian employment centres, an important factor contributing to the appeal of such supra-tribal, integrative associations as the Watch Tower. The degree of administrative control over workers in the Katanga was, however, qualitatively different from that in the Rhodesias. The fear of proletarianising the work-force, the move away from migrant labour, and the unchallenged hegemony of the company rule of the U.M.H.K. combined to create a situation in which there was a low degree of social mobility between urban and rural areas, and a high degree of regimentation within the compound.

It was against this background of a rigid intolerance of independent religious movements and the strict control of associations amongst the workers that the banapoleoni Watch Tower movement took shape. It is significant that the existence of this movement escaped the attention of the Belgian authorities for some half a dozen years; it was not until 1931 that Musomba was arrested, after an investigation into the widespread refusal of workers to buy goods in the company store had revealed that Musomba was preaching the advent of American negroes, liberation from Belgian rule, and a period of plenty.[2] The organisation of the movement appears to have primarily been geared to the maintenance of secrecy, until the upsurge of millennial hopes at the

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[1] SEC/NAT/72, Report on Rhodesian Natives in the Katanga, 1932.

[2] ZA 1/15/M/1, Notes on the Kitawala Movement in the Belgian Congo and Northern Rhodesia made by the British Vice-Consul, Elizabethville, at an Interview with M de Beauffort, Chef du Service Administratif de la Justice, 9 Jan. 1932.

time of the depression made its existence apparent. A strictly hierarchical division of functions between elders, deacons, and followers was noted; meetings were held only at night, in remote places, with frequently changing venues; sentries were posted at all gatherings, and no singing was permitted.[1] Despite the deportations and arrests which followed the discovery of this movement, the Watch Tower continued to spread in the labour centres.[2]

During the early 1930's, industrial expansion in the Katanga took place on a large scale. The completion of the railway to Port Franqui in 1928 and the Benguela railway in 1931, the opening of new mines and processing plants in the Jadotville district, and the mushroom growth of labour compounds for Africans around these centres, led to an inrush of Greeks, South Africans, Italians, and Belgians, as well as of Africans from most areas of central Africa. Although the establishment of a settled labour force at Elizabethville and the discovery of the Watch Tower activity by the police led to its virtual disappearance there, the movement rapidly spread to Jadotville in 1936,[3] to Albertville in 1937,[4] and subsequently to most of the urban centres of Katanga province.[5] The shanty towns - described by Grévisse as 'véritables taches de lépre dans la brousse sans verdure'[6] - were the centre for numerous ethnic associations

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[1] Ibid.

[2] On these deportations, cf. above, p. 294.

[3] Rapport Annuel, 1936, p. 8.

[4] Ibid., 1937, p. 7.

[5] Ibid., 1939-1945, passim.

[6] F. Grévisse, 'Quelques Aspects de l'Organisation des Indigènes déracinés résidant en territoire de Jadotville', Le Trait d'Union (Antwerp), 1936; cf. also G. Baumer, Les Centres Indigènes Extra-Coutumiers au Congo Belge (Paris, 1939).

catering for the needs of workers. Generally speaking, these associations were strictly supervised specifically in order to counteract any political demands which might have arisen,[1] and some missionaries even founded such associations deliberately as a counter-attraction to the Watch Tower movement.[2] Just as in the Southern Rhodesian labour centres, however, the Watch Tower had a wide supra-tribal appeal, an organisational structure which enabled it to avoid total suppression, and it possessed a particular attraction for the semi-proletarianised worker.

During the 1930's, then, the Watch Tower spread throughout the rural areas of southern Katanga as a witchcraft eradication movement, while migrant workers - who doubtless also played a part in this rural diffusion - extended its ideas into the network of labour compounds springing up in the major settler areas of Katanga and Kivu provinces. As on the copperbelt, it appears that the movement appealed particularly to workers of some status:

> Fondant sur l'interpretation des textes bibliques des revendications sociales et politiques, les doctrines [de Kitawala] s'accréditent surtout chez certains noirs évolués sans atteindre toutefois la masse des travailleurs et les populations agricoles.[3]

Initially this group comprised Nyasas and Northern Rhodesian Africans, but with the discouragement of labour from the south and the industrial development of the upper Katanga, it appears

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[1] F. Grévisse, 'Le Centre Extra-Coutumier d'Elizabethville', Institut Royal Colonial Belge: Sciences Morales et Politiques, XXI, 1951.

[2] Cf. Legrand and Thoreau, Les Bénédictins au Katanga (Bruges, 1935), pp. 150-151.

[3] Rapport Annuel, 1936, p. 8.

increasingly that the labour elite who particularly adopted the Watch Tower ideology were the Luba. By virtue of the operation of Catholic missions, the proximity of the Port Francqui-Sakania rail link, and their own readiness to respond to innovation, the Luba of the southern Kasai district took over many of the skilled jobs on the mines and railways.[1] Much in the manner of the Nyasaland Tonga, these Luba workers appear to have been the key group who spread Watch Tower ideas along the network of road, rail and river communications linking the southern Katanga with the commercial centres and plantations in Kivu province. With the penetration of the Watch Tower ideology into the eastern districts, it began to merge with local ideas and demands, losing its external origins, and developing as a Congolese social movement.

The Belgian reaction to the Watch Tower movement was immediate and strongly antagonistic. Not only was it associated with the killings and revolutionary preaching of mwana lesa, but as an African association outside the control of church, state or company it ran strongly counter to the Belgian colonial philosophy of heavy-handed paternalism. A work of fiction treating the Watch Tower in horrific terms - 'telle une gigantèsque arraignée, partant d'Elizabethville, le Kitawala a tissé sa toile, et elle enserve tout l'Est de la Colonie', and likening it to a Communist revolutionary movement - was a not unfair reflection of attitudes of the day.[2] Blame for the

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[1] R. Lemarchand, Political Awakening in the Belgian Congo (Los Angeles, 1964), pp. 97-98.

[2] L. Debertry, Kitawala (Editions Essor du Congo, Elizabethville, 1953), esp. p. 27.

movement was laid at the door of the Protestant missions[1] - who in turn blamed the Communist Party in South Africa,[2] and the Northern Rhodesian administration[3] - rather than on the social and political conditions on the mine compounds, and a policy of repression was instituted. Foreigners were deported in terms of the regulations governing African associations, while local Africans were exiled from the urban areas - very much in the Southern African manner of 'endorsing out' - to 'centres d'amendement'.[4] This technique was used systematically against Watch Tower adherents, followers of Simon Kimbangu, and others regarded as politically undesirable, in the belief that 'la rélégation est le plus sûr moyen de combattre les élément de trouble'.[5] With the increasing popularity of the movement amongst Congolese, it was decided in 1937 to construct penal settlements in remote rural areas, the 'colonies agricoles pour rélégués dangereux' (colagrels), to which the leaders of the many politico-religious movements in the Congo were exiled in the post-war years. This policy had two major and unintended effects: it threw adherents of the Watch Tower movement, followers of Simon Toko, Simon Kimbangu, and members of the Mission des Noirs - an independent offshoot of the Salvation

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[1] Cf. e.g. R. Brou, 'Le Prophétisme dans les Eglises Protestantes Indigènes d'Afrique', Congo, I, 1931.

[2] Congo Mission News, LXXXVIII, 1934, p. 24; Legrand and Thoreau, op. cit., p. 151.

[3] ZA 1/15/M/1, British Vice-Consul, Elizabethville, to Sec. Nat. Affairs, 18 Sept. 1934; cf. also above, pp. 295-296.

[4] R. Wauthion, op. cit.

[5] Rapport Annuel, 1930, p. 97.

Army under the leadership of Simon Mpadi[1] - together, thus bringing about something of an ideological synthesis in these movements; and it spread the movement to remote areas which it otherwise may well not have influenced. For example, escapees from the 'colagrels' at Bossobolo and Yakomo in Equateur province converted the mass of the population in the surrounding Basankusu and Befale districts to the Watch Tower, leading the Belgians to station troops in the area.[2] The successive provincial bans on the Watch Tower movement - Katanga in 1937, Orientale in 1943, Kivu in 1944, Equateur in 1946, Léopoldville in 1948, and in the Belgian Congo as a whole in 1949[3] - perhaps reflect the rapid extension of the movement as much by way of administrative action as through the slower processes of rural diffusion and communication along the labour routes.

