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## Joseph Merinyo: A Patriotic Chagga Nationalist and Adamant Champion for Justice and Human Rights

By Godson S. Maanga

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## 1. INTRODUCTION

From the biological viewpoint human beings fall into only two groups (males and females) but their socio-economic, religio-cultural, and politico-scientific contribution is diverse and multi-faceted. Some human beings contribute so little to the society whereas others contribute abundantly and extensively. There are people who live in the world without any distinct aim and as a result when they die they do not leave behind anything substantial. Such people are useless and a great burden on the society. They are 'good for nothing chaps', just like Unoka in *Things Fall Apart* who is depicted by Chinua Achebe as a loafer and an incorrigible debtor – a total failure who (because of his chronic laziness and cowardice) is derided by everybody, including his relatives (Achebe 2004:3–6).

Some people have a contribution so great that they are remembered many years after they have passed away. There are people who protrude above others due to the fact that they are remembered as great researchers and accomplished scientists, tough freedom fighters and adamant social reformers, bold voyagers and new land discoverers. Others are remembered as articulate architects and fecund musicians, historic novelists and visionary poets, as well as great historians and veteran politicians. Such people are great accomplishees in deed and thoughts – people of the stature of William Shakespeare, Thomas Edison, Winston Churchill, Wolfgang Goethe, Sebastian Bach, Abraham Lincoln, Karl Marx, Julius Nyerere, and Nelson Mandela – to mention only a few.

### a) *The Problem and Aim of the Paper*

This study aims at answering the following important question: is the person of Joseph Merinyo sufficiently studied? If yes, has he been studied correctly, fairly and for the benefit of members of the society? This particular question crops up amidst the realization that in different areas of Africa, there are many people who have superb contribution behind them but due to the fact that there is no intensive research done about them, in most cases these people remain in oblivion. Some die without having anything recorded about their lives when they were alive. The study is geared towards achieving one objective – to take Joseph Merinyo as an object of study and share the results of the study with the general public. This is the actual thesis of the paper and its purpose has been to prove that Merinyo really lived and he stood for his convictions. As it is said in a research manual, the main purpose of a research paper is “to explain, illustrate, argue for, or in some sense ‘prove’” (Weidenborner and Caruso 1994: 6) what the researcher has in mind.

In the light of the available handful literature, Joseph Merinyo is least studied. This is disappointing, remembering his great role and contribution to the society. The situation underlying the scarcity of research on the life and work of Joseph Merinyo has dictated the research and writing of this paper and hopefully more papers of this kind will appear in the future.

The aim of this paper is not to blow trumpets for Joseph Merinyo who was never perfect. In his own right, Merinyo had strengths and weaknesses, just like any

genuine human being. He lived in real world, with human ups and downs. Nelson Mandela points out quite clearly when he says that in “real life we deal, not with gods, but with ordinary humans like ourselves: men and women who are full of contradictions, who are stable and fickle, strong and weak, famous and infamous” (Mandela 2010: xvi). Quoting Barack Obama, the first American president with an African ancestry, the researcher confesses that the paper’s account on Joseph Merinyo is not the story of an infallible person or a super creature. Like the story on the life and work of Nelson Mandela, information on the person of Joseph Merinyo is a story of “a man who was willing to risk his own life for what he believed in, and who worked hard to lead the kind of life that would make the world a better place” (Obama 2010: xiii).

#### b) *Working Hypothesis*

As a stepping stone, the researcher established a tentative hypothesis. This hypothesis helped him guess a number of things about Joseph Merinyo. Hypothesis can be explained as “a conjecture about relationships between relevant variables, cast as a statement that is testable. It provides a clear (tentative) proposition of what might be the case that is then subjected to verification via empirical investigation” (Green 2011:56). Thus, the following hypothesis was formulated: Joseph Merinyo was one of the makers of Chagga history and that most of the things seen in Chaggaland are the product of bold and fecund-minded people like him. The researcher formulated this hypothesis, quite aware of the fact that history is not made by one person. With this realization in mind, it was evident to the researcher that Joseph Merinyo, in collaboration with other prominent Chagga citizens, shaped Chaggaland into what is seen today.

#### c) *Theoretical and Conceptual Framework*

The life and work of Joseph Merinyo is used to highlight the socio-cultural and politico-economic contribution of various people in the African villages. In the pursuit of this study, it became necessary to define some concepts which occupy a crucial role in the paper. These concepts are patriot, nationalist, justice, kingmaker, human rights, and diplomacy.

According to *Oxford Advanced Learner's Dictionary*, the term ‘patriot’ means a person who loves his country and “who is ready to defend it against an enemy” (Hornby 2005: 1068). Nyerere introduced National Service to his country so that the citizens could be patriots who are willing or ready to put into practice the initiatives and aspirations of first-generation patriots like Joseph Merinyo.

The *Chambers Twentieth Century Dictionary* defines the word ‘nationalist’ as a person “who favours or strives after the unity, independence, interests, or domination of a nation” (Macdonald 1974:877). As far as the African political history is concerned, people like

Nelson Mandela, Julius Nyerere, Samora Machel, Steve Biko, and others were nationalists in the real sense of the term.

Nationalists use people (their countrymen and countrywomen) as agents of change in the nationalist pursuits. This is proven by Biko’s bold statement – that it becomes necessary for one to see the truth as if one understands that the people who have lost their personality as human beings are the only tools for change. Thus, the first initiative in nationalist campaigns is to enable the black people come back to themselves; to restore pride and respect to them; to enable them recognize their complicity in the folly and crime of agreeing to be misused and mistreated by their oppressors and committing the crime of letting evil dominate in their country of birth (Biko 1978:12). In his own right, Joseph Merinyo was a political comrade and a hardcore nationalist because he was always striving to liberate his people and enable them live in peace, unity and independence.

In the *Webster's New World Student's Dictionary*, the term ‘justice’ is briefly defined as “the quality of being just and fair” (Goldman and Sparker 1996: 482). Another Dictionary, *Random House Webster's College Dictionary*, gives a definition that is more or less similar to the one found in *Webster's Dictionary* but with something extra. According to this dictionary, ‘justice’ means the quality of being just, righteous, equitable, or morally right. Quoting an unknown author, Nicholas Otieno and Hugh McCullum say that what is important in African societies is not democracy as such but rather providing “justice, equality, and dignity for its citizens” (Otieno with McCullum 2005:73). This was very much realized by Joseph Merinyo during his lifetime. He understood how the forces of imperialism and exploitation impinge bitterly and mercilessly on the lives of poor and sometimes defenceless people in the dilapidated African villages, including villages of his home area.

As it is defined by *Oxford Advanced Learner's Dictionary*, the term ‘kingmaker’ means “a person who has a very strong political influence and is able to bring [somebody] else to power as a leader” (Hornby 2005:815). Joseph Merinyo was one such person because his political influence was great and he indeed possessed the power of enthroning various chiefs.

According to *Encyclopaedia Britannica*, the term ‘human rights’ means “rights that belong to an individual as a consequence of being human.” Merinyo was a champion of human rights because he worked hard to ensure that everybody got the respect and rights he/she deserves. According to Julius Nyerere, human rights means the rights to participate in public elections (i.e. to elect and be elected to positions of leadership), being regarded as a valuable creature, getting chance to establish humane communities, enjoying equal socio-

economic opportunities, and things of that sort (Nyerere 1966: 69–71).

The *Collier's Encyclopedia* defines the term 'diplomacy' as "the theory and practice of conducting negotiations between governments." Merinyo was a master of diplomacy but not always so because sometimes he was harsh and forceful as it becomes evident in the incidents he dealt with certain people who fell out with him. In a democratic society, diplomacy is very much needed because history has proven that swords and guns never solve social conflicts – they worsen things.

#### i. *Nature of the Paper*

This is a historical paper which deals with its variable from a historical perspective. Taking history as a huge building, Joseph Merinyo stands as one of the blocks or walls which give the building shape and existence. The paper is also political in nature because it reflects on the political stance of a Chagga icon whose life and work occupy a permanent place in the annals of history about great people, inside and outside Africa.

#### ii. *Significance of the Paper*

The significance of the paper lies in the fact that quite a big number of people are expected to benefit from its finding. These people include students, teachers, researchers, politicians, missionaries, ethnologists, anthropologists, sociologists and even philosophers. Joseph Merinyo's thoughts and initiatives will continue being influential in many social sectors. The paper is also significant because it is expected to stimulate more research on influential people around the country – hence supply subjects of study for school and college curricula. It is believed that any academic debate arising as the result of sharing and discussing the message passed across by the gist of this paper would be an indication that the paper's main concern has not been in vain. Like a virtuous circle, it is hoped that the paper will stimulate more research because this is always the case in the academic arena.

#### d) *Methodology*

As it is done in any academic study, research procedure, design, as well as sampling and sample size were duly accorded the attention they deserve, with the understanding that the quality of methodology "refers to how well . . . a study has been designed and implemented to achieve its objectives" (Fink 2010:63).

#### i. *Research Procedure*

The research procedure enabled the researcher go about the subject at hand and the research design enabled him conduct and collect data in the manner which is measurable and analyzable. The data were carefully collected, making sure that they are reliable and they had as less errors as possible. This is because "reliable data collection method is one that is relatively free from error" (Fink 2010: 114).

#### ii. *Sampling and Sample Size*

The sampling procedure gave the researcher the chance of choosing the target of the study – that is, Joseph Merinyo, to be representative of other prominent people in Chaggaland and Tanzania at large.

