Chapter Three

Industrials and Schoolgirls

Bonds of Personal Dependency and the Mbweni Girls’ School, 1877–1890

The “asylum” for freed slaves at the UMCA’s Mbweni shamba grew much more quickly than missionaries had either imagined or intended. Between 1875 and 1880, the population of the shamba nearly doubled in size from 150 people to 260—the latter a number that did not even include schoolchildren. In 1881 alone, the mission received more than 155 slaves from British anti-slave cruisers.¹ These numbers, which were far higher than missionaries felt they were equipped to handle, were due in large part to the change in the East African export market, and to the ironic results of the string of legal resolutions the British and others enacted in an attempt to abolish the slave trade.² To many, it appeared that Steere’s warnings about rapid growth outstripping missionaries’ capacity to teach and transform were indeed coming true, and that there was no end in sight.

Rev. N. Forbes Capel, who arrived in Zanzibar as an eager new worker early in 1876, was deeply critical of the situation he encountered. A self-described “revolutionist,” Capel’s enthusiasm for his work was quickly dampened by the realities of life at Mbweni; after four months with the mission, he was overcome by what he called the “deplorable state of things on the shamba.”³ Capel’s concerns about the state of the mission can be boiled down to two related points: first, that the sheer number of adherents taxed the mission’s resources, and second,
that the social structures and labor practices that were emerging on the *shamba* contradicted what the missionaries had imagined for a Christian community. The disproportionate number of women seeking succor at the already overcrowded mission was a particular area of concern for the missionaries, in large part because they believed women needed special attention and moral guidance, given the fundamental role they would play in the biological and social reproduction of the Christian community. Lack of attention to the women, missionaries reasoned, had begun to show itself in the nature of the relationships that were developing on the *shamba* grounds.

When, in early 1877, Capel’s colleague Rev. E. Randolph accepted a group of fifty refugees to be housed at Mbweni, Capel snapped. In a spate of tersely worded letters to his colleagues, Capel listed the reasons the UMCA should refuse the new additions. It was not merely “a question of feeding and clothing these fifty slaves,” Capel wrote, but “it is the immorality of herding together quantities of savages with next to no power of supervision either morally or spiritually to which I object.” As it was, Capel protested, the mission was not doing nearly enough “towards teaching and caring for the poor people.” He argued that the missionaries had failed to instill in their adherents the most basic of Christian values of communalism, hard work, and self-reliance since “there is not the slightest pressure” from anyone in the mission “to make them help themselves.” The only work the Mbweni residents seemed to do was that which was required to retain their rights to the land, lodging, and board the mission provided in exchange for labor, and nothing more. Even that paltry work they did with such reluctance, he insisted, that it was in effect “as much forced labour as West Indian labour used to be.” Ultimately, Capel lamented, he could not see how the refugees were “being bettered. If tomorrow they were to change masters and Mohammed bin Ali were to take the place of Dr. Steere,” he wrote, “I do not imagine they would know any difference, except perhaps that they would have rather more freedom . . . and be a little less discontented than they at present are.” “Knowing all this,” he continued in a letter addressed directly to Randolph, “how can you seek to burden us with the care of fifty additional people? Have they no souls? . . . The past neglect of the people is already in my opinion, a shame and a scandal.” He threatened to resign if the newcomers remained on the *shamba*.

Even more troubling to Capel were the social dynamics that had grown up among women at the *shamba*. The typical female student at Mbweni struck him, he lamented, as far from ideal. “Compared with their fellow country-women,” Capel
told the bishop, “the girls are being brought up as ladies. The result is that they are proud and stuck up, that they look upon work as a degradation.” Even worse, he revealed, is that they “despise and revile the ‘slaves’ as they term them, on the shamba.” And, when the young women of Mbweni married, they themselves tended to “keep a slave, and of course, do nothing—except gossip.” “This may be African,” he wrote, “but it is not Christian.”

Over the next ten years, the missionaries devised a plan to address both the overcrowding of the women’s spaces, and what they characterized as the “non-Christian” social dynamics and labor practices. This plan comprised an investment in women’s education in the form of two separate educational tracks at the shamba’s Mbweni Girls’ School—one track for “Schoolgirls” and one for “Industrials.” Far from bastardizing Christian principles, shamba residents were actually mapping the very lessons missionaries taught them about patronage and dependency onto the inherited ideologies of community and kinship that shaped refugees’ engagement with the mission. Indeed, the UMCA’s missionaries themselves pursued labor practices that were deeply hypocritical, but adherents saw in them valuable opportunities to establish affective relationships, to stitch together new kinship ties, and to embed themselves more forcibly and securely into the mission community. The tracked system of education enshrined, rather than eliminated, these labor practices and social dynamics among shamba residents and Mbweni graduates. The search for belonging, familial ties, and kinship networks characterized the nature of relationships first between refugees and missionaries, then between Schoolgirls and Industrials, and finally the evangelical relationship itself. As the shamba and in particular the Mbweni Girls’ School emerged as the ideological and geographical heart of the mission from which evangelical and affective relationships migrated out over the next several generations, these relationship ideals underwrote their approach to evangelism on the mainland.

From Shamba to School, 1881–1887

The UMCA was not the only abolitionist mission struggling in the 1870s and 1880s. Rosters of missions across the eastern African coast swelled, the numbers straining resources and the diversity of new congregants taxing the plans and patience of administrators. In the Church Missionary Society’s Freretown settlement in Mombasa, for example, arrivals of freed mateka overwhelmed the mission’s capabilities.
The children were ill, the setting too new, and the missionaries too impatient. “The children we could easily manage,” an exasperated missionary wrote, “but the adults are simply a lot of idle savages, and until they can be made to understand their position and our kind feelings toward them we shall have something to do to keep order.” The mission’s lay workers, who were Africans educated at the CMS’s mission schools in India and brought to Kenya for the purpose of educating new adherents, also frustrated the missionaries. The “Bombay Africans,” as they were known, were a “continual clog and hindrance to the work,” despondent missionaries asserted, complaining of their “idleness, carelessness, and shoddy workmanship.”

Soon after the CMS established the Freretown settlement, slaves from Mombasa absconded, streaming into the station and begging for asylum. Whereas the Freretown missionaries could work with government maliwai to return runaways to their masters when the space got overcrowded, the UMCA’s island location provided them slightly less flexibility to return Africans for whom they did not have room.

The Holy Ghost Fathers, one of four other mission organizations working in Tanzania and Zanzibar by the late 1870s, also worked with freed slaves and by the early 1880s had become dissatisfied with their approach. The Fathers did not produce a single serious candidate for holy orders and despaired of ever finding one among freed slaves. Their work often felt more like political machinations than evangelism. The newer mission societies, including the CMS, the LMS, and the White Fathers, were eschewing work among freed slaves for work with discrete “peoples” further inland. These missions, the UMCA included, also felt the pressure of the Islamic revival happening along the coast during the late 1800s and early 1900s. The Quadiriyaa brotherhood carried Islam further into the interior, extending the reach of Arab and Swahili caravan traders and leading to the first extensive acceptance of Islam by communities on the mainland.

While official mission propaganda and missionaries’ letters home described Mbweni in the mid- to late 1870s as “prospering” and “better cared for than ever before,” private correspondence tended toward the more critical, and workers quibbled back and forth with what seem like endless complaints. The appearance and cleanliness of the house and of the girls was “disappointing,” they said. The dining hall was “a dreadful hole, always as close and hot as it can be.” With no ventilation, the room never cooled and “anything like fresh air is unknown.” The drainage from the roof to the girls’ dormitory was so poor that in the rainy season the girls “generally sleep on a wet floor.” Things seemed to missionaries little better inside the schools. Even if the adult population on the shamba continued to decline,
missionaries reasoned, failure in the schools would have been disastrous—the whole future of the mission rested on producing an educated Native Clergy. Capel spent a great deal of time “carrying proper order and discipline into the system of the girls’ school” during his time at Mbweni because, as he pointed out, “tho we may live without carpenters, tailors or washermen, we cannot live without native teachers.” If things were not ideal at the boys’ schools, the girls’ school seemed to be in particularly dire straits. “After four months experience,” Capel penned in yet another letter of complaint, this time to the bishop himself, “I am of the opinion that the school wants revolutionizing. The present system seems to me false.” The female scholars were hard to train, missionaries complained in their logs and letters home. They were stubborn, they were insubordinate, and they were willfully disobedient, missionaries wrote. Responses from students indicated that they failed to see the relevance of their education: Nine-year-old Chela explained that she refused to attend classes because “learning is not property, I don't want to learn!” To Chela, who was born into a society that valued people as the basis of wealth, and raised at a time when accumulating people was paramount, accumulating book knowledge must have seemed an implausible way to get ahead in life.