The rapid development of the movement in isolated parts of the Belgian Congo, its fusion with local forms, and not least the hostility of the administration towards it, ensured that the W.T.B.T.S. had little if any influence over it. Jehovah's Witnesses in South Africa were aware of the growth of the Watch Tower movement in the Congo, and in 1932 approached the Belgians for permission to send in official organisers, which was refused.[4] A history of Jehovah's Witnesses in the

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[1] Cf. Balandier, Sociologie Actuelle de l'Afrique Noire, pp. 448-463.

[2] Rapport Annuel, 1938, p. 10, 1945-1946, p. 9.

[3] F. Gevaerts, Vadé Mecum à l'Usage du Service Territorial, (Brussels, 1953), pp. 30-33.

[4] 'History of the Development of the Work of Jehovah's Witnesses in the Katanga', (unpublished typescript, W.T.B.T.S., Brussels, 19 May 1964, in the author's possession).

Congo drawn up by the W.T.B.T.S. in Brussels - a document mainly concerned to disassociate the sect from the African independent movement - reveals that contact with the African Watch Tower in the Congo before the official recognition of the W.T.B.T.S. on June 10th 1958 was minimal, and that the indigenous movement had by that stage become uncontrollable by them.[1] Nevertheless, at least in the Elizabethville district, African attempts at establishing a Watch Tower church had led to the formation of a branch structure connecting adherents in the Katanga with sections of the movement in Nyasaland and the Rhodesias. The main mover in these organisational attempts appears to have been a Luapulan, Ponde Earlyface Nathaniel Siwila, who having disowned the independent movement - 'Napoleon and James Mfula and Sandock, these three men they are destroyed the land with wonderful teaching and the babbling senseless speaking only lying' - sought permission to establish a recognised African church, and became the main supplier of W.T.B.T.S. literature to the Katanga followers.[2] Outside the southern Katanga, however, the Watch Tower movement developed in directions not dictated by the guardians of sectarian orthodoxy in the south.

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[1] Ibid.

[2] ZA 1/10/1, Siwila to Magistrate, Kawambwa, 4 Dec. 1926; cf. also KDD 1/4/1, W.T.B.T.S. to Siwila, 1 May 1935. On Mfula and Sandock, cf. pp. 291, 294, 299.

2. Watch Tower Rebellions

The political quality of the Watch Tower movement, particularly in Katanga and Kivu provinces, may perhaps be seen as twofold, ideological and organisational. A distinction should also be drawn between the urban movement and the rural movement. Generally, the main ideological themes were those which have been noted for other parts of south central Africa - the overthrow of European government and religion by some supernatural intervention leading to a theocratic state; the demand for racial equality, higher wages, and the removal of the tax; and the idea of Africa for the Africans.[1] Organisationally, a functionally defined hierarchy of preachers, deacons and elders was established, based on a fluid and interlinked cell structure. At the level of the mine compound, the Watch Tower movement was in the 1930's and 1940's perhaps the largest and most significant African association in the Katanga: while a quietist ideology and sect-like qualities did slowly emerge amongst its adherents, by virtue of its supra-tribal form and hostility towards the whites it became the vehicle for a number of workers' protests, of which the rebellion at Manono in 1941 is perhaps the most interesting example. The contribution of the movement to an emerging proletarian consciousness was important for the development of Congolese anti-colonial nationalism, as Lemarchand has suggested,[2] but this was perhaps not as significant as the rural resistance movements for which

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[1] Cf. Paulus, op. cit., p. 64.

[2] Lemarchand, op. cit., pp. 132, 171-172.

it provided the vehicle. Generally as a rural phenomenon the Watch Tower commenced as a witchcraft eradication movement and evolved into a highly localised cult, possibly fusing with customary secret societies,[1] but where conditions of extreme political fragmentation and a sense of oppression existed, it provided the basis for a millennial resistance movement, as amongst the Kumu in 1944. The Kumu revolt is the outstanding example of the politically revolutionary content of the Watch Tower movement in Africa.

With the increased demands placed upon their colony by the Belgians during the war, industrial production also expanded, drawing workers from the southern Katanga into the upper Lualaba area, and the area of operation of the Comité Nationale du Kivu (C.N.K.) in the lake area. Watch Tower activity spread to Ankoro, Albertville, Baudouinville, Kamina and most of the other labour centres in the south-east Congo.[2] At Manono, linked to the Lualaba river by a railhead, the Géomines company had established a tin mine, where, in accordance with the policy of stabilising the work force, the bulk of the labourers had been recruited from amongst the local riverine Luba.[3] These 'Lubaised' peoples formed a stateless, segmentary society, lacking the institutions of chieftainship which Belgian administrators sought to utilise at the local level.[4] It was amongst these villagers and workers that the Watch Tower message of millennial

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[1] Cf. J. van den Bossche, Ethnographie du Congo Belge et du Ruanda-Urundi (Brussels, 1958), p. 116.

[2] Rapport Annuel, 1939-1945, passim.

[3] Lemarchand, op. cit., p. 101.

[4] Cf. E. Verhulpen, Baluba et Balubaisés du Katanga (Antwerp, 1936).

rebellion was preached in 1941. The chief prophet - an unnamed labour migrant from the south - preached in secret that the whites were about to leave the country, that an age of plenty was at hand, and that all should prepare for the great day. An informal organisation of lesser prophets spread the message in the surrounding districts, goats and dogs were killed in large numbers, and preparations were made for the expected access of wealth. On the appointed day, some 1,000 believers, dressed in white and waving palm-fronds, marched in a hymn-singing procession on the small Belgian administrative post. The flag and mast were torn down, and the few whites who had taken refuge inside were surrounded and beaten by the adherents, while a large crowd waited expectantly. The arrival of soldiers and mining officials quickly put the Watch Tower followers to flight, however, and mass arrests and imprisonment signalled the end of this short-lived attempt to bring about Armageddon.[1]

It is possible that the close relationship between workers and the local populace give this millennial rising the characteristics of an ethnic movement, as Young has suggested generally for the political role of the Watch Tower in the Congo,[2] but it would appear that the grievances which led to this millennial hope of the overthrow of European rule were primarily those of workers. The actions and beliefs compare interestingly with the confrontation over tax and wages which took place in the Broken Hill compound under Watch Tower auspices,[3] and a number

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[1] Josse, 'De l'Hérésie à l'Emeute: Les Méfaits du Kitawala', Grands Lacs, LXI, 1946, pp. 71-76.

[2] C. Young, Politics in the Congo (Princeton, 1965), pp. 252-253.

[3] Cf. above, pp. 273-275.

of other contemporary instances of mobilisation amongst workers suggest that the influence of the Watch Tower at Manono was similar to these. Large scale rioting broke out in Elizabethville at about this time, provoked by specific grievances over wages and working conditions, which commenced with the excited gathering of workers believing imminent change was at hand, who were fired on in panic by soldiers.[1] At Luluabourg in 1944, shortly after Watch Tower cells were noticed as being active there,[2] there were large-scale strikes and a mutiny by the force publique, accompanied by rumours of the arrival of American negroes; the timing of the strikes seems to have been decided by an order requiring the compulsory vaccination of the African population for smallpox. It was the opinion of the commander of the troops which crushed the protests that the Watch Tower was partly responsible:

> Le mouvement Kitawala d'inspiration négre Américaine, ... a contribué à établir chez les indigènes le climat mental nécessaire à la propagation de théories aussi subversives qu'absurdes.[3]

These events resemble the strikes and protests of workers in Southern and Northern Rhodesia, in that widespread millennial rumours and in some cases the active leadership of prophets of the movement were important in preparing and mobilising people to protest against their working conditions, and to confront colonial authority. While this confrontation may often have been only symbolic and limited in understanding, it nevertheless indicates a vision of change and an ideological commitment amongst urban workers which formed an important stage in

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[1] Cf. Lemarchand, op. cit., p. 112.

[2] Rapport Annuel, 1939-1945, p. 9.

[3] A. Gilliaert, 'Mutineries au Congo Belge', Zaïre, I, 1947, pp. 493, 507.

developing anti-colonial ideas.