The population sample and sample size were limited to the person of Joseph Merinyo but to balance the kudos, other people were involved here and there, particularly the few people (who are still alive) who knew Merinyo in person – friends, colleagues, and relatives. The interviews and discussions were organized in such a way that ten people were chosen: children, grandchildren, colleagues, friends, and tribesmen – two from each group. The logic behind this particular sampling and sample size was to get a fair representation, as far as the people with reliable information about Joseph Merinyo are concerned.

#### iii. *Literature Review*

A modern researcher describes literature review as a "systematic, explicit, and reproducible method for identifying, evaluating, and synthesizing the existing body of completed and recorded work produced by researchers, scholars, and practitioners" (Fink 2010:3). Literature review required the researcher to survey all available materials on the person of Joseph Merinyo – published books as well as unpublished theses and dissertations. Unfortunately, these materials were considerably few.

The little corpus of published literature with sporadic information about Joseph Merinyo was examined. This includes *Social Facts & Fabrications: Customary Law on Kilimanjaro, 1880–1980* by Sally Moore; *The Short History of Tanzania* (edited by Isaria Kimambo and Arnold Temu); *Historians and Africanist History: A Critique* by Arnold Temu and Bonaventure Swai; *Penetration & Protest in Tanzania* by Isaria Kimambo; and *History of the Chagga People of Kilimanjaro* by Kathleen Stahl. Others are *The church in East Africa 1840–1974* by William Anderson and *A History of the Lutheran church Diocese in the Arusha Region* by Joseph Parsalaw.

These few publications depict Joseph Merinyo as a brilliant person who served the society in different capacities – court clerk, interpreter, houseboy, husband to a chief's sister, and worker at a colonial district's office. Merinyo is also presented as the president of *Kilimanjaro* Native Planters Association (KNPA), the first coffee growers' association in *Kilimanjaro*, as well as a person elevated to the position of a chief when the German missionaries were deported in *Kilimanjaro* in 1920 (Moore 1986:118–119, 123; Anderson 1988:75).

The points touched on by all these publications are important but they are not detailed, nor do they indicate the factors which pushed Merinyo to do what he did. Admittedly, these publications make quick or brief references to Merinyo because his life and work is not



their main concern. This paper is written to examine the person of Joseph Merinyo in a broad perspective. So the literature review enabled the researcher discover that very little study has been done on Joseph Merinyo and from this viewpoint there is a gap which needs to be filled up.

#### e) *Data Collection Tools*

Research Methods, which incorporates the basic tools for gathering data were employed by the researcher to get the information presented in this paper. These methods were mainly interviews, discussions, and documentary analysis. All these fall into the realm of ethnography (a recently coined term) which is a "form of qualitative research combining several methods, including interviewing and observation" (Fielding 2011:267).

Interviews were of considerable value because they were frequently used by the researcher. Various people were approached, using both structured and unstructured questionnaire. A challenge was interviewing educated people who sometimes failed to keep promises due to their tight programs. So the researcher was compelled by inevitable circumstance to plan the interview sessions with elites in a particular way. As it is asserted in research circles, "When it comes to interviewing elites, the location of the interview venue, the length of the interview, interview format and the presentation of the interviewer are extremely important" (Franklin and Blyton 2011:111).

#### f) *Data Analysis and Evaluation*

The data gathered in the course of doing research on Joseph Merinyo (November 2012 to April 2014) were analyzed before being summarized and evaluated. The main task here was to evaluate the views and comments acquired from the interviewees, discussion partners, and the reviewed literature. As it happens in any historical study, some interviewees and respondents had hazy memories about Joseph Merinyo and the researcher had to engage in cross checks, interpreting or evaluating information from such people against the data from the people who seemed to have more reliable information about Merinyo. It was by so doing the validity and invalidity of the data was established. Considering research data as scientific findings deduced from a laboratory experiment, the researcher joined Benjafield in arguing that any tentative or experimental endeavor employed in an academic study "can provide objective data that allow a researcher to argue in favor of one theoretical interpretation rather than another" (Benjafield 1994:16).

Prior to analyzing the data obtained, the researcher applied both descriptive and inferential approach, something which enabled him to make decisions in the crucial task of checking how the data relates to the hypothesis or research assumption (Salkind 1991: 165–166).

Now let us go to the life and work of Joseph Merinyo – drawing together the important aspects of his early life, teenage years, middle age, and finally his old age and demise.

#### g) *Birth and Early Childhood*

Joseph Merinyo was born in Mahoma village, Old Moshi, on the slopes of Mount *Kilimanjaro*. His father was Merinyo Ndewero Maro and his mother was Ndesingyiokyi Malyatuu. As it was the custom in the Chagga traditional society (prior to the advent of Christianity), when he was born he was called Mnyamari, the name he bore until he was baptized and given the name Joseph.

Why Merinyo was called Mnyamari (the evil doer) nobody can tell. The reasons for giving this local name can probably be based on the argument that before the coming of the Christian missionaries to Chaggaland most people were named according to the circumstances or environment in which they were born. For example, some people were named *Ndeinja* (I visited many places in search of food), *Ndemasiawengyi* (I made others rich), *Ndetenga* (I roamed here and there), *Marunda* (works or duties), *Mkyamise* (he was taken to many places or take him to many places), *Ndemicho* (I was shoved aside), *Mturuchuae* (the ill-treated or ill-treat him) *Kyilawelega* (that which cannot be refused), *Mkaasara* (loss wife), *Mkahimo* (Himo market wife), *Kyituwakyaumbe* (cow hatred), and many others. Even in the post-Christian era, Christian converts in Chaggaland were given names which captured a meaningful situation in the Christian circles (Lema 1982:217) – names like Elyiambuya, Lyimikasia, Lyianaelyi, Ndeenengosia, Ngyianasia, Onyonyasienyi, Elyingyisutsawuyesienyikoelyi, Ngyitanamsu, Ndetaramo, Ngyilekyiro, Ndesario, Elyiawonyi, Ndeletwa, Nkyirashekyia, Aleonika, and others.

The parents of Joseph Merinyo enrolled their son at Kidia Mission School. They were extremely proud of him because very early in his life he showed that he would grow into a strong and very hard-working man. As the ancestors put it, a good day is seen in the morning and a strong cock is witnessed when it is still a chick. His teachers at the mission station could see in him a brilliant pupil, a great leader and a bold nationalist. He looked a very serious student – determined to accomplish extensively in school and life in general. However, at it sometimes happened even to brilliant students attending school in the colonial era, Joseph Merinyo encountered a number of hurdles such as lack of enough school fees, unbecoming weather, poor school facilities, discouragement from people who were least informed about the value of education, childhood diseases, ailing infrastructure, and lack of employment.

Despite the fact that Joseph Merinyo – on whose life and work this essay focuses – was born in a very remote African village and to poor parents, he is

one of the people who are still remembered for their great ideas, historic social commitment and lasting heroism. As we shall see in the subsequent sections of this essay, Joseph Merinyo's nationalistic and patriotic contribution to his society was so great and valuable that he is regarded as one of the greatest sons, not only of Chaggaland, but also of Tanzania and Africa at large. Compared to the people of his time, his vision was unequalled, his strategy incomparable, his patriotism unfathomable and his nationalism rare and exemplary. He was a tireless champion, who never rested until he saw achievement and realization of what he believed to be right and just.

Joseph Merinyo's personality and social commitment was a blend of Chagga patriotism and nationalism, as well as a combination of constant fighting for people's rights and defending social justice. Nationalism, as it is understood by James Coleman, means opposing foreign domination, appraising national culture and achievements; it is struggle for self-rule well as expressing or encouraging national consciousness, even if it is through agitation (Coleman 1958:425). In a broader perspective, nationalism includes "different kinds of organized protest, which may be couched in tribal, religious, economic, cultural, or racial terms" (Okoth 2006:1).

Nationalism was at its apex when Merinyo was busy fighting foreign rule in his country. This is proven by the fact that from the 1930s nationalism was looked upon as a force of change among the oppressed Africans. It was a force capable of moving people into action and it was a demonstration of either peaceful or violent well-being of the oppressed and exploited people in Africa (Hallet 2005:667). In Tanzania nationalism began with the colonial invasion. So even Nyerere, expressing sentiments of nationalism, said that independence of his country should be attained – peacefully or by force (Temu 1997:189–190).

Gripped with nationalism impulses as well as being nauseated by oppression, Joseph Merinyo opposed oppressors quite fearlessly – to free himself and his people from the fetters of religio-cultural and racial-economic oppression. He shared Nelson Mandela's sentiments that no "power on earth can stop an oppressed people determined to win their freedom" (Crwys-Williams 1998:36). And Ndabaningi Sithole describes African nationalism, which strongly appealed to Merinyo, as "the desire of the African people to rule themselves, and it is their desire to terminate all foreign rule" (Sithole 1963:2).

Strong desire for freedom and self-rule was a quality that became distinct very early in Merinyo's life and even his parents and relatives knew for sure that their family had somebody who one day would involve himself fully in the task of fighting for people's welfare, from the socio-economic and cultural-political perspective. In the person of Joseph Merinyo, it became

inherent that love and justice are practical remedies against injustice, social factions, and human inequalities. Some years ago, Dom Helda Camara, the Latin American priest, once disillusioned the world by heralding that the power of love and justice is as strong as the force of nuclear energy – probably stronger (Camara 1974:1–6).