As someone new to mission work, it is possible that naïveté and misplaced enthusiasm had raised Capel’s expectations and, once disillusioned, he painted a picture of Mbweni far worse than it deserved. Yet, Capel was not ignorant of the demands of shamba life—for nine years he had served as the UMCA’s honorary organizing secretary in England, “generously and unweariedly devoting his whole energies without remuneration to the cause.” Part of his duties as honorary organizing secretary even included touring the mission’s stations on Zanzibar in 1875. While there, he felt the call to service and shortly thereafter resigned his secretaryship for a life in the field. Capel was tasked with supervising the shamba and the girls’ school. Not long after he assumed his duties, he came to see that everyday life on the shamba bore little resemblance to what he had envisioned.

In addition to his long list of complaints, Capel offered recommendations for reform. “I believe,” he wrote, that instead of allowing what he saw as the gossiping, the “slave holding,” and the otherwise lackluster moral development of the shamba girls to continue, “a better course would be to put out such big girls as are not wanted in the house, to work on the shamba.” In other words, what Capel was proposing was that the mission remove women made “troublesome” by their age, unmarried state, or other refusal to fit within mission expectations of their behavior from the schoolhouse and evangelical framework altogether. Rather than try to
groom “rebellious” women into lay evangelists, the mission should instead remove them entirely from the physical spaces of the mission where learning and moral development took place. This, Capel believed, would allow the mission to keep the “scholastic element” and the cultivation of a native ministry “prominently in the front as of paramount importance” to the mission’s work. “In my view, nothing is of equal importance with the scholastic element as leading to a native priesthood,” including educating those whom he believed to be the more unsavory members of the mission’s congregation. What Capel proposed was a way for the mission to remain focused on the needs of the Native Clergy, without being burdened by the demands, individual personalities, contingencies, and expectations of individuals who did not immediately fit the mission’s objectives.

Despite Capel’s enthusiasm for reform, change was slow to come to Mbweni. And when it did, it took the fresh eyes of a new bishop and nearly a decade of repeated complaints by Mbweni’s headmistress. Bishop Steere succumbed to a stroke on August 27, 1881, and the mission was “widowed” for just over two years. The organization finally found a suitable leader in Charles Alan Smythies, also a Cambridge man. Before he was bishop, Smythies was the vicar of Roath in Llandaff Diocese in southern Wales. A former colleague there described him as having great “ability and assiduity” as well as “patience, tenderness and courage,” and as having “labored to set free and teach individual souls”—all of which were traits Mbweni and the rest of the mission desperately needed. Smythies oversaw a flourishing mission. In 1867 the mission had sent its first evangelists to the mainland, where they established stations in the region of what is today Tanga and the Usambara Mountains. In part to relieve the creeping claustrophobia, the UMCA sent fifty-five freed slaves from the shamba to the mainland at Masasi, an area inland and to the south of Lindi near the border with Mozambique, in 1876. They settled in the dry, rocky ground of southern Tanzania and continued the mission’s expansion to the mainland. Removing the Masasi congregation failed to permanently relieve the population pressure, however. By 1880 the companionate pairs the mission had been so keen to see grow into nuclear families were beginning to realize what Bishop Steere had quipped were “their indefinite powers of addition”: in those five years, the shamba had grown to include 230 adults alone, 200 of whom were married couples with 30 young children among them.

As soon as Smythies arrived in Zanzibar in February 1884, he saw the “strain of over-fatigue” to which Mbweni’s supervisors, Miss Thackeray and Miss Berkeley, were subjected. While some of the strain seemed to come from a lack of trained
assistants, the bishop believed that the responsibility of keeping girls who were unsuited or undisposed toward teaching out of trouble until they married was the heaviest of the ladies’ burdens. The pool of suitable young men for educated African Christian women was relatively small, Smythies lamented, because they could not marry either “Mahommedans or heathen.” The only option missionaries felt they had was to remove young women whose behavior was “not satisfactory” from the house altogether, either to live in the single women’s home and work in the fields, or to face excommunication. Thackeray did just this to an unnamed girl in 1885. By her very presence in the house she was “doing so much harm among the small girls,” and she was thus banished to the single women’s house at Mbweni, where she would be “quite out of the girls’ bounds.” Forbidden to even go near the school grounds, her education was over. The anonymous girl, although not befitting the ideal of a Christian girl, was apparently not so objectionable that she could not be put to work in service of the mission. Under the charge “of an older person in the single women’s house” she did manual labor instead.23

The solution, as Smythies saw it, was not to battle with unmotivated, bored, or lackluster students in the classroom but to put some of the girls, particularly those who “shewed no capacity for the work of a teacher,” under “different rules” and a different roof.24 Separating the girls into teachers-in-training and “others” would not only solve their immediate behavioral and space challenges, he believed, but it had a host of other benefits. There was little need to go on producing teachers at the rate they had been, Smythies pointed out. “As yet the country is not prepared for the higher education of women,” he noted; “all they need is a good elementary education. Even for teachers we have but a limited demand; we need enough to supply the places of those who marry and leave the school, but we do not find we can use any women as teachers elsewhere.” Smythies was concerned not just about misdirecting the mission’s resources by investing in women who were not prepared to make full use of the education, but also about the effect that an unnecessarily advanced education would have on a young woman’s marriage prospects.25

Smythies’s decision to separate future teachers and clerics’ wives from those girls who were either unfit or undisposed to be either marks the tentative first steps toward realizing Capel’s suggestions from an earlier decade. (Despite once claiming that a loss of faith in the mission would be “pretty much like cutting off my right arm,” the reverend was not around to rejoice; he had resigned amidst concerns about the mission’s future several years earlier.26) Smythies’s solution hewed closely to Capel’s in that it did not yet institutionalize an educative program
for those who were uninclined toward teaching. It did, however, remove them from
the schoolhouse and set them toward more domestically productive tasks. This
new scheme began in 1885 with twelve girls who, at fifteen or so, were “too old to
go on any longer in school” but desperately needed to be “out of the schoolroom,
and free from school-girls’ rules as much as possible.” They needed to “form quite
a separate establishment” under the watchful eye of May Allen, a worker from
Shropshire, England.

The daughter of an archdeacon, Allen grew up hearing her father’s employer,
Bishop Selwyn—the intrepid former bishop of New Zealand whom we met in
chapter 1—preach the values of foreign service. The idea of outreach resonated
with Allen, who trained as a nurse not because she particularly wanted to practice
medicine, but because it was one of the few opportunities for women to “serve.”
Fresh out of nursing school, May Allen worked as superintendent of the Conva-
lescent Home for Ladies in Scarborough. She would do much the same when she
arrived in Zanzibar, initiating the first hospital work at the central mission house at
Mkunazini. She also spent time in town, proselytizing to urban Muslim women who
were confined to their homes due either to domestic obligations or to a combination
of class and religious prescriptions that required elite women to observe purdah,
or seclusion, during the daylight hours.

Tending to the ill and recalcitrant seemed ample preparation for work with this
“troublesome” group of women. Allen immediately arranged for the girls to occupy
a separate space, which was essentially a shed with a makuti (coconut leaf) roof.
It was, as far as the missionaries understood, local “custom” for women to work on
the land, and each of the twelve students received a grant of land that they would
cultivate as part of their studies. The girls would “work all day in the garden and
on the land round the house under an overlooker.” These skills would be “most
useful to them,” Smythies reasoned, because “a husband often values his wife in
proportion as she is good at helping him to cultivate his ground.”

Anticipating some resistance from the new cohort of women, Smythies lectured them about
the reasons behind his decision. As soon as children in England were old enough
to leave school, he told the girls, they worked “because: (1) we had found out that
the only way to be happy was to work; (2) Because it was the only way to keep out
of sin.” Idle hands make the devil’s work, world round.