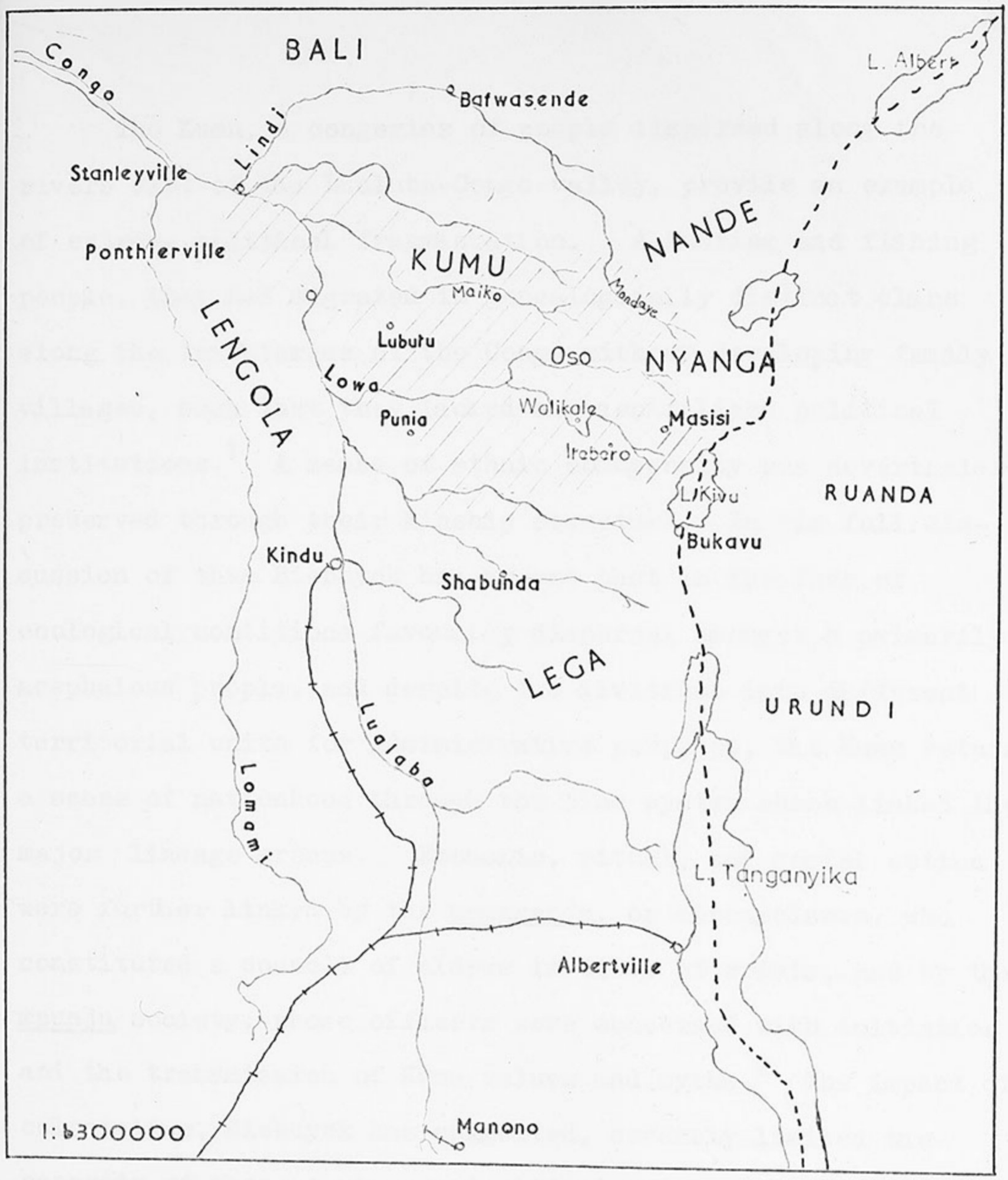
It was not until Watch Tower ideas penetrated into Orientale province that a rural movement of resistance came to be based on it. The Belgian administration itself had expressed fears that if the Watch Tower movement reached the Maniema district, the heartland of the Arabised area of the Congo, it might reawaken memories of rebellion. In part this fear was based on the resistance to colonial authority advocated by an Islamic sect, Mulidi, at this time,[1] and in part on the recollection that this was one of the last and most difficult areas to be brought under Belgian rule.[2] Remote from the main administrative centres of Bukavu and Stanleyville, and with virtually no communications other than along the many feeder rivers of the Congo, the area inhabited by the Kumu peoples was amongst the most isolated in the colony. It was not without commercial significance, however, as its climate was suitable for the cultivation of rubber. With the new demands for such strategic products placed upon the Belgian Congo by the 'effort de guerre', the enforced collection of rubber, both wild and cultivated - abandoned since the days of the Free State - was reintroduced in 1942 under the control of the C.N.K.[3] The Kumu, however, perhaps because of their remoteness from the old trading and slaving routes, appear to have been relatively untouched by Islam; this was rather the religion of their traditional enemies, the Lega. When resistance to the Belgians developed amongst the Kumu in the Masisi district in 1944, it was opposed rather than supported by the Arabised elements amongst them.

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[1] Rapport Annuel, 1936, p. 8.

[2] Cf. Anon., 'La Force Publique de sa Naissance à 1914', A.R.S.O.M., Sciences Morales et Politiques, XXVII, 1952.

[3] Young, op. cit., pp. 222-223; Rapport Annuel, 1939-1945, passim.



MAP VIII. THE KUMU IN KIVU PROVINCE.

The Kumu, a congeries of people dispersed along the rivers east of the Lualuba-Congo valley, provide an example of extreme political fragmentation. A hunting and fishing people, they had migrated in genealogically distinct clans along the tributaries of the Congo without developing family villages, such that they lacked any centralised political institutions.[1] A sense of ethnic homogeneity was nevertheless preserved through their kinship structure. In his full discussion of this Biebuyck has argued that in the face of ecological conditions favouring dispersal amongst a primarily acephalous people, and despite the divisions into different territorial units for administrative purposes, the Kumu retained a sense of nationhood through the clan system which linked the major lineage groups. Economic, ritual, and social action were further linked by the menaganja, or circumcisers, who constituted a council of elders in times of crisis, and by the mpunju society, whose officers were concerned with initiation and the transmission of Kumu values and myths.[2] The impact of colonialism, Biebuyck has suggested, severely limited the capacity of these customary institutions to provide unity and leadership:

> Dans la société Kumu, le circoncision et le mpunju constituaient une force d'intégration et une sanction mystique de premier ordre. Ces deux organisations faisaient partie intégrale des orientations majeure de cette culture: mythomanie en relation avec une totémisme désintégré; individualisme en relation avec la différenciation et la scission; cérémonialisme en relation avec la complexité des rites de

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[1] H. Van Geluwe, Les Bira et les Peuplades Limitrophes (Tervuren, 1956), pp. 19, 116.

[2] D. Biebuyck, 'La Société Kumu face au Kitawala', Zaïre, XI, 1957.

passage. En décourageant et en abolissant ces deux organismes par des actes administratifs, en omettant de substituer à ces complexes cérémoniels et rituels à fonction sociale de nouvelles institutions équivalentes, on a créé un sérieux vide et un profond déséquilibre dans le statut des personnes et des groupes.[1]

This situation of political fragmentation and a submerged sense of identity compares interestingly with that of the Wiko in Barotseland - the Chokwe, Luchazi and Mbunda immigrants living under Lozi rule for whom the Watch Tower become a movement of millennial resistance to both Lozi and settler rule.[2] The Kumu, however, were ethnically homogeneous, had no previous experience of primary resistance or rebellion, and constituted a political nation in the sense that they shared a common history, religious beliefs, and material culture, and moreover regarded themselves as inter-linked through kinship. In this, they are perhaps more comparable to the northern Shona. Watch Tower ideas were adopted by the Kumu in a total and lasting way, however, rather than through a piecemeal and temporary fusion of its ideology and structure with pre-existing institutions. The first stage of this syncretism was a millennial revolt.

Watch Tower ideas entered the administrative circonscriptions of Banango-Babutugani, Haut Lubutu, and Mandimba-Wasa in the Kivu-Orientale area probably in 1937, with the exiling to the 'colagrel' at Lubutu of two Luba Watch Tower leaders, Ilunga and Matombo, who had been arrested in Jadotville.[3] In 1942, one Bushiri

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[1] Ibid., p. 34.

[2] Cf. above, pp. 334-341.

[3] Rapport Annuel, 1937, p. 7; cf. also Debertry, Kitawala, p. 8.

escaped from this camp and began to spread the word of the Watch Tower millennium in the surrounding district. Bushiri, described as being literate and probably mission-educated, claimed to have died for a fortnight and returned from the dead in a white aeroplane, bearing a message from God that the whites were foreigners and should be destroyed; he rapidly attracted a large popularity in the Utanda district north of Masisi in 1943.[1] Bushiri's *modus operandi* was at first that of the eradicator of witchcraft: the rite of baptism was joined with that of divination, using two Bibles and a flask of coloured water. His activist message of imminent liberation soon led, however, to a movement of armed resistance.