There are people who are given names which resemble their deeds and character, and this is exactly the truth about Joseph Merinyo, whose lineage goes back to a Maasai ancestry. Merinyo's bold personality is well captured in the explanation given by Parsalaw who says that in the Maasai vernacular Merinyo means "one who does not retreat in battle" (Parsalaw 1997: 285).

Joseph Merinyo's father was a war leader of Meli, a Chagga formidable chief (Stahl 1964: 273) who stands in the annals of history as one of the most strategic Chagga heroes hanged for resisting German intrusion in the Central *Kilimanjaro* area. That Joseph Merinyo's father was a war leader is proven by Stahl who says that "Moshi made an ill-starred attempt [to invade Sina of Kibosho], but its warriors led by Merinyo were completely routed" (Stahl 1964: 171–172). Elsewhere, Stahl writes that "the Moshi warriors who accompanied the German troops to collect booty after the victory were led by Merinyo, the same who had earlier been put to flight in his foolhardy attempt to raid Kibosho" (Stahl 1964:186).

A deeper look into the person of Joseph Merinyo suffices, to know who he was as well as what he did as a civil servant and a family man.

#### *h) Family Tree and Close Siblings<sup>1</sup>*

Joseph Merinyo came from a polygamous family and later on he followed suit in the sense that he too was polygamous. His father was married to two wives, and Merinyo's mother was the first one, who according to the Chagga custom is accorded the highest respect. His mother had three children – Joseph, Simba (his younger brother), and Ndelyawosi (his sister) who was later on christened Christine.

In his life, Joseph Merinyo got married four times. In 1909 he married his first wife, Yohana Masochi, and with her he got three children: John, Shauri (Elikunda) and Anna. His wedding with Yohana Masochi was unique because it was the first wedding in Old Moshi where the bridegroom put on a suit like a white man. His wife was also revolutionary because she put on a head cover (shela) like a white bride. Before that period any person who had had a church wedding in Old Moshi simply wore a kanzu (a white flowing robe). In 1913 Joseph Merinyo got married to Idda Makei Mandara, who gave birth to Mringi, Jesse, Japhet, Pauli, Cleopa, and Nicolaus who was later on chosen

<sup>1</sup> The information presented under this subheading was obtained from Dr Jesse Maro, in an interview session with the researcher on 1st November 2012.

Tanzania's Ambassador to Germany and Burundi before passing away in 1992. Merinyo married a third wife called Makomu in 1915 and from her he got two sons (Anderson and Amos); and in 1917 he married his last wife called Ndawonyi, who gave birth to Dawson and Emma.

Joseph Merinyo is survived by a number of children, grandchildren and great grandchildren. For example, Dr Jesse Maro, who until the date of writing this article was a medical doctor with the YMCA Hospital in Moshi, got married to Maria Abrahamu Mandara in 1948 and his children are Frank (an employee of Tanga Sisal Company), Stella, David (deceased) and Freedom. Joseph Merinyo had a number of grandchildren. Through Frank he had Maria, Haika, and Ndichi; through Stella he had Wawila and Maria; and through David he had Martin. Through Shauri he had Anna (wife to Benjamin Mkapa, the third President of Tanzania), Betty Minde (a private advocate), Lesley (deceased), and Esther. Through Anderson he had Lui Godwin. He also had grandchildren through Freedom and Japhet but through Haika he had no grandchild because she did not get married.

#### i) *Fighting for Human Rights and African Dignity*

A German missionary family once employed Joseph Merinyo as a houseboy. The German missionary who used Merinyo as a houseboy was a medical doctor by profession and one of his daughters was married to Bruno Gutmann, the famous German pastor-cum anthropologist who was so committed to the Chagga culture and local values that the local people named him *Wasawu o Wachaka* – Grandfather of the Chagga – (Jaeschke 1985: 341). The German missionary doctor took Joseph Merinyo to Germany, something which gave Merinyo a profitable international exposure as far as his future life was concerned.

Joseph Merinyo stayed in Germany from 1906 until 1908, working as a houseboy, garden attendant and a general overseer of his master's property. As a houseboy he performed his duties well that the missionary trusted him very much but unfortunately Joseph Merinyo lacked the favor of his master's wife.

While in Germany Merinyo wrote a letter to Rev. Robert Fassmann who by then was working as a missionary in Old Moshi, complaining about the harsh treatment he got from the doctor's wife in Germany. When Fassmann got the letter he wrote a strong-worded letter to the German doctor, saying categorically that it was not fair for his wife to treat Joseph Merinyo that way. Being saddened by the situation to which Joseph Merinyo was exposed, the German doctor requested Merinyo to forgive him for what his wife had been doing to him, admitting honestly that he was not aware that his wife treated Merinyo so harshly. Ever since, the German doctor promised to do the work of assigning Merinyo what to do, instead of his wife.

The protest of Joseph Merinyo against the German medical doctor's wife inhuman treatment depicted him as a strong fighter for human rights. He resisted the bad treatment done by the doctor's wife to show the world that being an African should not warrant a license for anybody to treat him like a beast or second-hand human being. He was a human being who deserved love and respect, like any other human being. Merinyo detested the inhuman treatment from the doctor's wife because, like Nelson Mandela, he was committed to struggle for the respect and dignity of the African people – to eradicate all sorts of domination as well as fighting fearlessly for a society where people, regardless of race or social status, "live in harmony and with equal opportunities" (Mandela 2010:121–122).

As a way of consoling Merinyo as well as keeping him away from the brutal lady, the German doctor decided to take Joseph Merinyo to all places he visited, inside and outside Germany. For example, they visited London in the United Kingdom (via Dover's Gate) and Paris in France. While in France, Joseph Merinyo got a rare chance of meeting King Edward VIII of The United Kingdom – making his international exposure even more profitable.

From France, Joseph Merinyo and his master proceeded to other European cities like Madrid in Spain, Lisbon in Portugal, Brussels in Belgium and Moscow in Russia (when Russia was ruled by King Tsar Nikolaus). According to what Joseph Merinyo used to tell his friends and relatives, almost the whole year of 1908 was used for visiting various places in Europe.

The German medical doctor and Joseph Merinyo decided to come back to Tanganyika through Rome, Jerusalem and Cairo. In Cairo they boarded a ship and passed through Aden and traveled until Mombasa where they disembarked from the ship. From Mombasa they traveled by train until Voi where they rested for a few days before coming back to Old Moshi on foot because by then the Voi-Kahe railway junction was not yet built. This particular journey via Mombasa was very useful to Joseph Merinyo because when he was later on employed as a clerk to carry out his master's financial assignments he took money to a bank situated in Mombasa. The doctor's financial income came from his two hotels – Kibo Hotel in Marangu and Kolila Hotel in Old Moshi. So Merinyo, as a result of his wide travel and transaction with people of different backgrounds and nationalities, became a very enterprising fellow.

#### j) *Go-between in German and British Administration*

During the First World War, the British troops moved from Taveta to Kahe. Some of these troops followed the railway line and others used the path used by the Chagga of Old Moshi (*Wamochi*) on their way to Kahe to look for *mbala* (soda ash). The troops which followed the path to the soda ash supplies passed

through Msaranga and ascended as far as Kolila<sup>2</sup> where German offices were situated.

Kolila was the headquarters (*Bomani*) of the German administrators and when the Germans left Tanganyika in 1920 the British shifted the headquarters from Kolila to a place they called New Moshi (the present-day town of Moshi) and they called Kolila and its surrounding areas Old Moshi. The British administrators built the new headquarters at the place which has been known as *Bomani* until today – the place which is behind the District Court building on the Moshi-Arusha highway.

The British troops which used the path meandering from the soda ash area in Kahe finally reached Kolila and laid a siege around it and the troops which followed the railway line seized the railway station in the new town of Moshi. Unfortunately, the troops which went to Kolila found that the German Colonel Paul von Lettow-Vorbeck had already escaped – something which made them extremely dismayed (Lema 1980:95–97). The British troops (which consisted of Boer, British, and some African soldiers) were led by two soldiers, General Jan Christian Smuts and General Jeunter.

Due to the fact that the Kolila people were not knowledgeable in matters connected with the British ways of doing things, Joseph Merinyo (by then a knowledgeable, bold, and strategic young man), came up and met the British troops. He impressed them very much because he could communicate with them in English. Joseph Merinyo became the interpreter of what was written in the German files left behind by German run-away administrators at Kolila. Earlier on Joseph Merinyo had appealed to the German administrators because he was also able to communicate with them in German. He was therefore a very useful person for both the Germans and the British, mainly because at that time nobody in the entire area of Old Moshi could speak German or English to the extent of Merinyo.