This was little more than a temporary fix designed to meet the immediate
needs of these twelve “troublesome” girls, and administrators longed for something
more permanent. In 1885 Caroline Thackeray wished “more than ever” for “some
outlet for those of our elder girls who are indifferent scholars—either from having come late into the house or want of capacity for books.” According to Thackeray, “there will always be a proportion of such and they both form a very troublesome element in the school.” Thus, she proposed that they might be “far better trained and happier for the two or three years before they marry in an Industrial Home, with rules and regulations in many ways different from those which suit a school.”

In the end, missionaries adopted a more moderate version of Capel’s proposal, choosing instead to separate women of schoolgoing age into two tracks: a track for Schoolgirls and a track for Industrials. The name for the latter derived from industrial schools in Britain, which were essentially vocational reformatories. In particular, the Industrial Wing was named after the Clewer Industrial School. Founded in 1852, Clewer was initially established as a refuge for prostitutes who wanted to leave the streets. Rather than send women who were “given over to evil living” to a penitentiary for reform, as was popular at the time, they were put to work. Some of the same assumptions that characterized the Anglican response to prostitutes also characterized UMCA missionaries’ assumptions about African women. Plans were undertaken and the school was set to open in late 1887, about a
decade after Capel’s earliest complaints.\textsuperscript{35} In offering a tracked system of education to its female adherents, the UMCA was not unique, as a wide range of missions recognized their adherents had different needs, skills, and personal capacities. Indeed, the UMCA already funneled their male adherents into different tracks for vocational and clerical workers. However, the labor practices at the mission and the particular vulnerabilities of women in late-nineteenth-century East Africa combined to produce a unique focus on personal relationships that underwrote the mission’s expansion to the mainland.

Labor and Relationships of Personal Dependency

Ironically, Mbweni’s tracked system of education was built upon, and in fact further enshrined, the very social dynamics missionaries had hoped to eliminate. The similarities between the missionaries’ own labor practices and the relationships of patronage and dependency that their female refugees used as a pathway to intrude more forcibly into new communities and to reduce their marginality, point to one of the deepest paradoxes of the UMCA: namely, that although the missionaries were self-proclaimed abolitionists and some of the most notable critics of slavery, the mission itself relied heavily on African labor—including slave labor—to carry out its evangelical project. In a highly visible example, Bishop Steere was posthumously accused of employing slave labor to build the Slave Market Memorial Church at Mkunazini, a building intended to represent the “presumed affinity between Christianity and anti-slavery” and stood as a “home of freedom” for “all colours and races.”\textsuperscript{36} Steere had initially planned to have freed slaves build the church, but they did not possess the skills for the work he needed done. They thus remained largely confined to labor on the Mbweni plantation, where they harvested coral to be used in the construction of the cathedral walls. Instead, he employed skilled hire-slaves, including Hindu masons, who were of the highest class of manual laborers in Zanzibar.\textsuperscript{37}

Missionaries rationalized this apparent contradiction in several ways. First, they argued that building the cathedral required a level and variety of skills that the mission’s freed slaves did not possess. This was no doubt true, but it rankled members of the local British administration and staff in the UMCA’s home office nonetheless. Second, although the slave trade was officially outlawed, the use of slaves as servants or laborers remained legal for British subjects outside of
British dominions. By 1888, it was finally illegal for British subjects to hire slaves through the slave master, but one could still arrange a contract directly with the slave herself.38 And third, the missionaries believed in the biblical significance of labor and servitude. UMCA missionaries, like others of their time,39 argued that the condition of slavery took away an individual’s freedom to choose and removed their authority over their own body, stifling the development of any incentive for self-improvement or morality. Once freed, Africans could undertake wage labor, which the missionaries understood as having a host of other benefits. The UMCA’s brand of Christianity was steeped in agricultural metaphors and allusions to church work as a way of serving God; missionaries commonly referred to themselves as “workers” or “labourers for the master’s harvest.” One freed slave described his journey from the slave trade to the mission with a similar trope: “I was going to be sold away to Pemba, but Jesus carried me away to be His servant, and now I am trying to serve Him.” Missionaries also believed Christian wage labor taught the dignity of labor and encouraged better “habits” and “improvement.” Missionaries argued that although the “Arab” slave owner “might not be as cruel as the English slave owner in the Americas, the absence of wages still hindered productivity and diligence.” Labor also helped maintain efficiency and a social hierarchy.40

Ultimately, the mission approached the all-important question of labor more as employers attempting to understand and engage with particular local labor customs than as zealous abolitionists. While the missionaries realized that rejecting local customs outright was futile, they worked to produce Christian workers from within the mission itself.41 This approach satisfied both their abolitionist and evangelical goals. Paradoxically, the UMCA’s ambition to create a self-sustaining Christian labor force and community out of freed slaves essentially meant that while the new congregants had ceased to be “slaves” in the legal sense, they remained so in practice. As we have seen, the UMCA’s congregants were often treated as slaves; it is also likely that they continued to see themselves as the subordinate partner in a relationship of dependency. Indeed, despite the missionaries’ theoretical and theological commitments to abolition, the ideology of client slavery continued to regulate the lives of congregants on the shamba; they were known colloquially, as we have seen, as watumwa wa balozi (“slaves of the [British] consul”) or watumwa wa wangereza (“slaves of the British”). Mateka would have been familiar if not comfortable with this relationship; freeborn mission Christians would have assumed these relationships to be natural, knowing no other way of life.
This complicated relationship to labor was not uncommon within late nine-
teenth-century British missions in East Africa. Indeed, historians have observed
care of contradictions between Christian ideas of freedom and Christian ideas of labor
throughout the continent. Africans on the Swahili Coast often thought of their
missionary neighbors as yet another brand of trading chief or warlord, one who
“competed for political hegemony by the time-honored technique of building
up followings of slaves.” There are many examples of conditions that appeared,
for all intents and purposes, to be slavery. Contemporaries regarded the working
conditions in the Church Missionary Society (CMS) stations in Kenya, for example,
as having surpassed the hardships of Swahili plantation slavery. Several scandals
at CMS stations near Mombasa and on the central caravan route near Mpwapwa
illustrate the often brutal working conditions many congregants faced. After
watching a CMS worker cruelly beat an adherent for committing fornication, one
Mombasa slave concluded that “it is much better to be the slave of an Arab than
the slave of a European.” At Bagamoyo in the late 1870s, villagers worked twelve
hours a day, five days a week for the mission, and received food, clothing, and a
plot of land to cultivate in any spare time. Church attendance was mandatory,
there was a curfew at 10:00 P.M., and no resident might leave the village without
permission. Minor offenses were punished by “penances,” more serious ones by
imprisonment. Indeed, “slaves who sought to escape a brutal master by taking
refuge with the Christians were often disappointed to find that the daily mission
regimen of work, prayer and corporal punishment was harsher than that which
they had left behind.”

At the UMCA one found similar conditions. As Capel himself noted, the
missionaries forced their congregants to work for the land they farmed, the clothes
they wore, and the food they ate. Officials told newcomers where to live, whom
to marry, and to whom they should pray. They punished people by withholding
their payment and food, and when that did not work, by banishing them from the
community altogether. African children and adolescents often worked as domestic
laborers, a concession to the high costs of running a mission, which the missionaries
rationalized as industrial education. Work included cleaning, cooking, collecting
water, serving food, maintaining the grounds, and waiting on the missionaries.
Failure to complete assigned tasks was an opportunity to teach discipline and
to enforce the missionaries’ vision of a Christian work ethic. And, once on the
station, the refugees remained outsiders without any social or kin ties on the island,
except—and this is significant—for those with the UMCA missionaries who had settled them on the station. Missionaries did provide hope for some refugees, in that they could offer the sustenance and protection any powerful patron would offer in return for loyalty, as well as new familial and kinship ties. Refugees had many reasons to invest in the relationships of dependency, family, and kinship that the missionaries, and alliance with the mission community, offered.

Significantly, while UMCA missionaries used labor and relationships of patronage and dependency to create Christians, they objected when Africans tried to do the same. Capel watched the *shamba* women and determined that they “kept slaves,” objecting to this behavior on the grounds that it was not “Christian.” Yet the missionaries’ complex theological understanding of the spiritual benefits of wage labor was often invisible to the *shamba* residents. By employing slave labor, by tightly controlling their congregants’ daily labor and schedule, and by providing refugees with patronage and security, the mission blurred the lines between slave master and evangelist. It is thus not surprising that the congregants acted in ways that did not live up to what the missionaries believed they were preaching. By following the missionaries’ lead, the *shamba* residents managed to create complex social hierarchies and relationships of patronage and dependency on the *shamba*—relationships that both mimicked those modeled by their Tractarian leaders, and resembled social structures and dynamics of the societies from which they had come.