Initially, Bushiri's revolt was marked not so much for its hostility towards Europeans as to foreign Africans in the Kumu area. Starvation resulting from the neglect of crops following enforced cotton and rubber cultivation had brought many into the area in search of game and fish, and there were a large number of migrants, mainly Nyanga, working on the rubber plantations in the area. Some hundreds of these were killed by Bushiri's followers.[2] While it is possible that some of these deaths resulted from suspected cases of witchcraft, it seems more probable that this was part of the growing resistance to forced labour practices. The majority of those who were killed at this stage were functionaries of the C.N.K. involved in enforcing the collection of rubber; many had been to Catholic missions, and were working as territorial guards, policemen, tax and census officials, 'moniteurs et plantons de caoutchouc'.[3]

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[1] *Rapport Annuel*, 1939-1945, p. 9.

[2] *Ibid*.

[3] A. Bribosia, 'L'Assassinat par Bushiri des Auxiliaires Indigènes de Masisi', *La Voix du Congolais*, I, 1945, pp. 4-6.

Bushiri, it was reported, gave a choice to these to join his movement or be killed. The largest source of recruits was from amongst the porters and rubber harvesters, however, who, on hearing Bushiri's message of salvation, it was stated, 'hadden...de vrachten in het bos gesmeten, alle diensten geweigerd en de rubberoogst gestaakt, en de identiteitskaarten verbrand'.[1]

Bushiri, now hailed as the mukombozi wa yesu (son of God), organised a group of local leaders - the names Alleluya, Katshaka and Fuemba recur - and with a following ~~of~~ several hundred strong, armed with bows, spears, and muzzle-loaders, headed south from Masisi towards the centre of the rubber-planting district. His intention was to destroy all the whites, and it was claimed by a local missionary who witnessed the revolt that Bushiri sent a message to this effect to the Belgian administrator at Masisi.[2] Bushiri's followers attacked a series of rubber plantations, recruiting the workers, and kidnapped the sole European planter, de Schrywer, in the Mondaye district. News of de Schrywer's capture filtered through to Bukavu by February, 1944, and a military campaign against Bushiri's movement was mounted. While the small garrison at Masisi started searching for Bushiri, using Nyanga intermediaries, a large force of some 300 soldiers set out from Bukavu.[3] Bushiri continued his attacks on the colonial presence by destroying the

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[1] J. Ragoen, 'De Watch-Towers of Getuigen van Jehova in Midden-Afrika', Nieuw-Afrika, LXXII, 8, 1956, p. 300. 'They dumped their loads in the bush, refused to work, abandoned the harvesting of rubber, and burned their identity cards.'

[2] Ibid., p. 299.

[3] A. Matagne, 'Exploits du Kitawala', La Revue Nationale, CCCII, 1958, pp. 311-313.

C.N.K. station at the village of Niamasa, where he also took another two Europeans into captivity, and headed towards the confluence of the Oso and Lowa rivers, presumably aiming at the settler areas in the Bukavu district. The Masisi garrison force launched two unsuccessful attacks against the Watch Tower following first at Osokari, and them at night across the river at Djambi. At Djambi, some 50 of Bushiri's followers were shot before the garrison ran out of ammunition; they were prevented from fording the river, however, and were forced to retire. Meanwhile the main force from Bukavu, having visited the deserted station at Niamasa, were making their way to Djambi. The rear of their column, mainly consisting of Lega soldiers who had offered their services against the Kumu Watch Tower movement, was ambushed unsuccessfully by the Watch Tower, and the two Belgian forces united. They were prevented from fording the river, however, by the bullets and arrows from the opposite bank. After a number of forced marches in search of a place to cross the Lowa river, the Belgian forces retraced their steps to Walikale where there was a pontoon, crossed, and advanced on Bushiri, who had encamped at Osokari.

A final attack, after a fortnight of minor affrays, was made on Bushiri on March 6th 1944, where the Watch Tower claims that bullets would turn to water and that Bushiri possessed a magic lance which would destroy the whites, were put to the test:

> De aanvallers....moesten zich, met de bajonet op 't geweer, een weg banen tusen de opstandige vrouwen en kinderen, die in rangorde opgesteld waren voor Bushiri's leger dat bestond uit 500 man, gewapend met lansen,

> kapmessen en bogen. De opstandelingen stonden eerst te wachten op Bushiri met zijn lans. Maar ziende dat die magische lans geen uitwerking had, sloegen ze allen, met Bushiri aan het hoofd, op de vlucht.[1]

After this defeat, the repression of the revolt was rapid. Bushiri, Alleluya, and three other leaders were executed in Elizabethville in 1945; a further 72 were sentenced to death, but their sentences commuted; and 48 were sentenced to life imprisonment. For six months, soldiers were stationed in the Lubutu-Walikale area.[2]

The failure of the hopes generated by this millennial rebellion by no means led to the fading away of Watch Tower ideas, however. By 1945 the ideology had spread to Ponthierville, where a chief on tour was attacked, and to Lubero, north of Masisi, where there were further arrests of Watch Tower supporters.[3] In 1956 when Biebuyck and Gérard undertook fieldwork amongst the Kumu, it was noted that the ideas and organisation of the movement were general in the southern quarter of Kumu territory;[4] and by 1960 it had spread to include an area bounded by Stanleyville, Ponthierville, Punia, Shabunda, Masisi and Bafwasende, where it lent itself to the support of a new movement of regional opposition, the Mouvement Nationale Congolaise aile Lumumba, and continued in force into the post-

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[1] Ragoen, op. cit., p. 301. 'The attackers...with bayonets fixed, had to force a path through the women and children, standing in formation in front of Bushiri's army, which consisted of 500 men, armed with spears, axes, and bows. The rebels first waited for Bushiri with his spear. But seeing that the magic spear had no effect, they all fled, with Bushiri taking the lead'.

[2] Matagne, op. cit., p. 313.

[3] Rapport Annuel, 1945-1946, p. 12; 1947, p. 13.

[4] Biebuyck, op. cit.; Gérard, 'La Grande Initiation chez les Bakumu du Nord-est et les Populations Avoisinantes', Zaire, X, 1956.

independence period.[1] It is outside the scope of this study to examine these further developments of the movement, other than to take note of the conclusions of Biebuyck and Gérard that the Watch Tower continued in the aftermath of Bushiri's rebellion to provide the organisational basis, symbols, and ideology for an attempt at maintaining social and political cohesion by the Kumu. The beginnings of this process lay in the Kumu response to Bushiri's predictions; and the continuing adherence of the Kumu to the symbols and organisational structure of the Watch Tower, if not to the explicitly millennial sections of its ideology, testifies to the depth of penetration of the movement in Kumu society. This seems to have arisen by virtue of the extreme conditions of fragmentation amongst the Kumu, the outlawing of those traditional institutions whose operation prevented this disorganisation from becoming anomic, and the critical time at which Watch Tower ideas were introduced into the area, when economic exploitation was intense.

There are further aspects of Bushiri's rebellion which should be examined. Of particular interest is the manner in which belief and commitment was sustained in the millennial promise until the successful attack by Belgian troops proved these false. There is no mention of the use of W.T.B.T.S. literature in the commentaries on the rising, nor is there more than fragmentary evidence of the nature of Bushiri's preaching. What is remarkable, however, is that the rituals of violence of the movement bear a strong resemblance to the images of killing

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[1] Cf. Biebuyck, op. cit., p. 35; 'History of the Development of the Work of Jehovah's Witnesses in the Katanga'; Greschat, Kitawala, pp. 97-105, where letters of independent leaders of the Watch Tower in the Stanleyville district are reprinted.

and humiliation contained in much W.T.B.T.S. literature of the day. It is significant that the three Europeans were captured rather than killed by Bushiri: these, indeed, were later freed by friendly villagers. The whites were publicly stripped of their clothing, and subjected to severe daily beatings.[1] The symbolic importance of this subjugation of the representatives of colonial rule may perhaps be compared with the action of John Chilembwe and his followers in displaying the decapitated head of an unpopular white planter.[2] The revolt also clearly indicates the pre-millennial idea that supernatural intervention on behalf of the believers would only occur once they themselves had demonstrated their commitment, and taken up arms. The course of the revolt is marked by a steady escalation in scale and intent: initially, witchcraft eradication was practised, but this very soon went beyond the boundaries of the normal inter-personal suspicions at the village level. Hostility was readily externalised and directed against foreign Africans, who were not only hunting and fishing in Kumu territory, but were also seen as collaborators with the state in enforcing rubber collection. The choice given to these to join the movement suggests that it was at this stage that the ideology became explicitly Africanist, and perhaps more than a Kumu movement. The idea of a confrontation between black and white led to active military mobilisation, and the march towards Bukavu, attacking and destroying the rubber plantations en route. The ultimate millennial claim of supernatural aid and invulnerability was finally destroyed at the

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[1] Matagne, op. cit., pp. 312-313.