When the British troops realized that Joseph Merinyo was a smart guy, shrewd and intelligent, they decided to use him as a person who could show them the hiding places of the Germans who had escaped from Kolila. Merinyo's responsibility in this particular assignment was not very difficult because some of the British troops knew English, German, Swahili and Kinubi. So, the importance of Joseph Merinyo in the British

troops' day-to-day military and administrative activities made him stay at Kolila for many hours – from very early in the morning to very late in the evening. As Joseph Merinyo himself would say afterwards, he used to go to Kolila at six in the morning and left around 8.00 to 9.00 p.m. in the night, due to the fact that the numerous work at the Kolila *Boma* made him very, very busy.<sup>3</sup>

#### k) *Defending Land and Fighting for People's Property*

Joseph Merinyo worked very closely with the foreign rulers but when these rulers oppressed the local people he opposed them very strongly. For example, when the British troops seized Kolila, the neighboring villages were robbed of their cattle, bananas, and other foodstuffs to feed soldiers. Annoyed by this particular robbery, Joseph Merinyo stood up in defense of the villagers. He fought so strongly and fearlessly that the British government ordered the invasion and looting of people's property to cease immediately. His resistance made him a useful link between the British government and the local people in Old Moshi. In this respect Merinyo is supposed to be a role model in defending people's land in the country, land which is increasingly being taken by foreign land-grabbers, in collaboration with gluttonous local agents. It needs to be remembered that local resistances such as the *Mau Mau* Uprising in Kenya and the *Maji Maji Rebellion* in Tanzania erupted as a result of, among other things, local land defense and hatred against foreign rule (Sahlberg 1986:70). Merinyo was adamant and committed to defending his people's land like Kirilo Japhet who traveled all the way to New York in his towering campaigns to defend the land of the Meru people which was being looted by foreign settlers and colonial masters – a saga captured in the book entitled *The Meru Land Case* written by Kirilo Japhet and Earle Seaton. Talking about the relationship between land and nationalism, John Iliffe says that population increase and land scarcity stirred up nationalism. Even the *Mau Mau Rebellion* in Kenya was a reaction "to a population growth on a fixed area of land" (Iliffe 2009:258). Merinyo saw the danger of land scarcity very early in his life and he acted accordingly.

Due to his usefulness, one of the leaders of the British troops ordered Joseph Merinyo to be taken to Mombo Tanga to work as an interpreter. However, when Merinyo reached town of Same, report came that he was needed back at Kolila because of too much work there. He respected the call and returned to the Kolila *Boma*.

#### l) *Fighting for Equal Rights in Employment*

Joseph Merinyo was on the frontline in fighting for equal rights in matters pertaining to education and employment. In 1947, Dr Jesse Maro (the eldest son of

<sup>2</sup> In Swahili Kolila means *Kwa Lila* and in the Chagga vernacular it is *Ko Lila*, which literally means 'Place of Lila' – a place owned by Lila or where Lila is prominent. History has it that Lila was a famous Arab trader who dealt mainly with slave trade and he had a camp at this place which was later on named after him. As time progressed, Kolila grew and became the original place of Moshi town. There is another place called Kolila in Meruland where the same trader had a station or a stopover for his trade caravans coming from Ngarenairobi to Sanya Chini. This particular caravan joined the route from Arusha, the route which proceeded to Kilimanjaro and finally to the coast (interview with Rev. Peter A. Komba, 30<sup>th</sup> December 2012, Kiboriloni, Old Moshi).

<sup>3</sup> Interview with Dr Jesse Maro, YMCA Hospital, 1<sup>st</sup> November 2012, Moshi town.



Joseph Merinyo) was posted to Bombo Hospital in Tanga town. By then Joseph Merinyo developed a dental problem and he was referred to Tanga to see a more qualified dentist. It was way back in 1954 and while in Tanga he stayed at his son's house.

When Joseph Merinyo went to Tanga for the dental treatment he met Pastor Yakobo Ngombe, the first Lutheran black pastor in Tanga Province during the colonial era. By 1954 Ngombe was working as a pastor at Kana Lutheran Parish. Pastor Ngombe was one of Joseph Merinyo's best friends and their friendship started when Joseph Merinyo was a student in Tanga from 1934 to 1936. According to what Merinyo used to tell his son, before becoming a pastor Yakobo Ngombe was an evangelist and he was the one who propagated Christianity to Tanga in the midst of strong Muslim influence. Ngombe's evangelization strategies won him a few converts due to socio-cultural and religious barriers which loomed quite large in Tanga.

When an American missionary (the name is concealed) came to Tanga he stifled up the nice work which Pastor Yakobo Ngombe had been doing over the years. With an attitude of arrogance and despise, the missionary caused an incitement so great that it became impossible for the work started by Ngombe to flourish. Due to the tricks and malice of the missionary and his collaborators, Ngombe was dismissed from church work, being accused falsely of squandering church money.

Remembering their great friendship, Joseph Merinyo decided to go to visit Pastor Yakobo Ngombe. He found him in his dilapidated house with his wife Christine, extremely destitute and depressed – something which put Joseph Merinyo on the brink of tears. When he was told that Ngombe had been deposed from church work as a result of false accusations that he had stolen church offerings, he decided to defend him.<sup>4</sup>

Joseph Merinyo's defense for Yakobo Ngombe brings to memory other people who were forced by oppression circumstances to defend the local people in their own areas. For example, we learn from history that Samwel Chiponda, Martin Kayamba, Leslie Matola and his brother Cecil Matola stood up firmly to defend and instruct their people who were highly disunited due to ignorance and poverty brought about by colonial oppression and exploitation. With their great commitment to education and the Christian faith, as well as their deep experience in civil service and travel, they called upon their people to value education, form trade unions, enhance unity, and promote social advancement (Iliffe 1997:154–157).

Joseph Merinyo secretly summoned a meeting of the African members of the church council at Kana and explained to them how he had known Yakobo Ngombe, a pioneer local pastor in Tanga. He told them that the white people could not have succeeded to build a church in Kana hadn't it been the selfless struggle and notable sacrifice made by Yakobo Ngombe. He also said that it was quite unfair to allow white missionaries come and cause havoc in the African church. Because of that he called upon all members of the church council to be on his side and defend the rights of Pastor Yakobo Ngombe.

Defiant of colonial masters, Merinyo went to the office of white missionaries at Kana and told them that they were quite unfair in kicking out Yakobo Ngombe from the church. With tact and great concern Merinyo told the missionaries that they were supposed to give Yakobo Ngombe a good salary as well as guest allowance because most church guests who visited Kana at that time were entertained at Yakobo Ngombe's simple house, with the little income he used to get before being dismissed from church work. The missionaries were extremely ashamed by the questions Joseph Merinyo threw at them.

From Yakobo Ngombe's house in Digoland, Joseph Merinyo went straight to Usambara and confronted the white missionaries who worked there. When he told them pointblank that nobody would believe that white missionaries who posed as God's clean servants and people from countries where justice and human rights were practiced could dare to treat Ngombe in such a bad way, the missionaries were so ashamed that they decided to allow Yakobo Ngombe resume his pastoral responsibilities. So, Joseph Merinyo's advocacy and campaign for the rights of exploited people enabled Yakobo Ngombe continue working as a pastor, getting a fair salary until his death. Following this particular incident Joseph Merinyo explained everywhere that he formidably faced the oppressive and racially-minded missionaries, to the extent of giving an African clergyman in Tanga what he deserved.

#### *m) Fighting for Cultural Identity and Religious Rights*

Joseph Merinyo was on the front line in demanding freedom of worship. He insisted that the Chagga Christians should be looked upon as valuable children of God and because of that they should be allowed to express their Christian faith in the way they see appropriate. That is, according to their feelings and environment. He really opposed imposing the European religious culture on the Africans. Merinyo challenged his people to reject the religio-cultural yoke of enslavement and oppression placed on the Africans' shoulders by ruthless colonial masters and their puppets. This is what Samuel Kobia, the then LWF General Secretary, recognized in 2004 – hence cautioned his fellow

<sup>4</sup> Interview with Dr Jesse Maro, YMCA Hospital, 1<sup>st</sup> November 2012, Moshi town.

Kenyans about the danger of perpetuating the history of colonial stalwarts who enslaved and oppressed the African people by the cruelty of western 'ideologies and institutions' (Otieno with McCullum 2005:90).

Joseph Merinyo was also a good propagator of Chagga culture and traditions. He did not entertain the idea of forcing the Chagga Christians to throw away their religio-cultural traditions, simply because they were despised by foreigners. In this stand he was supported even by German missionaries like Bruno Gutmann and British administrators like Charles Dundas. For instance, Charles Dundas confesses that "given wise teaching, the African may still be appreciative of and faithful to his traditions, whether he be pagan or Christian" (Dundas 1968:6). And Johannes Raum, one of the ardent admirers of Chagga ways of life, was so agonized by disintegration of the Chagga culture that he called upon sincere cooperation between the German government and mission societies working in Chaggaland. He always struggled to make sure that the Chagga traditional culture was preserved for the advantage of future generations (Lema 1982:7, 290).

Being a good student and disciple of Bruno Gutmann, Joseph Merinyo, in collaboration with Nathanaeli Mtui (a renowned Chagga historian) supplied Charles Dundas with almost the whole information which enabled him write the famous ethno-anthropological treatise entitled *Kilimanjaro and Its People* (Moore 1986:119; Dundas 1968:6). According to Kathleen Stahl, Dundas "drew extensively upon the views of Mr Joseph Merinyo . . . who served as his clerk in Moshi" (Stahl 1964: 223).

Joseph Merinyo's insistence on religious freedom made him demand that African Christians should be left alone to run their own church affairs. In his opinion, overseas donors should cut down foreign church aid as much as possible. In other words, he fought for total freedom of the Africans, because as Ama Ata Aidoo (the Ghanaian writer) has observed, "the liberation of the [African] continent is inextricably linked with the liberation of its people" (Aidoo 2000:21). It is pleasant to see that Joseph Merinyo, as far back as the pre-independence era, recognized that the dignity and role of the African churches rested on the struggle to be self-governing, self-supporting, and self-propagating – things which afterwards became the dream and determination of most churches in independent Africa (Otieno with McCullum 2005:81).

The commitment of Joseph Merinyo to church affairs made him spend most of his time and energy in building churches in various places, particularly in the northern province of Tanganyika. One of the church buildings he is remembered for until today is the Lutheran Cathedral in Arusha Town. His contribution to this church building was great and valuable. He supervised the task of constructing it, and being a tax

clerk he spent most of his time going to settlers to collect money for the construction.