The institutionalization of the Schoolgirl and Industrial tracks likely seemed to its participants to be a logical or natural outgrowth of existing circumstances, as they had experienced no other system. Pupils at the Mbweni Girls’ School might have been even more willing to engage in this new system as they were unlikely to have imagined one’s determination as an Industrial or a Schoolgirl as static or prescribed. Rather, drawing on inherited ideas of personal dependency, the Mbweni students were much more likely to have seen the missionaries’ formally “tracked” educational system as fluid and contingent. Much like the status of coastal slavery itself, the Industrials’ was a marginality that they imagined could be reduced to manageable proportions, eliminated altogether over the course of several generations, or remedied immediately by a calculated marriage, suitable adoption, or by imputing other forms of kinship.

In many cases, an African Schoolgirl patron might have seemed at least as desirable as a British missionary, or in many ways largely indistinguishable. Indeed, the same relationships of fosterage, mentorship, and fictive kinship that grew up
between British missionaries and female adherents also existed between female adherents themselves. As early as 1871, church administrators began to place young female orphans in the homes of adult freed slaves whom they settled at the Mbweni shamba. These relationships were likely familiar to the participants, many of whom may have arrived to the mission as slaves via pawning or another form of temporary fosterage or exchange. Fosterage has a long history in many parts of Africa. Adoption, fostering on a temporary basis (including but not limited to pawnship), and various forms of support or investment in children by interested relatives, acquaintances, or clients allowed precolonial Africans to negotiate, between individuals and among communities, the rights and responsibilities that attend parenthood. Conventionally, relationships of fosterage in precolonial Africa had enormous advantages for guardians. Foster children could provide extra labor to an elderly couple or infertile woman, perform domestic or market chores, or take care of younger children or infirm members of the household. Foster parents could attempt to claim additional benefits such as access to certain social networks, or future benefits such as bridewealth payments or straight cash assistance. Such arrangements allowed prospective parents to reap the benefits afforded by children irrespective of any limitations placed on fertility by biology or the life cycle. The ability to cultivate foster relationships in the absence or felt paucity of biological children would thus have been particularly attractive to women. 47 Biological parents negotiated foster relationships in order to secure an apprenticeship for their child, access to social networks to which they themselves were not privy, or other social or religious training or guidance. Children entered foster homes for trade apprenticeships, to train in the domestic arts, and particularly in areas with large Muslim populations, for Islamic education with private teachers.48

Evangelical communities in late precolonial and colonial Africa relied heavily on fosterage as a tool for social reproduction. In CMS communities in Nigeria, for example, Igbo clerics’ wives trained Igbo children in Christian living. In addition to raising their own children, missions encouraged young Christian wives to take in “a few of the children of other, aspiring families and train them about Christianity, sanitation, and the proper care of a ‘modern’ household.” These children acted as “household help for their foster mother while gaining access to the Christian networks that could eventually mean school, employment with the colonial administration or, at least, an enhanced understanding of the new regime.”49

UMCA adherents and mission workers cultivated similar relationships, first
in Zanzibar and later within mainland communities. Kate Kadamweli, one of the first female adherents at Mbweni, participated in several such foster relationships with women the mission considered “wayward” or “lapsed.” Elizabeth Kidogo was one such “notorious bad woman” from the Mbweni *shamba* who spent the last few years of her life in Kate’s home. Other *shamba* women in good standing with the church looked after younger engaged women immediately before their weddings by acting as stand-ins for absent mothers, for those unwilling to participate in a Christian marriage, or for those the church deemed unsuitable parents. These foster mothers helped prepare young Christian women for marriage by helping to finalize their domestic or academic educations before the wedding, and worked to ensure chastity during engagements. Once a young Christian woman reached puberty, she was subject to a higher level of scrutiny from church administrators and their female interlocutors; if a Christian mother was not around to look out for the young woman’s virtue, church officials called on certain well-respected women to look after her. Records from the 1910s affirm that this practice remained a valuable tool for decades. On June 30, 1919, Louiza Kachija apparently “reached puberty” and was sent by church administrators to live with one Rhoda Kemblu in the hopes that Mama Kemblu would watch over her until a suitable match was made. In another case, *Mwalimu* Louisa Numbi, the wife of an African cleric, mentored Mbweni student Fibi Salama in Zanzibar for some time before her wedding. When it came time for Fibi to attend the church’s obligatory pre-marriage counseling sessions, it was Mwalimu Numbi who attended as Fibi’s guardian. Another young woman, Faith Naubri, attended the *shauri* with them, perhaps in preparation for her own marriage. Fibi married Mkabi bin Majanja of Pemba on June 2, 1919, and they returned to Pemba to live. Mama Logi, a member of the Zanzibar mission, took on a formal, paid position caring for Neema Heri, a woman “who does not want to be married.”

In the late 1880s, UMCA adherents, particularly those just entering the mission as refugees, might have been even more willing to engage in a range of relationships that offered them security, even if they seem undesirable to the modern-day reader. German commercial expansion on the mainland had just begun, exacerbating unrest and turmoil in some regions. Changing social and political relationships on the mainland might have made students even more willing to engage in a social hierarchy that they knew and that promised inclusion, rather than in one that was largely unknown.
The Mbweni Girls’ School Industrial Wing

On Monday, November 21, 1887, the Industrial Wing of the Mbweni Girls’ School opened to much fanfare. With the help of Archdeacon Hodgson, the girls decorated the walls inside and out with pennants left over from their celebration of Queen Victoria’s Golden Jubilee five months to the day prior. There were palms and flowers, too, from Mbweni’s gardens. The embellished white coral rag shone in the bright sun of that rainless day, which was a rare treat at that time of year. At four-thirty in the afternoon, as the sun was making its descent and the hottest time of day had passed, a procession formed at the girls’ school. Mr. Allen, a British missionary, went first, followed by the Reverend Cecil Majaliwa. Cecil had become a dependent of the mission when he was rescued from HMS *Dryad* on June 1, 1871, at the age of six, but had quickly risen through the church ranks to attend Kiungani, the UMCA’s boys’ school and theological training college, and then Saint Augustine’s College in England. When he returned to Zanzibar he was ordained as the first African priest of Tanganyika. Epitomizing the mission’s successes, Cecil took pride of place in the day’s procession, walking in front of the bishop and carrying his staff. The British teachers and nurses followed Bishop Smythies. The “Native Christians” brought up the rear, proceeding in reverse hierarchical order: first came the new Industrials, in blue dresses with scarves and red *kofias* (hats); then the pupil-teachers and first-class girls, both wearing red chintz dresses with white accessories; and last of all, the head class from Kiungani. The procession was far from somber, buoyed by the sounds of hymns and by the words of Psalm 67, recited as a prayer for the enlargement of Christ’s kingdom:

> God be merciful unto us, and bless us: and show us the light of his countenance, and be merciful unto us:
>
> That thy way may be known upon earth: thy saving health among all nations.
> Let the people praise thee, O God: yea, let all the people praise thee.
> O let the nations rejoice and be glad: for thou shalt judge the folk righteously, and govern the nations upon earth.
> Let the people praise thee, O God: let all the people praise thee.
> Then shall the earth bring forth her increase: and God, even our own God, shall give us his blessing.
> God shall bless us: and all the ends of the world shall fear him.
As with Israel, if the Lord would bless the UMCA, the community might, in turn, be a blessing to the world. The bishop said more prayers for the congregation to call all people to God, and the group recited prayers and sang hymns throughout the corridors and rooms. The first of two tea receptions followed. The Europeans crowded into one of the classrooms, where they socialized at tables, sheltered from the now setting sun. The children, eating fruit while they squatted on the verandah, would have watched dhows, silhouetted by the setting sun, glide past on their way from the Stone Town harbor. The second tea party was the next day, with all the teachers, married and single, and the Schoolgirls in attendance; the new Industrials were not invited to partake in sweets and biscuits consumed in their honor, for they were already ensconced in their new roles, cooking and serving behind the scenes.
The story of Fayida, who as we recall had arrived at the mission in April 1893 by way of HMS *Philomel* after a long trek to the coast with her brother, illustrates what might be thought of as the typical experiences of a young woman who found herself on the roster of the Industrial Wing. Fayida likely entered the Industrial Wing in 1895 or so, once it had been up and running for nearly a decade, and by a path that would have been common to those who preceded and followed her on the rosters. Early reports of Fayida were not flattering. Without the Industrial Wing she might have quickly been deemed a “troublesome element” and jettisoned from the school entirely. Indeed, workers reported that Fayida “gave a good deal of trouble at Mbweni.” She was, they said, “what her bringing up made her—weakly, timid and deceitful, and occasionally given to terrible fits of passion.”