[2] Shepperson and Price, Independent African, pp. 270-271.

pitched battle at Osokari, where Bushiri's army was dispersed.

In mobilising popular resistance in this fashion, Bushiri supplanted customary political authority. Prophetic leadership succeeded in providing the ideology and symbols of resistance and a new cohesiveness which the fragmented kinship system and the suppressed circumcision and initiation societies could not. Clan heads and the few chefs medaillés in the district did not however oppose the movement. The resistance inspired by the Watch Tower did not follow lines of political or social cleavage, but rather sought to mobilise the Kumu as a nation. It is significant in fact that the only elements amongst the Kumu who were hostile to the movement were the bangwana, Islamised persons, and certain Arabised chiefs. Chief Husseni at Djambi supplied rafts for the Masisi garrison force, and the Arabised chief at Walikale contributed soldiers.[1] The other major enemies were of course the Lega and Nyanga, long-standing opponents of the Kumu. The crucial factor in the development of the Watch Tower movement into one of armed resistance in the eastern Congo is thus perhaps that it came to be coterminous with an ethnic group, and contributed towards the attempt to establish a sense of nationhood. This is a similar process to that discussed by Balandier in his study of the role of the Kimbanguist movement amongst the Kongo,[2] and would appear also to support the arguments of Lemarchand, Young and others that a characteristic stage of development in anti-colonial African politics in the Congo was the emergence of regional, ethnically defined

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[1] Matagne, op. cit., pp. 312-313.

[2] G. Balandier, 'Messianisme et Nationalisme en Afrique Noire', Cahiers Internationaux de Sociologie, XIV, 1953.

movements, evolving from syncretic religious movements.[1]

From the comparative point of view, however, the concept of an ethnic national group as the essential prerequisite of millennial resistance is perhaps rather too general. When set against other instances of rural radicalism inspired by the Watch Tower movement - such as amongst the Mambwe and Namwanga in North-Eastern Rhodesia, the Shona in Southern Rhodesia, and the Wiko peoples in Barotseland - the major variables affecting the reference group would appear not necessarily to include this type of ethnic nationalism. The events at Manono and Masisi rather underline the conditions for receptiveness to millennial doctrines that there should be isolation, accompanied by the awareness of the new culture and possibly of the superior access to it of others; resentment of the imposition of external authority, the inadequacy of customary political communicators, and a readiness to accept prophetic leadership; a sense of economic exploitation; and a desire for an explanation of the new conditions of oppression which sharply distinguishes between the group and those who oppress it, and which holds out the promise of successful confrontation. These factors operated particularly strongly in the south-eastern Congo in the 1930's and 1940's, a period which saw the rapid intensification of social and political pressures through new industrial demands and the unbalanced relationship between town and country. It was these overall circumstances, comparable to the situation in the semi-industrialised, settler areas of the Rhodesias, which enabled

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[1] Lemarchand, op. cit., Chap. VIII; Young, op. cit., Chaps. XI-XII.

the Watch Tower movement - the most powerful ideological current available to the relatively isolated provinces of Katanga, Kivu and Orientale - to spread into this area in the form which it did.

CHAPTER X

CONCLUSION

Tracing the spread of an identifiable body of ideas across south central Africa has been a major theme of the preceding chapters. It has been noted that the study of diffusion in itself is not a sufficiently cogent framework of reference for such an approach, if only by virtue of the fact that the form and content of the movement at a given time and place depended in part on variables external to this process of diffusion. The approach has rather been to see the Watch Tower as an innovative social movement, whose fluctuating boundaries and local variations illustrate some aspects of social change and the reaction to change. Worsley's comment, that in general the distinction between active and passive millennialism is more important than that between millennial and non-millennial movements, is relevant here: activist millennialism is this-worldly, innovative, and an agent of change, despite the futuristic orientation of its promises and its supernatural salvationism, in a way in which the passive awaiting of the new dispensation is not.[1] Thus the factors affecting diffusion may be seen not simply as a series of constraints or favouring circumstances, but from the perspective that these are interlinked processes basic to the emergence of new forms of association and social attitudes in African society. The conclusions on the nature of the Watch Tower will be drawn from this point of view.

First, how clearly defined was the zone of impact of the Watch Tower? This is a difficult question to pursue, since the gaps in our knowledge of the spread of the movement are

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[1] P. Worsley, The Trumpet Shall Sound (1957), p. 236.

considerable, and elements of the Watch Tower fused with prophetic movements over a wider area than has been dealt with here. These did not regard themselves as explicitly belonging to the Watch Tower, however, nor always as part of a wider African movement. The limits of the organisational attempts of those who saw the Watch Tower as an African church need to be taken into account in establishing some broad geographical boundaries. Yet it is suggestive that the three mining belts of settler Africa (excluding South Africa) - the Rhodesian goldfields and coalmines, the Northern Rhodesian copperbelt, and the mines of the south-eastern Belgian Congo - provide the central focus of the movement, and that the migrant labourer was the major bearer. It may be argued that this was a distinctive region in colonial Africa, from the point of view that not only were social changes interlinked and comparable in nature, but also that the colonial situation was a common one, and that the specific circumstances here were particularly conducive to the spread of a millennial movement.

The settler areas of south central Africa were generally marked by intensive labour exploitation, administrative control which was neither particularly penetrating or effective outside the urban areas, and an only partial mission impact. This was notably the case in the Belgian Congo, and least true for Southern Rhodesia. Generally, too, labour policies and settler attitudes aimed to prevent, or at least retard, 'detribalisation', urbanisation, and the integration of Africans into a common society; as African participation in the settler economy inevitably brought new aspirations into being, so these attitudes

of exclusiveness hardened. The migrant system which existed in these territories, despite occasional experiments at establishing a settled labour force, prolonged the period in which Africans could be regarded as bound by their tribal culture, participating only temporarily in European civilisation, yet at the same time policies designed to promote labour mobility were instituted which undermined the economic basis of this tribal culture. The interests of the chartered companies remained primary in the governing of these colonies, despite occasional clashes between these and the imperial view, with the result that African social development was subordinated to the interests of the shareholder. Expenditure on health and welfare was minimal; and education was left in the hands of the missionaries. North of the Zambezi land alienation took place on a piecemeal basis only, and the smallness of the settler community, the sparseness of the African population, and the absence of any thorough-going system of native reserves meant that land was generally available, despite the disruption of customary economic organisation.

The broad consequences were that while on the one hand new horizons were opened and new sources of wealth made available, on the other the restrictions on urban settlement and the advance of skilled labour, taxation, and low wages erected barriers to participation. The feelings of deprivation and exploitation to which these gave rise were intensified by the increasing imbalance between rural and urban life. The rate of change in the industrial areas far outstripped that in the rural hinterlands, yet the migrant labourer continued to move

between the two worlds of town and country. While many journeyed to South Africa for employment, the development of the central African mines created centres of employment nearer home; and, through constant visitations to these different centres, migrants established new social relationships and a network of friends and countrymen in the small towns growing around the mines, railway stations, and provincial bomas. The migrant labour force which thus emerged was hindered, if not actually prevented, from organising itself, particularly where this entailed competitive organisation against employers. In the towns administrative control was generally sufficient to regiment life in the compound, while in the villages the migrant found a declining local economy, few avenues for economic and social advance, and none of the innovations of the towns. The process of proletarianisation in south central Africa was thus both prolonged and partial, and it is this feature of the area which perhaps provides a general explanation for the area of diffusion of the Watch Tower.