Joseph Merinyo's adamant decisions sometimes made him collide with some missionaries. For example, it is narrated that his wife decided to wear the garments put on by white ladies (i.e. a dress and a European hat – without a wrapper or khangas), something which appeared offensive to the white people. Merinyo's wife dressed in this way from the 1930s when some missionaries wanted to be treated like gods or goddesses. One day a white missionary (Pastor Georg Fritze) saw Joseph Merinyo's wife wearing a hat during a Holy Communion service in Kidia congregation. Immediately the missionary ordered a church elder to walk over to where Mrs Merinyo was sitting and the church elder took off the hat from her head. Other church historians narrate that it was Pastor Fritze himself who took the hat from the head of Merinyo's wife, when she had already knelt down to receive the Holy Communion (Patzig 1931:7; Parsalaw 1997:285).

Sitting on the men's side, Joseph Merinyo was so offended that he marched out of the Holy Communion service. Were he sitting together with his wife he would have prevented the man from taking the hat off his wife's head. The incident made Joseph Merinyo rethink the habit of making men and women sit in different rows during church services and from that day he did not support the system of segregating men and women during church services. In this regard, he depicted himself as one of the earliest women liberators in Chaggaland.

After the church service Joseph Merinyo's wife went straight home and found her husband sitting on the verandah of his house, annoyed beyond compare. "Do you know the man elder who took the hat from your head?" Joseph Merinyo barked. When Joseph Merinyo's wife said that she did not know the man but on seeing his face she could recognize him, Merinyo ordered her to go back to Kidia to look for the rude church elder. Without wasting time, Joseph Merinyo's wife started walking back to Kidia church and on the way she met the man who had harassed her. She asked him to escort her home because her husband was so furious that something must be done to cool down Merinyo's anger. Shuddering with fear and frustration, the church elder agreed to go with Merinyo's wife to her home.

When they reached Joseph Merinyo's home, he was still on the verandah. Looking at the church elder with angry eyes, Merinyo asked, "Are you the senseless and uncivilized man who removed a hat from my wife's head, right in the middle of worship in the church? Tell me before I tear you into pieces!"

The church elder mumbled something unintelligible and like lightning Joseph Merinyo jumped at him, panting like an injured leopard and slapped him severely. "You are indeed a fool! Instead of doing things

like a liberated African you continue licking the dirty boots of the white men.” Joseph Merinyo took a Bible which was near him and opened it hurriedly. He read a passage from 1 Corinthians which says that a woman should cover her head while worshipping. “My wife complied with the Bible because she covered her head during church service. And nowhere in the Bible is a woman forbidden to wear a hat in the church.”

Without waiting even for a word of apology from the church elder, Joseph Merinyo left quickly and went to Pastor Georg Fritze's residence at Kidia mission center. Breathing heavily, he asked the missionary as to why he had ordered a hat to be taken off the head of Merinyo's wife. He also read him the passage from 1 Corinthians. He wanted to slap the missionary as he had done to the foolish church elder but an inner voice told him not to. “Hadn't it been the fact that you are a consecrated person, God's servant, I would have taught you sense. You dare do that to my wife again and you will know that my mother did not suckle me for nothing. You pretend to be a pastor but you are as rude as Goliath, that bogus giant in the Bible who was killed by David – a mere lad. I warn you to stop treating Africans as if they are half human. You came here to preach the Word of God and not to practice racial discrimination,” Merinyo said vehemently.

The message Joseph Merinyo wanted to pass across to the racially-minded missionary was that Africans are neither beasts of burden nor empty slates where foreigners could write all sorts of nonsense. This kind of racial discrimination is what has by and large been fought against by Christian churches in East Africa, from the colonial era down to the present day. Douglas Waruta, talking about the history of Christianity in Africa, says that the

missionary Christianity was part and parcel of the colonial establishment. . . . The brand of Christianity . . . planted in Africa therefore, besides introducing the missionary country's civilization (habits, customs, laws, languages, etc) taught African converts that obedience and loyalty to the missionary's rulers was a religious duty. Respect for and subservience to secular rulers was instilled into Christian believers as an inseparable part of their religious faith (Waruta 1994:89).

Douglas Waruta summarizes his argument by asserting that the missionaries who brought the Gospel to Africa “abused the Biblical doctrine of Imago Dei, God's image, when they treated the African people as tabula rasa upon which to imprint all their values without adequate respect for the African cultural and religious heritage” (Waruta 1994: 94).

Joseph Merinyo's confrontation with the missionary at Kidia mission center put him in a difficult situation. Fortright the missionary announced that Joseph Merinyo had been excommunicated until further notice. The announcement annoyed Joseph Merinyo so

much that he could not keep quiet. He wrote a letter to Germany complaining about the missionary's decision to excommunicate him but the letter was not replied. To Joseph Merinyo's surprise, later on his case was examined at a pastors' conference (A Synod or General Assembly of the Lutheran church in Northern Tanganyika) held at Ashira in East *Kilimanjaro* District. The meeting had delegates from Germany and from all church districts in *Kilimanjaro* and Arusha.

The case of Joseph Merinyo was on the agenda of the General Assembly and when his time came he was summoned to go forward. At that time Stefano Moshi (later the Bishop of the ELCT Northern Diocese) was a teacher at Marangu TTC and he was invited to attend the meeting at Ashira. Afterwards Stefano Moshi narrated to his friends the trial of Joseph Merinyo in the following words:

I saw Joseph Merinyo entering the meeting hall – the church at Ashira. He was looking up and down, in a very stern stare. He was dressed in a very nice suit, and he looked very smart. He boldly walked right to the altar, like a lion – the king of the jungle. He was given a chair and he sat down confidently and with much authority. He seemed not to fear anybody. He looked at the people in front of him like an army commander checking his troops. Having proven to himself that there was nobody in the hall who could frighten him he adjusted his necktie methodically and kept quiet, waiting for the next step. Honestly speaking, Joseph Merinyo was a very courageous person. He did not fear even the white people.<sup>5</sup>

Joseph Merinyo's case was heard at the “First church Synod of the established Lutheran church in East Africa [which] took place in *Kilimanjaro* Mamba congregation from the 22nd to the 26th of August, 1930” (Fleisch 1936: 442). Fifteen congregations sent delegates to the meeting and the newly established Maasai Mission were given a chance of sending two representatives although they were not bona fide representatives of the church assembly. About fifty people – natives and missionaries – participated in the church assembly (Parsalaw 1997: 283). As Joseph Parsalaw goes on to narrate,

on the last day of the meeting the 26th of August, 1930, Joseph Merinyo, an influential Christian from the Old Moshi congregation was heard in the Synod. Joseph Merinyo was reported to have been an important man in the government as well as being the chairman of the Native Cooperative Society in *Kilimanjaro*. His position in the government as a representative of the Chagga people and his other post as chairman of the Chagga Native Coffee Society had won him great respect among his people (Parsalaw 1997:285).

<sup>5</sup> Interview with Dr Jesse Maro, YMCA Hospital, 1<sup>st</sup> November 2012, Moshi town.

According to the chairman of the General Assembly, Joseph Merinyo had gone beyond his bounds because he had gone to a highly esteemed missionary and quarreled with him. At that time quarreling with a pastor missionary was an insubordination of the highest order.

When Joseph Merinyo was given chance to defend himself, he stood up majestically, cleared his throat, surveyed the people accusing him and said fearlessly:

I want somebody to tell me the truth. The missionary pastor was at the altar, communicating with God through prayer. How did he see my wife wearing a hat? How could he communicate with God and at the same time order somebody to remove a hat from my wife's head? Indeed, the pastor forgot his responsibility. Honestly speaking, he misbehaved while doing a sacred job at the altar. He must be excommunicated because, from the Christian viewpoint, he did something which made him unclean. Now let me ask another question. Doesn't the Bible allow a woman to wear a hat during a worship service? If yes, why was my wife barred from wearing a hat? Is it because she is black? And if women are not allowed to wear hats, why are white ladies allowed to wear hats right inside the church? Removing the hat from my wife's head is indeed a great discrimination against the black people. Even God does not like this kind of discrimination.<sup>6</sup>

In the battle with Missionary Fritze Merinyo was pressed to apologize but he "saw no point to retreat" (Parsalaw 1997: 285). He was fully convinced that an African of his type should never yield at a trial chaired by a white oppressor because a person who is fighting for truth and justice should fight to the very end. He fought hard but unfortunately nobody stood on his side, even his fellow Africans. Parsalaw explains:

Joseph Merinyo, having presented his case and defending himself from the reproach before the Synod members, found no support even from his closest supporter and friend Petro Njau who always took sides with him. Instead of being supported by the congregational representatives, Joseph was rebuked. He was pinned down by Solomon Nkya from Machame congregation accusing Merinyo for two points. He was told that he should have brought his problem to his congregational elders just like any other normal Christian of the Old Moshi congregation should have done. Secondly, he was accused of the trouble he wanted to bring the Lutheran church into by his repeated threats to call back the Anglican missionaries to reoccupy Old Moshi. The church Synod then in its decision requested Joseph and his

wife to bring their complaint back to the congregational elders (Parsalaw 1997:285-286).