Having arrived at the mission at age ten or eleven, Fayida would have had memories of home, of a family who loved her, and of a traumatic dislocation from all that she knew. Speaking neither Kiswahili nor English, she was likely lonely, homesick, and scared. Pain and resentment no doubt fueled those early “fits of passion.” After a year or so, however, she settled into her new life and began to flourish.

At approximately twelve years old, Fayida began to prepare for baptism. We cannot know for sure if Fayida’s heart was changed, but it is easy to imagine that Fayida took stock of her situation and made a resourceful decision. By 1895 the UMCA was one among several options Fayida was likely to have known about—the fledgling hierarchies offered by the German colonial administration on the mainland and Arab masters on Zanzibar were others. Revolts attended the imposition of German rule, and individuals from many sectors of coastal society and of communities farther inland resisted. The encroachment of the German colonial presence further destabilized areas along the caravan routes, particularly after 1890. After what she’d endured, life in the Industrial house was surely better than a life lived largely in the field, or in exile. Of course, Mbweni staff credited Fayida’s engagement with the “main truths of our religion” and her mastery of the Creed, the Lord’s Prayer, the Ten Commandments, and the simple Catechism for allowing “her real character . . . to show itself.” “For sheer plodding,” one lady missionary wrote, “I have seldom met her equal.” She seemed to not care for reading other than religious tracts, nor really to be “clever enough at book-learning to make a school-mistress.” The girl who seemed born for domestic work, with hands and arms that were “strong and delicate, that of a craftsman from shoulder to finger-tips,” thus made her home among the other “domestics.”

Like the other girls without “an aptitude for teaching,” Fayida would have taken
up residence in one of the two dormitories that made up the second level of the long, narrow white house built of coral rock and lime that adjoined the school chapel and the schoolhouse. Less a bed than a mat, her sleeping pad would have been adorned with a patchwork quilt stitched by a ladies auxiliary group back in England, and with the cards or trinkets that her British patrons sent her. The dormitories were accessible from an outside verandah through the bedroom of a Bibi, or British lady worker, set up to double as a “guard post” to keep the girls in, young men out, and virtue intact. The upper verandah, which faced west toward the sea, offered “the prettiest views of Mbweni,” which was indeed saying something as the entire site offers magnificent views toward the coast and setting sun. Above, the large flat roof often served as a dance floor on bright moonlit nights. Below, leading to five rooms, was the ground floor verandah, which was a popular spot for sitting and gossiping between chores or after a long day of work. One of the five rooms was a sitting room for the Bibis, one a lamp room, and the third storage, where the girls kept their personal items and clothes.62 The practical blue frocks the girls wore nearly every day hung on pegs or sat folded in cubbies. These dresses, stitched by mission patrons in England out of the very same material used for dresses worn in the British workhouses after which the Industrial Wing was modeled, were both cheap and durable.63 The girls’ white dresses would have been tucked away for special occasions, such as church holidays, Sundays, and weddings, safe from the red dust and coarse sand that was constantly tracked in by bare feet. The wing’s two other rooms, both quite large in size, are where Fayida and her classmates would have done their laundry work, studied their lessons, and prepared and eaten their meals—all separate, of course, from the main house.

Safely out of the classroom and away from girls the mission considered to be the more serious scholars, Fayida and her classmates practiced, as UMCA adherents always had, Western habits of personal hygiene: washing with soap, wearing clothes, and keeping their living spaces clean and tidy. They were also expected to learn to value— even covet—certain material goods, such as their blue “working girl” frocks and the lace that bordered their special-occasion white dresses. By the time they descended the stairs for the day’s lessons, they had transformed once again from slaves to the living embodiments of the “Three C’s” that Livingstone and others espoused as the remedy for the slave trade. Becoming a Christian “does not simply mean a changed soul,” one Quaker missionary living among the Maragoli in Kenya wrote to her parents, “it also means a changed life.”64

As for classes, the missionaries’ Tractarianism meant that the Industrial curriculum would be a mix of Victorian domestic values and what the missionaries
believed to be “indigenous custom.” As we have seen, the UMCA was determined to build a Native Church, an institution they defined as adapted to the “special circumstances of the race and the country” in which they worked. In such a church, the essential core of Tractarian doctrine would remain intact, as would the movement’s emphasis on, for example, sacramentalism, ritualism, and reserve. They sensed a need to compromise on the incorporation of certain forms of expression and of longer-standing African practices into the new church; for example, UMCA workers deemed asceticism, retirement, and the monastic ideal as unsuited to African life and thought it wise to permit African clerics to marry, for the purpose of growing the church—both biologically and socially. British missionaries were not prepared, however, to concede on the issue of polygamy, and they staunchly advocated for only monogamous marriages between two autonomous individuals. These concessions and adaptations were not fixed, but were sites for contestation over the ability to define the church’s borders and to stake out membership within the church community, as we shall see.

The Industrial girls learned that cleanliness was next to godliness and developed a healthy respect for the value of clean clothes, for example, but they were taught to wash only “in native fashion.” “Perhaps you will say, ‘Why not teach them English ways?’” asked one missionary rhetorically about this plan. “But, you see, we have to look to the future. These girls will soon have to live in a native hut up country, and the cost would be great indeed to carry tubs, mangle, and all the plan required for an English laundry to a far-off station. But now these girls take a wooden tray to wash upon their heads, a bucket, and a charcoal iron, and they can go hundreds of miles up country and have all they require for this work.” Clean clothes would prove their Christian virtue even in the far corners of heathen lands, and would set them apart from their less unsoiled neighbors. UMCA trainers also considered English cooking techniques to be impractical, unlike brethren at other missions. In the Belgian Congo, for example, Nonconformist missionaries working in the equatorial forest on the Congo River in the 1920s sought to make their station as much like their home as possible. Adherents learned to serve and to consume full three-course, European-inspired menus. When a new missionary sat down for her first dinner party with “natives,” she was surprised that they ate roast meat with mint sauce, potatoes, peas, and rice. Criticizing the adherents’ inability to use cutlery she wrote, “Of course it was a little difficult to convey peas safely to their destination by means of a fork, when you have never done it before . . . But with the assistance of a dessert spoon all went well.” African Christians in the Belgian
Congo developed fine motor skills and even finer palates. When King Leopold II’s son, Prince Albert, visited the same station in 1909, his experience with the landscaping, food, accommodations, and service was such that “one would truly think one was in England.”

On the other end of the spectrum were those like the London Missionary Society’s eccentric missionaries J. T. Van der Kemp and James Read. The pair believed local custom was no hindrance to a Christian life, and even embraced it themselves. Read lived for a time “shoeless in a clay hut with a Khoekhoe wife, learned to like Xhosa sour milk, gave up bread, tea, and coffee when he could not afford them.” Van der Kemp, who advocated purity through renunciation and suffering, was often seen “without a hat, his venerable bald head exposed to the burning rays of the sun . . . dressed in a threadbare black coat, waistcoat and breeches, without shirt, neckcloth, or stockings, and leather sandals bound upon his feet, the same as are worn by the Hottentots.” He even went so far as to “marry” (though “free” or “hire” might be more appropriate) a thirteen-year-old slave girl from Madagascar. It is likely that neither Read’s Khoekhoe wife nor Van der Kemp’s Malagasy bride cooked pot roast and green peas in a double boiler on the veld. Such impassioned embrace of local culture was not the kind of accommodation the Tractarians had in mind; indeed, UMCA missionaries advocated a middle road between Nonconformists in the Belgian Congo and the likes of Read and Van der Kemp in southern Africa.