The adoption of the Watch Tower in the urban areas may also possibly reflect the beginnings of class formation peculiar to this area. While on the one hand colonialism brought about the fragmentation of the small-scale African societies and instituted new forms of differentiation, on the other new bases of consolidation and common interests arose. Adherence to the Watch Tower, it has been argued, allowed the migrant labourer to give expression to new demands. While no coherent picture of the Watch Tower as a proletarian movement - in the classic sense of the term - emerges, it nevertheless served to

aggregate and articulate common responses towards the settler as employer. A high proportion of skilled and literate migrants joined the movement, many of whom of course had had some mission training. Surface rather than underground workers, clerks, hawkers and traders, 'natives of the detribalised class', and those with some intellectual aspirations were prominent in the urban membership. While at first there was something of an elite of believers, limited to Nyasa migrants, the movement came to cross ethnic, cultural, linguistic and national boundaries in the urban compounds, and would appear to have attracted this support at least partly because it was a movement of solidarity and protest against economic exploitation. It acted as a mutual aid society, expressed grievances over the rate of taxation, and contributed both in ideological and organisational terms to the strikes of the 1920's and 1930's. As an organisation independent of the missions and the colonial administration which bridged the village and the compound, it also responded to the particular needs of the migrant by providing an associational home which could operate equally well in town and country. Its doctrines emphasised the achievement of social and economic rights within the new society, and it provided a home for those who wished to adopt Western dress and manners, and aspired to be literate. It also articulated resentment against the humiliation of racial discrimination, and envisaged the mastery of Africans over western technological achievements. Generally, the urban Watch Tower movement in the mid-colonial period reflected a developing awareness by black workers, and the new stratification which accompanied colonial rule.

In the rural areas too social and political cleavages were emerging, partly related to the developments in the towns, and partly to broader historical changes. It has been suggested that one reason for the proliferation of Watch Tower villages was the series of constraints placed upon the returning migrant. Customary authorities were jealous of the new men, whose way of life emphasised urban values, and the prevalence of witchcraft accusations against those possessing superior wealth tended to prevent the labour migrants from advancing within local society. Separate villages provided both economic advantages and independence of action. It would also appear that the Watch Tower appealed to economically subordinate groups who were faced with a critical situation as a result of changes during the colonial period, such as the Wiko traders and Ila cultivators. The prevalence of women and youths in the rural Watch Tower suggests that these economic cleavages were reinforced by other forms of differentiation: the withdrawal of adult male labour threw a heavy burden on female agriculturalists, whose social status was in any event a subordinate one. Generational disputes were also sharpened by the new opportunities opened to the young for trade and travel. The Watch Tower was significant not only for new social groups in formation, however, but also provided an organisational basis for subordinated or disintegrating ethnic groups whose customary leadership was ineffective. Examples of this are the Wiko against the Lozi, the Kumu against the bangwana, the Nyanga, and the Lega, and perhaps also the peripheral groups in North-Western Rhodesia against the Bemba. It may be argued that the ethnicity which

was a simple reflection of the geopolitical relationships between neighbouring peoples, who were distinct in terms of the kinship relationships and common beliefs which held the groups together, underwent a process of redefinition during the colonial era both as a result of the broader scale of social action, and through the new political relationships which came to be established. The extension of colonial rule could either reinforce the dominance of one people over another, or remove and perhaps reverse this; the selective impact of the missions and trade and transport routes provided a superior access for some to the benefits of modernisation; and a variety of new situations in which people of different tribes might encounter each other emerged. Thus the millennial protest movements of ethnically distinct groups were not so much instances of tribal nationalism, as responses to the intensification of ethnic cleavages, which resulted from a variety of factors. The pattern of the extension of Watch Tower may not be explained simply in terms of the situation of the migrant labourer; it is clear that a broader historical view is necessary.

In central Africa during the nineteenth century a number of centralised empires had extended across the savannah, creating on their peripheries a series of dispossessed peoples with weak political institutions.[1] The entry of Europeans and the demarcation of administrative boundaries had the effect of freezing an unbalanced relationship between such state systems as the northern Lunda and the surrounding smaller tribes; the

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[1] Cf. J. Vansina, Kingdoms of the Savannah (Wisconsin, 1966).

Bemba and the Iwa, Namwanga, Mambwe and Bisa; and the Lozi and their vassal peoples on the upper Zambezi. Rule was for the most part established by default through treaties with foreign paramounts rather than after unsuccessful resistance. It is significant that the Watch Tower was adopted by a number of these small, acephalous peoples, such as the Tonga, Mambwe, Iwa, Namwanga, Lenje, Lala, Nsenga, and Kunda, by groups on the periphery of resistance such as the northern Shona, and by the migrants from Angola and Mozambique, and not by the powerful centralised groups such as the Ndebele, Ngoni, Lozi, and the metropolitan northern Lunda. It may be argued that the imagery of resistance, the prophetic leadership, and the promise of a new world to come of the Watch Tower appealed particularly to these groups, where secular political leadership had neither attempted resistance or rebellion, nor even successfully collaborated. The appeal of the millennial vision of liberation correlates not with defeated resistance but with situations where the urge to throw off the yoke of colonial rule developed at a stage when secular leadership had become compromised and ineffective. Indeed the forward-looking ideas of the hoped-for liberation were such that customary authority itself became a major object of attack, as it was both immediately visible and representative of the old order. It is possible here that the Watch Tower contributed to anti-colonial rebellions much in the manner that the customary secret society did, by providing rituals and beliefs which gave participants a feeling of invulnerability, and a mobilising ideology which went beyond the

political capacity of the chiefs.[1]

The nature of local political organisation was an important factor affecting the adoption of the Watch Tower. Generally where chiefs retained their authority and responsibility, and were successful in securing the services of missionaries, the Watch Tower proved to have little appeal. The position of chiefs was of course affected not only by the pre-existing organisation of the state but also by the manner of extension of colonial rule, and by their relationship with missionaries. Colonial policy generally tended to support the chiefs, but their powers were greatly reduced, particularly as regards the traditional means of regulating conflict through witchcraft eradication practices. Where social pressures were suddenly intensified, either as a result of disasters such as crop failures and epidemic disease, or through the implementation of forced labour practices, population removals, and war, chiefs came to be regarded as inadequate for the task of social renewal. The balance of the relationship between chiefs and missionaries was also a delicate one. Missionaries might either usurp chiefly functions - aided by attempts to use chiefs within the administration - or fail to respond sufficiently to demands for innovation. In either event they brought into being a group which had little respect for the chiefs and sought rather to leave customary society behind them. The chiefs normally opposed the Watch Tower, which was a major challenge to their status. Watch Tower prophets not only popularised radical new ideas, but

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[1] Cp. J. Dufonteney, 'Les Sorciers comme Chefs de Rébellion', La Sorcellerie dans les Pays de Mission (Brussels, 1936); also B. Verhaegen, Rébellions au Congo (Brussels and Kinshasa, 1969), ii, Maniema, pp. 548-595, for a discussion of this point.

actively attempted to supplant the authority of the chiefs with their own. Where the authority of the chiefs had been eroded, or was slight, and few of the benefits of colonialism had been secured, the Watch Tower generally evoked a mass response.

Where the baptismal techniques of the Watch Tower were adapted to the detection of witches, however, and the popular demand was strong, a number of chiefs - particularly amongst the Lenje, Lala, Ila, Lamba, and Kaonde - gave their support to the movement. It has been suggested that the strength of the indigenous messianic tradition, and the periodic operation of witchcraft cults in this region, help to explain this phenomenon. However the particular situation of individual chiefs needs to be taken into account here as well; in some cases the support was only grudging, while a few actively initiated it. The difference in reception of the mcapi movement and the Watch Tower also illustrates how significant the variations in local political organisation were in explaining the rural incidence of social movements.

These local factors interacted in turn with external agencies of change, amongst which the missionaries were perhaps the most important. Generally the mission societies, with their limited resources and dependence on the administration, sought to establish themselves in well-populated areas where they could influence what were regarded as powerful or superior tribes, such as the Ndebele. In the more sparsely populated and remote areas, not only was the activity of missionaries only slight, but also these came to be areas of

competition between missions competing for 'spheres of influence'. Expansion was rapid but superficial, and few resources by way of health and educational services were available at many of the small out-stations in the early period. Thus the missionaries reinforced the unevenness between different groups. There was a more direct relationship between the missionaries and the Watch Tower, however, particularly as regards such exceptional mission undertakings as that of the United Free Church of Scotland. As has been argued these sought to transform African life, but were unable or unwilling to carry the changes through by promoting candidates, who in any event were not accepted by settler society. In particular, those who lived on the fringes of an area of evangelisation and felt excluded from its benefits were attracted to the Watch Tower. From this point of view the Watch Tower offered an alternative African Christianity which both belonged to the people and yet promised the benefits of white society.