The case of Joseph Merinyo revealed the real character of the African representatives of the Synod. It was African identity against the European superiority. The Africans were coward in defending their fellow African. It was collision between conservative German missionaries and liberal Africans and few pro-African culture missionaries like Bruno Gutmann who defended Joseph Merinyo. As Claus Fiedler (quoted by Parsalaw) narrates sarcastically, the quarrel on clothes

between Missionary Fritze and Joseph Merinyo casts a clear light on the values of the educated elite and several missionaries. The clothes quarrel shows also that not all conservative missionaries were of the same mind. Then it ended with the conservative Gutmann protecting the progressive Merinyo against the conservative and authoritarian Fritze (Parsalaw 1997: 286).

Joseph Merinyo's collision with the white missionary was not a mere conflict over garments – it was more than that. Through the fracas on attire, although a bitter ordeal on his person, Merinyo wanted to shake off his shoulders the habit of forcing Africans to continue wearing the clothes which were used by the white masters to look down on Africans. In his opinion, the Chagga should possess the freedom of wearing what they liked, including European garments if they wished. Again Parsalaw describes the situation vividly:

Before the war, most Chagga Christians wore what the missionaries called to be an African dress, namely the Kanza which was taken over from the Arabs towards the end of the 19th century. Now in the thirties, many Chagga have started to wear European clothes and many missionaries saw that as a symbol of destroying the culture of the Chagga. European clothes were also an expression of a growing social difference which several missionaries completely refused. For the Chagga, especially the educated and those who earned money, European clothes were a symbol of progress and the beginning of the aspiration to shake off European rule. That explains why the quarrel was very hot and why the nationalistic sound continued (Parsalaw 1997:286–287).

#### n) *Fighting for Educational and Ecclesiastical Rights*

Joseph Merinyo's social commitment increased as he continued demanding equal rights in education. Wherever he went in Chaggaland he advised people to build schools and colleges, so that the Chagga could compete with other people in terms of education, social development and employment, he himself struggling to the maximum to lead the way. It was during his involvement in *Kilimanjaro* Native Cooperative Union (KNCU) that a Cooperative College in East and Central

<sup>6</sup> Interview with Dr Jesse Maro, YMCA Hospital, 1<sup>st</sup> November 2012, Moshi town.



Africa was established in the KNCU building in Moshi town. The building had also a hotel of international standards, plus a number of rooms which were set apart for income-generating activities. In collaboration with visionary Chagga chiefs, diligent farmers, and scholars of his time such as August Ngoro (a prominent coffee farmer from Marangu), Solomon Eliufu (the Chagga Council president and the first Minister of Education in Independent Tanganyika), Abdiel Shangali (the first Chagga chief to be elected to the Legislative Council in 1945) and Thomas Marealle (the Chagga Paramount Chief), Joseph Merinyo's campaigns for better education in *Kilimanjaro* saw the construction of modern schools like Lyamungu (formerly known as KNCU Secondary School) which was built solely with money from KNCU.

The case of Joseph Merinyo was not the only issue discussed by the delegates of the Synod held at Ashira. Another important matter on the agenda of this particular Synod was to establish a school for training African pastors. It was realized that without having local pastors the church would not grow strong roots among the local people and as a result it would persist being a foreign institution among the Chagga. The first pastors' school under the leadership of Missionary Johannes Raum was started at the building of the Machame mission station. The candidates for the pastoral training were people who had undergone a teaching course. Furthermore, the candidates were also expected to be faithful Christians as well as people who had practical experience in congregational service. Thus when the case of Joseph Merinyo was ended it was unanimously agreed to start a pastors' training school at Machame known in German as *Machame Hirten Schule* (Parsalaw 1997:287-288, quoting Fleisch 1936:S. 442).

Joseph Merinyo had a great role in advocating for the endeavor of having local pastors. In the actual fact, the establishment of the pastors' school at Machame was the outcome of his struggle. He was the first person to write a letter to Germany, requesting the Leipzig Mission Society to come and start a school for training African pastors. At this time, there was only one pastor (a white man) who was in charge over the whole area from Old Moshi to Kahe in the plains. Other large areas like Marangu, Machame and Siha had also one pastor each. The assembly which approved Merinyo's educational initiatives took place on 23-26 August 1930 under the chairmanship of the leader of Leipzig Mission Society, Rev. Johannes Raum (Smedjebacka 1973:45).

The response to Merinyo's letter was the decision of Leipzig Mission Society to come and start a pastors' training school at Machame in 1933. Later the school was transferred to Lwandai (1947) and then Makumira (1954). The first Chagga pastors to be trained at Machame were Immanuel Mkony, Benjamin Moshi, Alyifayo Ngowi, Solomon Nkya, Nsesanjo Kitange, Amiramu Sandi, Yakobo Lyimo, and Timoteo Mushi

(Parsalaw 1997:290). So the training and graduation of these first African pastors in *Kilimanjaro* were undeniably the fruits of Merinyo's initiatives.

Joseph Merinyo was also instrumental in establishing the rank of a bishop in the Lutheran church in Tanganyika. When Stefano Reuben Moshi was the president of the Lutheran church in Northern Tanganyika (LCNT), Merinyo wrote a letter to the church authorities, supporting his argument with newspapers, claiming that the title 'president' was for secular authority and because of that the leader of the church must be called a 'bishop' as it was done in a country like Germany. Merinyo's argument was brought again by Chief Thomas Marealle at the LWF Meeting at Marangu in 1955 (Smedjebacka 1973:261). So Merinyo's lobbying made it possible for Stefano Moshi to be called bishop when he was installed in 1959. Joseph Merinyo was so committed to the whole issue of having a bishop and the ring which Bishop Stefano Moshi wore when he was installed was bought with money from Merinyo's pocket. Merinyo also fought against the people who opposed Bishop Moshi not to wear a miter.

Joseph Merinyo was one of the people who enabled the Lutheran church to continue existing in the northern zone of Tanganyika. For example, when he quarreled with Missionary Georg Fritze he threatened to use his "position in the government to call back the Anglican missionaries to reoccupy their old mission station. The present Old Moshi congregation was therefore invited to bring its case against Missionary Georg Fritze before the native representatives at the church Synod" (Parsalaw 1997:285, quoting Fleisch 1936:S. 433).

At the congregational level, Joseph Merinyo was also on the fore line in other things. He was one of the earliest church elders in Chaggaland. He initiated many ideas and resolutions in various church councils, especially the Executive Council which used to hold its meetings in turn at Moshi Town, Kotela, Arusha, and Shighatini. He used to spend nights at Bishop Stefano Moshi's residence in Mamba, so that they could discuss important church issues. Merinyo was a man who wore many hats and he wore these hats correctly and profitably.

#### *o) Fighting for Economic Rights and Social Development*

Joseph Merinyo was a leading advisor on matters related to coffee growing in Chaggaland. He went to London in 1953 to fight for better coffee prices. He met many obstacles in this campaign but he never gave up. He even managed to convince the British national, Donald Cameron, to join him in the coffee growing campaign as well as demanding better prices for coffee growers. So the fair pay which coffee farmers got in the mid-1950s was the product of Merinyo's

adamant demand for better prices in the entire coffee growing and selling business in *Kilimanjaro*.

Merinyo was the founder member of KNPA, which was started in 1924/25 and later changed into *Kilimanjaro* Native Cooperative Union in 1932. Joseph Merinyo and Charles Dundas formed the union for selling coffee, Merinyo himself being one of the leading coffee farmers. John Iliffe proves this when he says that "Joseph Merinyo, son of the chief of Moshi's war leader, remembers that he began to grow coffee in 1907" (Iliffe 1997: 136). Joseph Merinyo became the first president of KNPA and the first offices of this union were in the building along the Florida Road, opposite Rahisi Hardware in the present-day Moshi town.

When KNCU was formed, it took the offices which had been hitherto used by KNPA and the economic contribution of these two cooperative unions is among the factors which have transformed Chaggaland into what it is today. It is KNPA and finally KNCU which has brought into existence economic institutions like Coffee Curing Plant in Moshi town, Coffee Research Station (now TACRI) at Lyamungo Machame, various coffee peeling factories in almost all wards of Chaggaland, as well as numerous local cooperative societies which specialized in buying and transporting coffee to Moshi town, before being handed over to the Tanzania Coffee Board which played the role of ferrying coffee to auctioning centers, inside and outside the country.

Joseph Merinyo's contribution to social development is also a notable phenomenon. While working as a chief in Machame, he initiated and supervised the task of digging the road which starts from Nkuu to Lyamungo, and on completion it was known as Joseph Merinyo Road. All people who showed signs of resisting digging the road were severely dealt with. Joseph Merinyo went to the extent of whipping them so that they could comply with digging the road which he considered as a key for development. Those who knew him from close quarters narrate that among the things he prioritized was terrestrial infrastructure.

#### *p) Fighting for Political Rights and Placing Chiefs in Power*

Joseph Merinyo was both a king and a kingmaker. His role in the colonial era was great and what he said in front of the colonial administrators had a far-reaching impact. He was the spokesman of the Chagga chiefs in the Chagga Council which was established to mould Chaggaland into a modern society where things could be done fairly and leaders chosen democratically in such a way that all people would benefit, as far as the political equilibrium is concerned. During the era of the three Divisional Chiefs (Wamangi Waitori) who were appointed by the colonial government in 1946, Joseph Merinyo had an influence so great that he was invited to almost all meetings held in these

Chagga chiefdom provinces.<sup>7</sup> He was the brain behind all campaigns for demanding political rights from the colonial masters. Very few politicians today could measure up to the standards of Joseph Merinyo, in terms of political planning and implementation of sophisticated political ideas. Although he did not show himself openly as a politician, his political involvement in various political activities is a reality which will take time to fade in the Chagga political arena. Talking about the Chagga administrative and political structure in Chaggaland, Kathleen Stahl explains:

[W]hen the British administration created three administrative divisions in 1946, Mangi Petro Itosi became divisional chief of Vunjo. The creation of divisions provoked the first organized popular political movement on *Kilimanjaro*, the *Kilimanjaro* Chagga Citizens Union, which successfully worked to secure appointment of a paramount chief chosen neither by the British administration nor by the chiefs themselves but by popular election. The two organizers, Joseph Merinyo and Petro Njau, were both men of Moshi but their nominee came from the ruling Lyimo clan of Marangu; and from 1952 until 1960 Thomas Lenana Marealle, son of Mlaga and grandson of Marealle, ruled as the paramount chief of all the Chagga (Stahl 1964:335-336).