Fayida’s daily work, then, was a mix of laundry and ironing, sorting and pounding rice, collecting firewood, gardening, and cleaning. The purpose of her and the other Industrial girls’ work was twofold. First and purportedly foremost, the Industrials completed their daily chores in order to learn to execute the quotidian domestic skills that underwrote a civilized Christian life. Mastery of all that constituted the “Victorian cult of domesticity” would make the Industrials good Christians, good models of Christian behavior, and good evangelists. “Although these girls have not chosen teaching as their vocation,” one missionary wrote, “we hope when they leave us and go to their own homes they will be a power for good in the world, by leading consistent Christian lives themselves and doing what they can to influence their neighbours.” Any good work could be transformed into God’s work, and the girls and young women were encouraged to carry the spirit of God’s grace with them wherever they went and in whatever task was at hand. Even without polished teaching skills, missionaries conceded, they could still set a good example and enlighten “their less fortunate sisters . . . for, as we say in Africa, ‘among the blind the one eyed is king.’” This would be especially true if they
wound up living in areas where they did not speak the local language or share in local customs—the daily performance of these values was a language all onlookers could eventually understand.

Second—and perhaps more important to the missionaries and the Schoolgirls—the Industrials provided the daily labor that kept the schoolhouse running and the Schoolgirls free for more important intellectual pursuits. Thus the Industrials were responsible for cooking the midday meal, which was enjoyed by both their British instructors and the Schoolgirls. When not cooking or washing up, Industrials worked in the kitchen garden cultivating sugar cane, Indian corn, vegetables, and groundnuts, among other crops. Their training also provided them with some income-generating skills, such as laundry, mat plaiting, and sewing, which would help support them after school ended and they were no longer in direct service of the mission.71

The ironies implicit in the new track system of education did not end there. The new social hierarchy of the mission also resembled in many ways the conditions institutionalized under the so-called Poor Laws in Britain, which were codified in the late 1500s and reformed in the 1830s to include the system of workhouses for which the laws are known today. The missionaries would have been familiar with this system because poverty and unemployment were a central concern of 1870s bourgeois British society. These laws, a predecessor to the modern welfare state, offered relief to the very poor in conditions so rigorous that “no-one would voluntarily seek it in preference to work.” Poor women suffered double injustices under this system, for they were largely considered “non-wage-earning dependents” and were treated not as autonomous individuals who had a capacity to contribute to family income, but as dependent upon their husbands. They were therefore not granted the opportunity, as it were, to pursue workhouse labor on their own, and to raise themselves and their families out of debt. It was not until 1871 that a labor option was introduced for women. Single women—such as those who were widowed, divorced, abandoned, or never married—became equal to men under the Poor Law: as “potentially recalcitrant members of the work force.” These women, the law insisted, had a duty to work. With that duty came, in theory, access to useful training in the workhouse. This legal provision was not widely implemented, however, lest it make the workhouse too attractive.

While poverty and charity incite sympathy, they also breed stigma. As much as upper-class, churchgoing ladies’ auxiliary members in late nineteenth-century Britain might have sympathized with the plight of these women and offered them
outreach and assistance, they did not empathize. Charities and upper-class altruists sought ways to distinguish the “deserving” poor from the “undeserving” poor and struggled to understand the true root of poverty, something that they believed did not reside within them. Indeed, after the 1830s the complete transformation of working-class morals and habits “became a central feature of bourgeois cultural strategy.” In the 1860s the “social problem” of poverty and unemployment remained seemingly intractable, and British philanthropists sought the “revitalization of existing ideas and practices, with a consequent emphasis upon the reform of working-class habits, the need for discrimination and organization in charitable giving, and the value of personal contact between the classes as exemplified by the persistent ideal of the home visitor.” Questions about the natural tendencies and inherent propensities toward indolence, laziness, or sloth remained as the stigma of pauperism and relief.

The same ideology that motivated philanthropists of mid-nineteenth-century Britain to invest in the poor at home motivated others, such as the Tractarians, to look overseas. If Britain and her Tractarians “would claim the stewardship of Abraham to be the Father of many nations,” it would not be enough to tend to the heathen at home, but they must both “attack a citadel close at hand, and to advance against an enemy in the field.” Just as their charity applied to Africans as a race, so too did their skepticism of African morals and habits. Perhaps nowhere was this more true than in the case of unmarried women who, in the eyes of the British workers, were beginning to show little capacity to excel at the one career the mission made available to them. To the missionaries, these women suffered the multiple indignities of being African, being women, and being incapable of academic work, self-reliance, and personal uplift. They were sent to the workhouse, where they, like the most privileged of Britain’s female workhouse residents, could get useful training that, in theory, would lift them from their degradation. The Mbweni workhouse girls could not seem to escape the prejudices that plagued their British contemporaries, for they were essentially institutionalized, separated from the more “promising” segment of the Schoolgirls, and taught to live in service to others.

Thus ultimately, it seems that Capel’s assessment of the girls’ tendency to keep “slaves” was not too far off the mark. As illustrated above, these were relationships the missionaries themselves performed. Similar to their British contemporaries—members of a society in which one could find domestic servants, both paid and unpaid, at every level but the very poorest—Mbweni pupil-teachers relied on others to complete the mundane domestic rituals of a civilized life. This arrangement
may not have been all that surprising to the young women involved, for two reasons. First, as we have seen, Mbweni’s Schoolgirl/Industrial hierarchical labor system closely resembled both the system of client slavery from which many of the UMCA’s congregants had fled, and the now-familiar master-servant relationship on the station. Young Industrials had every reason to invest in relationships of personal dependency that they believed would further solidify their membership in the UMCA community. Especially if the young women did not see these relationships as static, but as a way to reduce their marginality over time, they might have seemed a savvy choice. Second, some among the Industrial students may have also grown up in communities in which the more powerful men practiced polygamy. In these places, junior wives served senior wives, and older girls did what was asked in service of the extended family. An Industrial education allowed women to forge new kinship ties and family units, albeit in ways that were unfamiliar and surprising to British mission staff. When presented with choices on the shamba about how to live out one’s life, not all women felt suited to the options missionaries presented to them. Faced with studying texts inside all day, a woman inclined toward farming or with a special talent in husbandry might have focused her attention on agricultural tasks instead. When she learned that she would have to lead Bible-study classes and recruit followers, a more introverted woman might have lost interest in her studies, focusing instead on cooking or making vestments for the clergy. A woman averse, for whatever reason, to marriage would likely have found ways to escape matchmaking for as long as possible, particularly that which might have paired her with the epitome of an African Christian man—the aspiring Native Cleric. Rather than seeking trouble for trouble’s sake, women the mission deemed “troublesome” were more likely simply expressing themselves in a way that did not match the categories to which the mission had ascribed them. As the mission responded to these idiosyncrasies, it did so in a way that exacerbated stratifications that were already beginning to emerge on the shamba based on female congregants’ own social positioning.

Mbweni’s Schoolgirls

After Smythies removed the twelve girls from the schoolhouse in 1884, only the teachers-in-training remained. A young woman named Kathleen Mkwarasho was enrolled at Mbweni during this time of transition, and was chosen to continue on
in the teacher-training track. Like Fayida, Kathleen’s experiences were likely typical of an Mbweni Schoolgirl in the 1880s and 1890s. Given that she appears on mission registers as a Makua, it is likely that Kathleen was born either in Mozambique or across the border in what is now southern Tanzania. The girl who came to be known as Kathleen was probably either captured in a raid or else pawned by her family to creditors and never redeemed. She ended up, by what trials we shall never know, aboard HMS Briton, whence she was transferred into the care of the mission in 1874. Kathleen was baptized just six months later. She must have been about three or four years old when she was incorporated into the mission, for she was counted among the “elder girls” in the 1886 school exams. She excelled on those tests, receiving commendation for her papers on the authorship of the Epistle to the Hebrews, the irrigation of Egypt, and the histories of Germany and Athens.

With the opening of the Industrial Wing the following year, Kathleen would have become a “pupil-teacher.” Dressed in the red Turkish chintz dresses that “betrayed a teacher,” Kathleen and her classmates would have followed a strict curriculum meant to prepare them for their lives as clerics’ wives at remote mainland stations. Kathleen and her fellow pupil-teachers split their time equally between learning and teaching, spending one month with their books and the next in a classroom with younger students. Their studies might have consisted of Robert
Isaac Wilberforce’s *Five Great Empires*, Andrew Jukes on the *Types in Leviticus*, and a little natural history. They often studied the Book of Acts, and had private lessons on the Gospel of Saint Matthew and other relevant pieces of scripture. Arithmetic, too, was on the lesson plan, although many missionaries believed it to be the school’s “most deficient point” because “it is always a great difficulty with African children.”