The administrative factor is also important of course from the point of view of whether African movements were tolerated, and how effective measures taken to control them were. The Nyasaland administration, after its initial hostile reaction, went the furthest towards open recognition of the movement. This, it has been argued, was possible because the conditions of industrialisation which were the basis of sharp cleavages in neighbouring territories did not exist, and because intensive missionary work had helped to open other channels for the expression of protest. The Northern Rhodesian administration was restrained by colonial office policy from banning the

movement, yet only with reluctance admitted official representatives to the country, and then in the hope that these would control it. Generally, their policies had little effect on the spread of the movement. In Southern Rhodesia, however, the administration was both hostile to the Watch Tower, and able to enforce the deportation of visiting adherents; the Watch Tower was consequently limited in extent to Mashonaland and a few main employment centres in Matabeleland. In the Belgian Congo, on the other hand, short-sighted attempts to eradicate the movement by interning its leaders in inadequately policed concentration camps promoted its dispersal across a vast area which might otherwise not have been influenced by it. The administrative factor in the spread of the Watch Tower generally, however, reflects the depth of penetration of colonial rule: where this was pervasive, as in Southern Rhodesia (and possibly South Africa), the Watch Tower was short-lived and of minor significance, and where it was only superficial, as in Northern Rhodesia and the Congo, the movement spread widely.

These considerations of the correlation of the area of impact of the Watch Tower with certain broad processes of change, may also be related to the ideology and organisation of the movement. Perhaps the most distinguishing feature of the Watch Tower - which helps to identify it from the many prophet movements and independent churches - was its millennial vision. This needs to be carefully defined, as it was neither that of Charles Russell nor in accordance with the Western apocalyptic tradition. Mair has commented that 'on the millennium in

Africa, the most succinct comment is that there is none'.[1] If millennialism is taken to signify a detailed vision of the perfect society to come, perhaps expressed in terms of a pastoral utopia, and - more literally - the belief in the imminent thousand-year reign on earth of Christ, then this statement has substance. But in the African Watch Tower there was an expectancy of an imminent and total change for a collective group, to be brought about either by or with the aid of supernatural forces, which is millennial in the broad sense in which Cohn has defined this term.[2] Historical events were seen as evidence of progress towards the day of salvation, and this was given an exact - if changing - date. Specifically, however, the inner core of Watch Tower ideas provided a vision of liberation. Its imagery and promises were concerned with the idea of freedom. This freedom was seen not so much as a return to some pre-colonial golden age, but was a forward-looking anticipation of participation in the new society. White invaders were rejected as oppressors and their departure was generally seen as an essential part of the new vision, but the benefits accompanying white rule were also desired. There was not simply an expectation of 'cargo', but a desire to acquire the technologically superior means of controlling the environment. Salvation lay in the hands of American negroes, and hero figures of the movement such as Chilembwe and Kamwana. The Watch Tower ideology might also be termed anti-colonial

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[1] Cf. L. Mair, 'Independent Religious Movements in Three Continents', Comparative Studies in Society and History, I, 1958-9, p. 129.

[2] Cf. N. Cohn, 'Mediaeval Millenarism: Its Bearing on the Comparative Study of Millenarian Movements', in Thrupp, (ed.), Millennial Dreams in Action (1962), pp. 31-32.

millennialism, since it may be argued that it was specifically the colonial situation which gave rise to it. The technologically powerful colonial state denied rights to the African partly on the grounds that he was viewed as a barbarian, and because he was regarded as incapable of social advancement without generations of tutelage. Watch Tower believers perceived this state of affairs as the result of a colonial conspiracy aimed at withholding God's rightful inheritance, which would otherwise have made Africans the same as Europeans. The cultural ethnocentrism and racial discrimination of the settlers erected rigid barriers to social and economic advancement, and this confrontation between black and white occupied a primary position in the ideological interpretation undertaken by Watch Tower prophets. Watch Tower preachers, despite the many variations of their predictions, announced a common theme. The whites were thieves, cheats and frauds, who had robbed the African of his land and the fruits of his labour through taxation; they had deliberately misinterpreted God's message to the Africans by distorting biblical truth; they pretended to be Christians, yet they prevented Africans from mastering the secrets of literacy and technology, and refused to share the the abundant wealth which they possessed. The whites were also seen as unclean, dangerous, and treacherous. They were responsible for the prevalence of witches, for economic misfortune, and were often associated with killing and death.[1]

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[1] Banyama myths (body-snatching, cannibalism) were common throughout the area under discussion and by no means exclusive to the Watch Tower, although absorbed into African Watch Tower preaching on occasions, as noted by the elephant control officer in Mporokoso in a letter to Llewellyn Phillips. Cf. Z. Arch., KSU 1/10, H.D. Barnes to L.V. Phillips, 23 Oct. 1938.

White men generally were described as snakes, vermin, disease, devils and monsters, the imagery of the apocalypse joining with that of customary belief. In opposition to this was the idea that black men should join together in common salvation. A vision of the continental unity of Africans against invasion and oppression by whites was held out as the mobilising hope, and this superseded the boundaries of kin and tribe. Pan-Africanism was a major current in the development of nationalist demands for independence, of course, and for south central Africa it would appear to be chiefly the Watch Tower which spread this pan-Africanist consciousness.

The elect of believers in Watch Tower doctrine was significantly different from that of Russell and Rutherford, with their careful distinctions between those who would become princes on earth in the theocracy, and those 144,000 who would be elevated to the right hand of God.[1] Sharp distinctions were made between believers and non-believers, particularly where Watch Tower villages came to be established which distinguished themselves from the neighbouring community, or where rivalry with the adherents of a mission - particularly Roman Catholics - existed. But particularly where it operated as a mass movement, it would appear that salvation was conceived of as all-embracing for black people. It is not being suggested here that it was necessarily this idea of a black millennium which attracted a popular response: this was certainly an important part of the appeal particularly to what might be termed the emerging

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[1] Cf. Rev. xiv, 3: 'And they sung as it were a new song before the throne, and before the four beasts, and the elders: and no man could learn that song but the hundred and forty four thousand, which were redeemed from the earth'.

intellectuals - the dissatisfied mission trainees and clerks and domestic servants - but a variety of other motives have been suggested as well. It was this broadening of political awareness, and the consciousness of belonging to a nation of African people, however, that was a major consequence of the movement. Many more came under the influence of the Watch Tower, it has been argued, than persisted in membership. Compound preachers, village baptists, popular hymns and the ubiquitous pamphlets spread the doctrine beyond the ranks of those sectarians who became encapsulated in a new and orderly environment. Its influence was to loosen old ties and loyalties and give impetus to new ways of thinking and new ideas about the confrontation between Europeans and Africans, without necessarily imposing its own doctrinal rigidity or hard social boundaries on those it affected.

The fluidity of and changes in the associational forms of the Watch Tower should not, however, be taken as an indication that the movement lacked an organisational base. The colonial administrations tended to see the Watch Tower as a single movement, an African offshoot of the W.T.B.T.S., which even if not fully controlled by the latter, was nevertheless their responsibility. The W.T.B.T.S. on the other hand maintained that there were at all times two groups - the 'foolish and fanatical' independents, who were responsible for killings, strikes, and subversion, and a small handful of true believers. These perceptions varied, of course, according to time and place, with the W.T.B.T.S. showing an increasing readiness to defend African Watch Tower adherents and claim them as followers, after the

initial years of little interest. But the reality was more complex than either of these views allowed.

Various levels of association and organisation may be distinguished in the Watch Tower. First and most central were the group of Nyasa followers of Elliott Kamwana, who formed the Kamwana Society Church. This was partly a break-away from the U.F.C. which absorbed Kamwana's version of Studies in the Scriptures as its doctrine, and partly a prophetic movement which lost its attributes as a 'church' and came to be a religious association of Nyasa migrants who gathered in Kamwana's name. These attempted to organise a countrywide Watch Tower movement, and included a number of non-Nyasas in what was developing as an early pan-Africanist association. The high point of these organisational initiatives was Manasseh Nkhoma's attempts to establish a branch structure linking the groups of members spreading across the urban centres of south central Africa. Nkoma, Salumo Banda, Harry Chilonga, Lot Mumbi, Fred Kabombo, Gilbert Mbewe and the many others who were involved in this broad organisation may well have been assisted by the W.T.B.T.S. in Cape Town, with whom they were in correspondence, and from whom they received literature, but they were not acting as subordinate agents. When representatives of the W.T.B.T.S. attempted to establish their control, very few were prepared to countenance this: they saw the Watch Tower as an independent African organisation, and recalled Kamwana as the prophet and founder in order to legitimate their independence. They viewed the Watch Tower as an African church, not in the sense of a small group breaking

away from a mission but as a corporate body representing African aspirations for a new dispensation. There were of course those such as Richard Kalinde who saw themselves as members of the W.T.B.T.S. and provided the Cape Town headquarters with lists of names, but these were a small and insignificant minority. Of the few who were accepted by the W.T.B.T.S. in the purge of the movement undertaken by Phillips in the late 1930's - and who accepted its control - a number subsequently reverted to their independent status. It was only in the 1950's that the W.T.B.T.S. began to attract a significant following of Jehovah's Witnesses in Nyasaland and the Rhodesias, although of course the name 'Watch Tower' was applied indiscriminately both to official followers and the independents.