Joseph Merinyo was instrumental in Chagga local politics due to his socio-political role as a court interpreter in the colonial era. In his capacity as an interpreter, he could even twist or alter the truth to fit his political campaigns. This is proven by Stahl who writes:

More important, each locally-staffed post in the Boma could be used by the holder to effect political repercussions on the mountain. The importance of the role played by the Boma interpreters and clerks in swaying the politics of *Kilimanjaro* is one of the most unexpected findings. . . . Joseph Merinyo of Moshi, clerk to Major Dundas in 1920's is the most outstanding of such intermediaries in a series beginning in the 1890's and continuing into modern times. Moving about the mountain at Major Dundas' side, in his master's eyes Merinyo was a good assistant in a humble post, but to the Chagga in word and deed he had more power at that time to make or break different chiefs than any other man (Stahl 1964:362).

As Kathleen Stahl explains, Joseph Merinyo was sometimes stronger than most chiefs in Chaggaland as well as a notable maker of history.

<sup>7</sup> "In 1928 the British administration introduced the first embryonic experiment of grouping the chiefdoms of Kilimanjaro into three divisions for financial and legal matters and in each division selected two leading chiefs to handle them. The better of these two posts was considered to be finance. In Vunjo it was given to Mangi Mashingia, since it happened that Kilema's chief had just been worsted by a stratagem of the chief of Marangu . . ." (Stahl 1964:289, footnote 4).

According to Stahl, Joseph Merinyo was one of the great politicians from Chaggaland. She narrates:

Curiously enough the impact Moshi made on the general politics of the mountain in the 20th century was not made by its chiefs at all, but by two astute politicians, both commoners, Joseph Merinyo and Petro Njau. Both men in their political operation cut right across chiefly boundaries. Both were kingmakers. In many of the chiefdoms Merinyo secured chieftainship for his candidates during the early 1920s, no action being more fraught with importance for *Kilimanjaro* than the choice of Mangi Abdiel for Machame in 1923. Later, from 1946 onwards, Merinyo and Njau successively organized and led a mountain-wide political movement against Mangi Abdiel and in favour of a Paramount Chief drawn from the royal ruling house of Marangu. Thus Moshi men, if not Moshi chiefdom, shaped the two most important political events on *Kilimanjaro* in the first half of the 20<sup>th</sup> century (Stahl 1964:279-280).

Joseph Merinyo proposed education as one of the qualifications for ascending to the post of a chief in Chaggaland. According to Stahl, Merinyo's insistence on education "incidentally provides an early example of the use of a new Chagga political argument which came with European rule and for some years was to be used primarily as a matter of convenience, that of schooling as a qualification for chieftainship" (Stahl 1964:141, Footnote 39). Here we see how Joseph Merinyo's value on education played a crucial role in the local politics in *Kilimanjaro*. Merinyo insisted education as one of the prerequisites for being elected a chief. For instance, he suggested to Major Charles Dundas that Abraham, who had a better educational background, was a better candidate to rule Machame. This educational precondition enabled Abraham to be enthroned in 1922, deposing Sudi who was less educated (Stahl 1964:276).

The political campaigns of Joseph Merinyo elevated to power a number of Chagga dignitaries. Even a famous monarch like the late Mangi Mkuu of the Chagga (from Vunjo area) was greatly supported by Joseph Merinyo to become a Paramount Chief. Why Joseph Merinyo did not campaign for a person from his home area (Old Moshi) is not easy to explain. So Joseph Merinyo who assisted the Chagga Paramount Chief to come to power had a great contribution to making Marangu famous because, as Stahl attests, "All these events redounded to the prestige of Marangu, enabling it to continue in the tradition which had been set in the 1890's by Marealle. This explains why, through the whole period of British rule from 1916 to 1961, Marangu . . . ranked with Machame as one of the twin-political nerve centres on *Kilimanjaro*" (Stahl 1964:336).

Joseph Merinyo was a kingmaker, in the sense that he assisted some individuals to rule. For example, as it has already been said, he enabled Abraham to be

a king. "Joseph Merinyo, the son of Rindi's old war-leader, favoured Abraham [in his case against Sudi] and, being employed as clerk and interpreter in the Boma, was most advantageously placed to advance his case" (Stahl 1964: 275). Merinyo had a very conducive environment for his campaigns for the people he wanted to see reigning as local chiefs in Chaggaland. This is because while the people of Old Moshi regarded Joseph Merinyo to have enabled Abraham to become a chief, they did not "regard his action as having been unfortunate: Sudi had shown himself useless, while Abraham was to serve them well. Moshi therefore provides an instance where Merinyo's king-making, which at that time affected chiefdoms all over *Kilimanjaro*, had happy rather than dire results" (Stahl 1964:276).

When the District Commissioner went to meet the Chagga local chiefs, from Kibong'oto in Sanya Juu to Usseri in Rombo, he was accompanied by Joseph Merinyo. In addition to that, when the DC wanted to clarify certain important issues to these chiefs, it was Joseph Merinyo who put matters clear or straight and by so doing his role in the colonial government became even manifold. This indicates that Joseph Merinyo was a man of the people, and being a person of rare abilities, he helped all people who came to him to seek help. The oppressor and the oppressed gained equally from this talented man.

One of the greatest things done by Joseph Merinyo was defending the Chagga chiefs who were shifted from a jail in Moshi to Tanga. The saga was the result of malignity started by a white priest (probably Father George) who worked in Kibosho and Uru in Central *Kilimanjaro*. The priest said that some Chagga chiefs were making clandestine plans with the Maasai to overthrow the British rule in *Kilimanjaro*, so that the Germans could come to power again. To curb the evil plans, the British authorities decided to arrest some Chagga chiefs and their allies and detained them in Moshi. When the chiefs were detained, Joseph Merinyo was chosen to work as an acting chief in Machame, the headquarters of his chiefdom being Machame Central.<sup>8</sup> Stahl explains pointedly:

According to the Chagga view, Merinyo's plan was carried out in three stages. When Ngulelo was deported Merinyo himself took over the chiefdom and for several months was effectively 'mangi' of Machame. With askaris from Moshi town to guard him, he ruled harshly and often with the lash to bring people to heel. The ground being thus prepared, Shangali was reinstated as chief in 1918 as a

<sup>8</sup> While in Machame, Joseph Merinyo attached himself to a woman named Ruth Fisha who had once been wife of Shangali. Merinyo's devotion to Ruth made him support the struggle of Abdiel (her son) to become chief.

temporary measure to pave the way for his son. After a decent interval he retired and Abdiel was installed as mangi by Major Dundas in 1923. The British administration was not the only pawn in these manoeuvres. Shangali himself was hoodwinked, for Abdiel was the son neither of his eldest nor of his favourite wife and not the heir he would have chosen. Here Merinyo outwitted him by suggesting to Major Dundas that he should suggest to Shangali that Abdiel was best qualified to become chief, since with the six years of schooling procured for him by Merinyo he was the most educated of Shangali's sons (Stahl 1964:141).

According to Anderson, the Chagga chiefs were deported from some areas of Chaggaland and Joseph Merinyo was made a chief, in charge of Machame area. Serving as a chief, Merinyo ('a leading Chagga Christian') "reduced the power of the headmen, raised the status of teachers and Christianity rose even higher as a result" (Anderson 1988:75).

Some writers say that Merinyo was among the Chagga individuals deported to Tanga when Germans were defeated in Tanganyika. When the British assumed power in the country, they suspected that the Chagga might stage a resistance or rebellion and to make sure that such a thing would never happen, the British authorities summoned the deportation. As Sally Falk Moore narrates, fearing that some of the Chagga leaders "might be a danger to the new administration, Major Theodore Morrison, the officer in charge in 1917, had ordered some thirty-six Chagga deported to Tanga, including nine chiefs, among them Salema, and his brother-in-law, the commoner Joseph Merinyo" (Moore 1986:118).

It was when he was working as a mangi in Machame Merinyo was informed that some Chagga chiefs had been detained, an information which sparked off his anger and compassion for them. He was so disturbed psychologically because some of the detained people were his father-in-law (Chief Abraham Salema of Old Moshi) and Merinyo's uncle called Imeti Lyatuu.

Without even saying where he was going, Joseph Merinyo immediately left for Moshi town where on his arrival he demanded being told as to why the chiefs and the other people had been arrested and detained. The DC refused to tell the reason and patriotically Merinyo said that he too was ready to be detained if the detainees were not released. "Open the door so that I too can be detained!" Merinyo said loudly, defiant of any punitive measures which the colonial authorities might take against him. Immediately the DC knew that Joseph Merinyo was indeed a bold man. Even when he was told to go back to Machame Merinyo refused. So he joined the local chiefs and the other people in the lockup, forfeiting the pleasures and privileges of serving as a chief in Machame.