In alternate months Kathleen and her contemporaries practiced their skills in classroom management and curriculum preparation. The elder girls were effectively teachers’ aides, expected to “use their influence amongst the children to keep order, and see that the rules are not broken.” They learned how to construct timetables, “how to be prepared for the many difficulties that come to a person who has a fair-sized school, and has to teach it single-handed, with only such help as can be got from the children themselves.” In addition to such concrete academic skills as reading, writing, and arithmetic, the girls worked to hone their skills at evangelism and proselytization. The missionaries tried at all times to “impress upon them that they must be kind and friendly toward heathen parents who do not see the use of education, having none themselves.” And, most importantly, workers tried to help their students “look upon their work as missionary work.” “I know,” confessed Thackeray, that “one cannot put the missionary spirit into anybody’s heart, but I think one may help to remove obstacles to its growth.” This idea, that teaching and working with parents was evangelical work, would continue to undergird the curriculum and training of the UMCA pupil-teachers for years to come.

Free from performing the mundane duties of civilized Christian life while the Industrials labored on their behalf, the Schoolgirls turned their attentions to their books and to shoring up their teaching, curriculum-development, and classroom-management skills. Relieved of the burden of domestic work, the balance of the Schoolgirls’ days was little different than it had been for all adherents in the mission’s early years. Indeed, for years, all of Mbweni’s elder students received on-the-job teacher training. For example, Lucy Majaliwa, Cecil’s wife, was grown, educated, and married by the time the tracked system of education at Mbweni began. Without a separate teachers’ classroom and with no extra British staff, the only training Lucy received for her teaching career was what she could glean while supervising the lessons of the younger students. Lucy had “natural abilities and goodness,” however, that allowed her to build a successful career as a teacher and cleric’s wife. Kate Kadamweli received a similar education before the Industrial Wing opened. “From the first,” Kate was “looked up to as head girl” by the others of her cohort, and thus it was little surprise that she was in charge of day scholars
at Mbweni, and of supervising the young pupil-teachers who were over the lower classes. When Caroline Thackeray arrived at Mbweni, she found Kate in the schoolroom "surrounded by girls, busy fixing the needlework which they were doing."

While the Industrials prepared to do the work themselves, the pupil-teachers trained expressly to teach others the essential skills and behaviors of a Christian life. In their future capacity as teachers and mothers at remote mainland stations, the missionaries idealized the Schoolgirls as the mission's most important means of modeling and passing along the skills and domestic callings associated with Western civilization (as with many of the missionaries' plans, the realities of the pupils' lives would complicate this distinction). Just as the UMCA required their British lady workers to have domestic expertise before entering the mission, the mission desired its pupil-teachers to receive proper training in Western domestic skills. The theory, apparently, was that one ought to know the "rules" before they could be bent to accommodate the necessary concessions for African life. And, for the most up-to-date and sophisticated training, the mission sent some of its female protégées to Europe. The Industrial School at Clewer, England, offered a four-year course for women aspiring to be trained in the domestic arts. In 1885 Nena Chadisa and Neema Chande, two of the girls in the newly formed pupil-teacher track, left Zanzibar to enroll at Clewer for four years. At Clewer, Nena and Neema would have studied "all household-work, laundry-work, and cooking," skills that would "be of untold value in Zanzibar and on the mainland." Such courses became popular during British rule, when formalized programs were established at industrial schools throughout Britain to attract girls from the colonies. Less formally, Thackeray took students with her to England when she returned for home leave. The girls helped in fundraising pitches and mission outreach events, but they also toured local homes and churches and took classes. Kathleen Mkwarasho went with Thackeray to England in 1882, and Keziah Shikalako was a senior pupil-teacher at Mbweni in 1893 when she traveled to Rome, where she took "lessons in church embroidery from a mistress trained in one of the great embroidery schools of the city." According to plan, she "so profited that she has lately been able to superintend the church embroidery class at Mbweni." Mwalimu Keziah's embroidery class at Mbweni was, as we shall see, one of many classes in the domestic arts taught throughout the mission's lands. Central to the mission's civilizing rhetoric, the domestic arts were a gateway to rituals of a Christian life. The domestic arts were also evangelical tools women could deploy wherever they traveled with their husbands, whether they spoke the same language as new inquirers or not.
Travels with British missionaries to England and Europe were but one of the many ways in which the mission further inscribed in its future teachers and aspiring clerics’ wives their privileged status within the mission. These moments also served to reinforce a sense of camaraderie between the British missionaries and Schoolgirls. And indeed, there were many similarities. The Bibis and Schoolgirls lived together on the mission grounds, sharing a building that was separate from the women who worked for them. And they shared in the missiological burden, responsible for spreading Christianity to new generations of Christians. They were all well-educated, literate, sophisticated women who were creative about carving out respectable futures for themselves. Yet both the British women and the Schoolgirls had their futures circumscribed by the social and cultural realities of their separate societies; the missionaries were hemmed in by the professional realities of Victorian England, and the very category of Schoolgirl (and indeed Industrial, too) was only possible because of the persistence of relationships of dependency. Facing limited options, the missionaries and the Schoolgirls both sought to expand their respective domains as much as possible, always pushing the boundaries or creating new boundaries in a circumscribed world. Both marginalized in different ways, missionaries rewarded those who they understood to be most like them.

Kate Kadamweli, for example, was proving to be in all ways a model of modernizing Christianity. In school, she quickly became “the most advanced of all the girls in general intelligence” and was the best at needlework among her peers, sewing hems “quite respectably.” Temperamentally, she struck missionaries as “being very truly religious, absolutely reliable and worthy of all the respect we could show her.” Under Miss Jones’s instruction at the girls’ school, Kate grew to be a talented seamstress with an obedient and teachable disposition. She and several others taught by Miss Tozer, the late bishop’s sister, were “distinguished by their peculiarly sweet accent and pretty manners” and carried some of Miss Jones’s influence, or so it was said, in her gentility and capacity for conversation. She was a “real influence for good, and her life shone out bright and pure among her heathen surroundings.” After leaving Mbweni, and being imminently “useful,” she pitched in where needed around the mission’s stations and ultimately became indispensable to the staff in Zanzibar Town. She was particularly kind and helpful to those who had fallen into sin, taking them into her house and nursing them when they were ill. She was, the hospital matron would say of her upon her death, “one of the most Christian women I have ever worked with.” In 1870 Kate married an African subdeacon from
Kiungani and became the mother of one biological and several adopted refugee children. In 1875, after a distressing stint on a mainland mission station during which she endured the death of a child and separated from her philandering husband, she returned to Mbweni. There, Kate took up teaching and became the school’s first and only Head Native Teacher.

Managing Marriage

Integral to, and indeed the most important product of, the tracked system of education at Mbweni was the development of communities. The experiences of female Industrials and Schoolgirls at the shamba encouraged congregants to think of themselves as participating in several overlapping and intersecting communities: as part of a community of other Industrials; as set apart in a community of Schoolgirls; as part of a universal communion of Anglicans; as part of a spiritual community of African UMCA congregants; and as part of a single Christian nuclear family. Each of these communities was based on a series of relationships, forged through common experience and a shared investment in the community and its perpetuity. These relationships unfolded similar to what Dorothy Ko, a historian of China, has described as a “series of nested circles.” We can think of the UMCA's sisters in spirit as unfolding in concentric circles; the innermost circle can be imagined as that which was absolutely fundamental to the biological reproduction of the UMCA's community: the companionate pair, the unit on which all good, Christian, monogamous marriages—and the mission's evangelical strategy—were based.

As we have seen, African women were the crux of the mission's plans for biological and ideological reproduction, and faced—at least according to the missionaries—a range of potential evils should they remain unmarried. Equally important was the nature of the marriage that ensued: British workers had in mind that their African congregants would pair off along lines drawn in the UMCA curriculum—Schoolgirls with male theological students (destined to be clerics and teachers), and Industrials with male congregants pursuing other careers, such as carpentry or working in the print shop. A rigorous matchmaking agenda that followed these specifications would, missionaries hoped, create a cadre of highly trained and educated evangelists who would spread out across the mainland and establish new congregations, setting a standard of African Christian civilization. British workers and African officials thus attempted to carefully manage the
marriage process, hoping to control the nature of the emergent community, though having less success in practice than they desired.