A second group of Watch Tower leaders was constituted by prophets and evangelists such as Hanoc Sindano, Jeremiah Gondwe, Peter Chiponda, Napoleon Mumbwa, and Joseph Mulemwa. These were associated with the urban leaders, but established villages where they became sect leaders rather than attempting to participate in any wider organisation. The organisation of their followers was noticeably less hierarchical and bureaucratic than the urban Watch Tower, mainly consisting of elders and preachers. These were nevertheless important in spreading the movement, either through sending out emissaries, or through touring in their home districts. Most of these were local prophets, who, having learnt the Watch Tower message, adapted it to the particular local conditions of their own areas. Of course the distinction between these and the urban preachers is a somewhat arbitrary one, as they generally both had similar origins - the

prophets emerging from the ranks of the labour migrants who returned to their villages, where they became leaders of Watch Tower communities. More clearly distinguishable, perhaps, are the Watch Tower prophets such as Tomo Nyirenda, Kamboni Wankilongo, and Jacob Nkunda who adapted the organisation and ideology of the Watch Tower to meet the popular demand for the eradication of witchcraft. Although these saw themselves as representative of a wider African movement, their attempts to institute new communities of believers failed, once the immediate desire for purification was satisfied. Rituals and beliefs which went beyond the control of witchcraft fears were insufficiently established through a new organisation of village life to have more than a temporary popularity.

Thus, while the Watch Tower was not a monolithic movement, it did possess a skeletal organisational structure and a central core of ideas which allowed adherents in the many variations and groupings to feel that they were part of a larger movement. This feature provides one possible explanation for the contagious quality of the Watch Tower which has been commonly noted: it was relevant to a wide variety of people who felt some sense of grievance, and enabled them to articulate their protest against the particular conditions of their oppression, while at the same time enabling them to feel part of a wider community. The most clearly political instances of Watch Tower activity - particularly the millennial rebellions which it inspired - were led by local men, who succeeded the original prophet and elaborated the message to suit local grievances, while as a witchcraft eradication movement it was led by alien prophets,

who found no successors. Its popularity in Northern Rhodesia and the Belgian Congo may also reflect the relative isolation of these areas from other currents of independency emanating from the south. But above all, the Watch Tower was a religion of the book: its popularity was closely related to the tracts, pamphlets and Bibles which its leaders carried.

The relationship between the desire for literacy, the appeal of the Watch Tower, and its historical significance is indeed an important one. The aspiration towards literacy in a predominantly illiterate society may be regarded as twofold: on the one hand it is seen as a symbol of power, and a ritual means of access to a new world, and on the other it is a pragmatic means of social advancement. In Watch Tower preaching the theme that the Bible was a means of controlling the material world was a frequent one. In God's words to mankind - for him who could read and interpret them - lay the answer to the superiority of the white man, the cause of oppression of the black man, and the means of changing this state of affairs. The Bible was seen as a source of hidden power. It was not only a means of communicating with God and a revelation of the promise of salvation for the black man, but it might also be used in a magical way as an amulet against evil, or as an instrument of divination in the eradication of witchcraft. Much in the way that Meggit has described the situation in Melanesia, a cult of literacy existed in colonial central Africa.[1] Whereas previously the ancestors or traditional deities were looked to for the protection of the everyday

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[1] M. Meggit, 'Uses of Literacy in New Guinea and Melanesia', in J. Goody, (ed.), Literacy in Traditional Societies (Cambridge, 1968).

interests of the group, it was the written word which came to be regarded as the key to power under the new circumstances of an awareness of material plenty, and feelings of oppression and deprivation. Mabel Shaw, one of the earliest educationalists in Northern Rhodesia, speaking of her pupils at Mbereshi (in the Luapula valley), asks the question:

> I often thought of the hundreds of our young men, and our young girls too, away in the mining area, at Elizabethville in the Congo, far removed from their tribal lands, cut adrift from all the sanction and tradition of the tribe, out of the jurisdiction as it were, of their tribal spirits. What is taking the place of these things? [1]

The answer for many, it would seem, was a quest for the power of the book.

A mission education was the primary channel of entry into the newly forming society, and this depended on the knowledge and ability to use books, in particular the Bible. Even those who had no opportunity to attend a mission might nevertheless seek to acquire such skills. These also provided practical benefits, such as access to the better jobs available. Literacy, too, was the hallmark of status: the man who could flourish a large Bible and make familiar reference to its texts was a respected figure of authority. 'The cultural segregation of the educated from the uneducated African' which was much decried by settler society created social divisions which gave rise to a general desire for the benefits of education and literacy.[2]

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[1] M. Shaw, God's Candlelight (1932), p. 25.

[2] Village Education in Africa: Report of the Inter-Territorial Jeanes Conference, Salisbury, May 27 - June 6, 1935 (Lovedale, 1935), p. 29.

From the days when Joseph Booth posted W.T.B.T.S. literature to his followers in Nyasaland, a stream of Bibles, magazines, and pamphlets - mostly printed in South Africa - had entered the Rhodesias in the hands of returning migrants and through the mails.[1] By 1949, Northern Rhodesia had banned a total of 62 publications from distribution within the country, and Nyasaland 52; the Belgian Congo and Southern Rhodesia had outlawed all the Society's literature.[2] A number of these had been translated into Nyanja and Bemba by the mid-1930's, and for many central Africans they formed the bulk of available literature, as the distribution of African newspapers was scanty or non-existent.[3] Although a New Testament had been translated into a Northern Rhodesian African language as early as 1901 - Mambwe - and texts were produced in Ila (1915), Bemba (1916), Tonga (1919), and Lamba (1921), these were neither freely available, nor cheap to buy.[4] The W.T.B.T.S. publications were commentaries on the Bible which included a discussion of contemporary events, and were not limited to the New Testament; they were cheap, and could be obtained fairly easily. In particular they expressed ideas hostile to the state and the established missions, and could thus be regarded as an independent source of biblical knowledge, which God had made available to Africans. Even for those who could not read, the

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[1] Shepperson and Price, Independent African (Edinburgh, 1958), p. 155.

[2] Cf. Z. Arch., N/0075, Box 1684, Reports of the Watch Tower Literature Committee, 1949-1957.

[3] Cf. above, pp. 364-366; also T. Cullen Young, 'The Native Newspaper', Africa, XI, 1938.

[4] Cf. C.M. Doke, 'Scripture Translation into Bantu Languages', African Studies, XVII, 1958. The earliest New Testament in east and central Africa was a Nyanja text published in 1886.

pamphlets were attractive with their plentiful illustrations of damnation, destruction, and the arrival of the millennial dawn. This prolific literature catered for the needs of those who wished to possess books for the sense of power and status which they imparted, and also for those who wished to practise and learn the art of reading. As an apparent route to literacy, the Watch Tower was perhaps as popular as it was on account of the predictions concerning the imminent destruction of earthly governments which these texts yielded.

Yet it is impossible to estimate what proportion of Africans in central Africa joined the Watch Tower. Not only are the guesses of District Commissioners and missionaries unreliable, but also the movement was sufficiently fluid and informal, and the nature of membership itself of such varying significance, for there to have been little institutionalised differences between participants and non-participants. Many were baptised who did not stay committed for long, while others who would not have regarded themselves as believers were nevertheless influenced by its ideas. The Watch Tower was prevalent in all the main population centres, along the routes of labour migration, and in many parts of the countryside; and there were few mission stations which had not had defections to it at some stage. It was a popular movement, if not indeed a populist movement, in the sense that it reflected the common desires and grievances of African society. In particular by providing the organisational basis for new forms of association, and an ideological language for the expression of new hopes, it contributed towards the transformation of popular attitudes.

Together with the many other associations which emerged in the colonial period - tribal societies, welfare associations, dance groups, mutual aid clubs - the Watch Tower extended the social networks of individuals who were becoming aware of and beginning to participate in a wider society, and in this manner helped to build the basis of mass African society.

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