When the UMCA's Mbweni girls, both Industrials and Schoolgirls, were “old enough to think of marriage,” they were allowed to receive visits from male students on monthly “Boys' Sundays.” Young lovers would sit on the verandas, feasting on all sorts of “native sweets and dainties” prepared for the occasion. If, for some reason, a mission boy could not find anyone to spend his Sundays with, he would employ a mission official to “write to one of the ladies in charge of Mbweni and state the case.” The Mbweni teacher would then “either send me the name of one, or names of any of the girls who were not ‘engaged’ or were not put down as friend of anyone,” or she would “send word asking the lad to call and see her when he went to Mbweni next time.” Fayida began courting a boy from the Industrial boys' home at Mkunazini not long after she arrived at the mission. He was, Fayida learned, prone to drinking, so she sent him away, pledging to not see him until she knew “he had been quite steady.” She hinted that if he were to sober up, the young man might “hear from me again.” And indeed, several months later, while spying through lilac passion-flower bushes at her young charge, Anne Foxley spotted Fayida, in a crisp new frock, leaning against a pillar next to a “tall, well set-up young fellow, who looked very well content with his position.”

While last we hear, Fayida's love affair was continuing “very happily,” it is unlikely that any relationship would have continued long without the meddling hands of the missionaries. As single women with no children of their own, the UMCA's British lady missionaries were likely very keen to plot marriages and weddings for their “daughters” on the shamba. And, there was so much riding on these matches that strict rules governed courtship and marriage. Girls were not allowed to consider themselves engaged “until they [herself and her lover] have been ‘friends’ (rafiki) one year at least.” If mission workers determined that the suitor was “in a position to marry, they are considered 'engaged' until the wedding can be arranged.” After a marriage was agreed to by the “elders” of each school, the wedding would soon follow. Officials actively discouraged long engagements because during a long wait to marry “there is almost a certainty of mischief resulting.” In a letter regarding marriages between mission adherents, Steere explained that the mission was “not dealing with the case of born Christians, or of intelligent thoughtful people, we are dealing with the case of heathens, unaccustomed to restrain their passions, and barely just beginning to comprehend the existence of a law and of self-restraint, and to get a glimpse of spirituality,” and therefore, the mission should encourage
among their Christians “marriage, openly and deliberately entered into” in the
“hope of escaping innumerable and nameless mischiefs.”

Although the girls were ostensibly given free range in their marital choices,
mission officials had high hopes that “the boys who are teachers will take the
educated girls, who can help them in their work.” The pupil-teachers, after all, had
been especially trained to “look forward, when they marry, to taking small isolated
schools on the mainland” with their husbands.96 Missionaries seemed particularly
tickled when their matchmaking worked out. Take the marriage of Harry Nasibu and
Emma Zalana, for example. Harry, or “Henry” as he first appears on mission rolls,
was Kame by birth, presumably from the area near Morogoro. Mission logs indicate
that Harry came to the mission straight from Zanzibar, perhaps as a runaway from
an island plantation, in June 1873.97 Emma, a Makua, arrived at the mission as a
refugee by way of HMS Flying Fish on May 25, 1875.98 She would have been a student
at Mbweni before tracked education began, and was therefore prepared to be a
teacher and encouraged to marry one. After graduating from Mbweni, Emma taught
at a girls’ school at Mkuzi, in one of the most beautiful villages in the Usambaras,
where Harry was a teacher.99 The couple returned to Mbweni for a time, and Caroline
Thackeray wrote glowingly of the pair. Emma was clever, Thackeray noted, and had a
great thirst for knowledge, something that did not seem to have “diminished during
the years which have passed since her marriage, as she always seems delighted
when here to share in any lessons of the pupil-teachers or to copy out any notes of
lessons which we have done whilst she was on the mainland.”100 Harry and Emma’s
marriage was, at least according to missionaries, “a most happy and suitable one.
Their house with its bookshelves and little table, always with signs of exercise books
and pen and ink on it, looks completely like what one wishes a teacher’s house to
be, and they seem to spend a good deal of time comparing notes and looking at
each other’s work. Certainly her interest in her own work has increased rather than
diminished since her marriage, and her house is also excellently kept.”101 They were,
to the missionaries, a model pair.

But even under such intense scrutiny, things did not always work out as the
missionaries imagined. Indeed, they soon found that “the course of true love will
not always run in prepared channels,” for it seemed that the African “teachers
sometimes think a girl who has learnt industrial work will make a better wife.”102
Further, the ratio of male teachers to female was not always even, so “the native
clergy and teachers look to the Industrials for wives when there are none to be
found in the school.”103 Although most Industrials did not go on to be teachers,
there were exceptions. For example, Beatrice Kilekwa’s friend from Likoma, Mabel Macheka, married Augustine Ambali and went with him to Msumba, on the shores of Lake Nyasa, where she did “good work as a teacher.” It was a challenging posting for the pair, Mabel explained in a letter to Caroline Thackeray, because “life in the midst of a heathen village was much fuller of temptations than at quiet Mbweni.” Sara Fatima, who married a teacher, was herself a “very capable ‘dobi,’ or laundress.” Together the Amanis lived on one of the mission’s stations in the Usambaras, where Sara helped teach in the girls’ school and did laundry work. Additionally, as with the inherited social systems of patronage and clientship on which these relationships were based, the boundaries between the categories of Industrials and Schoolgirls were fluid, and one could move between them over generations, over the course of a lifetime, or through marriage, adoption, or by imputing other forms of kinship ties. It is unlikely that Industrials saw anything subversive or revolutionary in their decisions to marry clerics- or teachers-in-training, but rather saw it as one of a range of options available to them that would allow them to reduce their marginality. In the minds of the missionaries these arrangements were not ideal, but when seen through the lens of the missionaries’ own actions and the safety and security offered by inherited social structures, marriages across professional tracks offered women the opportunity to intrude more forcefully into the community and into status hierarchies that resonated with them. This was particularly important as the mission expanded to the mainland, as evangelists moved between discontiguous stations, and as German colonial rule solidified on the mainland. The latter was a process that made day-to-day life on the mainland significantly more difficult for evangelists from Mbweni, both in terms of their actual work and in terms of straining their sense of connection to Zanzibar.

Capel, who had abandoned the Mbweni mission for India in 1878, would have been surprised to learn of the mission’s relative successes. That two decades later the mission would be sending well-traveled, well-educated, companionate pairs to the mainland as foot soldiers in the campaign to spread civilized Christianity would have been hard for him to believe. That women like Kathleen Mkwarsho and Lucy Majaliwa would raise daughters and teach young women who would come back to Mbweni to learn and to teach, and that they would create networks of “former Mbweni girls” to sustain themselves and the church through the Tanzanian
mainland, was surely far beyond Capel’s 1877 imagination. What would not have surprised Capel, however, is that these successes came at a cost.

A series of ironies shaped the Mbweni *shamba* during the 1870s and 1880s. The number of slaves available for proselytization, for example, increased with abolitionists’ efforts against the trade. The British women who searched for professional careers ended up reinforcing in the Industrial Wing the very system of circumscribed opportunity they professed to be leaving behind. And, rather than obliterate the master-slave relationship to which they were ideologically and theologically opposed, the missionaries enshrined it as integral to Christian life. The UMCA’s labor practices demonstrated to refugees and freeborn adherents alike that relationships of personal dependency were central to the mission’s efforts to build a new community. Particularly important to efforts to establish the new community, and to convince people to invest in it, were the affective elements of relationships of personal dependency. Whether it was British lady workers seeking relationships that mirrored the mother-daughter relationship, whether it was female refugees seeking to impute a range of kinship ties to intrude more forcibly into the community, or whether it was Industrial girls seeking husbands among the clerics- and teachers-in-training, affective relationships bound community members to one another. Gossip and ostracism, which Capel identified among his female adherents, were also forms of affective relationships that gave flesh to the community. As African evangelists spiraled out from the mission’s heart at Zanzibar to the farthest reaches of the ever-expanding dioceses, these affective relationships bound them to each other and to their colleagues, friends, and loved ones who remained behind at Mbweni. And, as other options for affiliation and status competed with the mission for Africans’ affections and allegiance—such as those offered by mainland communities or by the incursions of German conquest—these relationships strengthened their resolve and shaped their work.