After a few days, the Chagga detainees were divided into two groups. One group was taken to a jail in Tanga and the second one was taken to Kismayu. The reason for deporting these chiefs to Tanga and Kismayu<sup>9</sup> was probably to keep them away from their relatives, who might organize a plan to invade the jail in Moshi and set them free. The group taken to Tanga was kept at Tanga Police Station where they were held as political detainees. By luck Joseph Merinyo, Chief Salema, and Imeti Lyatuu were in the group taken to Tanga. The detention experience made Merinyo and his fellow prison inmates bolder and more freedom conscious, just as it happened to other African political detainees elsewhere in Africa. As history indicates, harsh penalties do not scare people when their consciousness for freedom is fully aroused (Mandela 1994:319).

The move to shift the detainees to Tanga and Kismayu made Merinyo even more furious, vowing not to rest until his countrymen were all released. His support to Chagga chiefs extended even to Kirua Vunjo. As Stahl accounts, Kiting'ati was a very weak leader who had narrowly escaped the fate of hanged Chagga chiefs in 1900 as well as the 'great Chagga conspiracy' of 1916. A great faction in Kiting'ati's chiefdom offered an ample opportunity for his son Mashingia (briskly supported by Merinyo) to rise to power in Kirua Vunjo (Stahl 1964:289).

Among the Chagga chiefs deported to Kismayu in 1917 were Msami, Ngyilyisho, and Malamia of Kibosho. Chief Malamia

was a natural victim since the author of the whole stratagem, the Boma clerk Joseph Merinyo of Moshi, was concerned to build up Machame chiefdom under his chosen candidate. . . . [Joseph] Merinyo had a special personal interest since he was a son of that Merinyo who had led Mangi Rindi's warriors to defeat in unsuccessful raid upon Kibosho in the time of Sina. The oral traditions of Kibosho put the responsibility for this stratagem squarely upon [Joseph] Merinyo (Stahl 1964:201).

Even while in Tanga, Merinyo's brilliance and smartness was recognized by the colonial masters. His experience and sound educational background made the Tanga DC choose and assigned him the task of working as a storekeeper of the prison he was detained in. Thus Merinyo served as a detainee and a storekeeper at the same time.

Joseph Merinyo went on fighting for the release of his fellow detainees and the jail warders listened to his pleas. They agreed to grant the detainees a little freedom of leaving the prison and spend the day in the town, but with the condition of coming back in the

<sup>9</sup> Other historical sources say that there was a group of Chagga conspirators – including Chief Kiting'ati of Kirua Vunjo – which was taken to Bagamoyo (Stahl: 1964:289).



evening – before 4.00 p.m. This particular freedom persisted and Joseph Merinyo kept on fighting for the total release of the detainees. Merinyo was so tricky that he requested the person in charge of the jail to give him some people to prepare lime. He was given the people he needed and after one week the lime was brought to the jail. Merinyo supervised the prisoners in the work of painting lime in all offices of the jail and the jail building became very attractive, something which made Merinyo looked upon as a very exceptional person in terms of brilliance and planning. So Joseph Merinyo became a figure of hope, encouragement, and expertise in manual labor, even in prison.

The British Governor who lived in Dar es Salaam had a routine of visiting Tanga town. One day he came to Tanga and Joseph Merinyo requested to be given permission to meet him. Unfortunately, the Governor left for Dar es Salaam before Merinyo could talk to him.

At that time the passenger train used to travel from Tanga to Moshi twice a week, to carry remand prisoners (*mahabusu*). Joseph Merinyo wrote a letter and gave it to one policeman who was coming to Moshi to escort remand prisoners. On arriving at Moshi the policeman delivered the letter according to Joseph Merinyo's instructions. The jail in Moshi was at the place where there is the present-day building with the offices of the Ministry of Work. Joseph Merinyo requested the people from Old Moshi who worked with the Ministry of Works to receive the letter from the policeman and take it to Anna Masochi, Joseph Merinyo's wife who knew how to read and write. The letter enabled her know the condition of her husband in Tanga as well as the condition of the other detainees. In response she spread information to the concerned families about the detainees held in Tanga and by so doing she became a very important link between the detainees and their relatives in Old Moshi.

In collaboration with Joseph Merinyo's grandmother, Anna Masochi ground tobacco and collected one rupee from the relatives of the detainees and put what they had collected into a tin and sent it to Tanga, using the same policeman who had brought the letter. Into the tin they also put a letter which explained from whom the rupees had come and to what detainees the rupees in the tin were destined.

Joseph Merinyo's grandmother (Malyatuu) descended to Moshi town to meet the policeman who would be requested to take the tin with ground tobacco, rupees and the letter to the people detained in Tanga. She gave the policeman one rupee as a motivation so that he could take the tin to Joseph Merinyo in Tanga. The policeman took the tin and ferried it secretly to Tanga.

When Joseph Merinyo opened the tin and read the letter he knew to whom the rupees were supposed to be given. Unfortunately, and to the annoyance of Joseph Merinyo, the detainees used the money for

buying coconut beer during the hours they were permitted to leave the jail and go to town. Merinyo cautioned his fellow detainees not to return to the jail drunk. Furthermore, to continue impressing the prison warders he did not go to town like the other detainees. He remained in the jail taking care of the store he was in charge of – to make sure that everything was in order.

The letter which Joseph Merinyo took from the tin also gave the prisoners all information about their home villages, families and relatives. It explained as to who had died, who had got married, who had got a new baby and other matters pertaining to life in Old Moshi in general. What a good luck! They got a lot of valuable information, despite the fact that they were in prison.

Joseph Merinyo's grandmother was quite intelligent, and her wits made her do another thing. She roasted meat of *ndafu* (fatted he-goat), dried it to deaden its smell and put it in a well sealed calabash (*kyisoro*) and requested the same policeman to take the calabash to Tanga, to the detainees. In that way, the detainees got *ndafu* meat from home. Getting *ndafu* meat while imprisoned was no little luck on the side of the Chagga prisoners.

The detainees stayed in Tanga for about two years. One day it was announced that the Governor would come to Tanga and Joseph Merinyo saw that as a very good opportunity to carry out his plans. He wrote a letter in English and sent it to the house where the Governor would stay and to remain anonymous he did not sign it. The letter was put on a small coffee table in the living-room, without him being aware of Merinyo's plan. When the Governor was through with what had brought him to Tanga, he returned to his lodge and found the letter on the table. He opened it and it read as follows:

Your Excellency, Honorable British Governor. We are political detainees from *Kilimanjaro*, detained without trial. We do not know our fate. The fact that the British Government is known all over the world for being fair, transparent and compassionate, we kindly ask you to intervene because we do not know whether we shall be hanged, detained indefinitely or not. We have stayed from our homes for quite a long time and our families, our wives in particular, are painfully missing us. Honorable Governor, please intervene and help us! In your capacity as the most powerful person in this country, we trust a hundred percent that you can save us. Honorable Governor, we are under your mercy. Please, help us.<sup>10</sup>

Joseph Merinyo was pushed by a strong inner feeling to write the letter because he knew how staying in prison tarnishes a person's personality as well as demoralizing him. As Nelson Mandela has noted, not

<sup>10</sup> The words of this letter were dictated to the author by Dr Jesse Maro, YMCA Hospital, 1<sup>st</sup> November 2012, Moshi town.

only does prison rob a person of his freedom but also tries to take away a person's identity (Mandela 1994:321).

The Governor took the letter and gave it to the DC of Tanga. "There are political detainees here. Why haven't you told me?" the Governor remarked. The DC was dumbfounded. He had nothing to reply because he knew the consequences of saying the truth.

When the Governor had left, the DC of Tanga asked the detainees as to who had written the letter. Immediately Joseph Merinyo said that he was the one who had written it. He clarified by saying that he wrote the letter because they did not know the crime committed by the Chagga detainees, nor did they know their fate. "We complained to the Governor because we have stayed here for more than two years without trial. We have left our wives and relatives at home – they are missing you a lot," Merinyo told the DC.

Having seen the urgency and sincerity of Joseph Merinyo's letter, the Governor did something very helpful. On arrival at Dar es Salaam he wrote a letter, in response to the appeal of Joseph Merinyo, and within a week the letter reached Tanga. The letter gave an order for all political detainees from *Kilimanjaro* to be repatriated to Moshi for public enquiry and that the person in charge of the inquiry would be Sir Charles Dundas, the Pangani DC.

Without delay, all detainees from *Kilimanjaro* were sent back to Moshi and stayed at Moshi Train Station for two months. Then a public inquiry (chaired by Charles Dundas) took place and Dundas was assisted by Joseph Merinyo as interpreter. Throughout the inquiry the detainees were brought meat, beer, and clothes by their relatives.

After the inquiry, it was seen that the detainees were not guilty and that their detention was the result of the rumor spread by an evil priest. They were reinstated to their respective areas, with Charles Dundas making sure that all things were done in a good way. Henceforth, wherever Charles Dundas went he was accompanied by Joseph Merinyo as interpreter. But whenever Merinyo saw anything which he thought might endanger the lives or welfare of his fellow Africans he interpreted it in their favor. Peace and tranquility prevailed in Chaggaland and the priest who had caused malignity was transferred to Nkhonda Morogoro where he died afterwards.

When the detainees had already been reinstated to their respective areas, Sir Charles Dundas was appointed the DC of Moshi and Joseph Merinyo became his secretary. So, most of the administrative activities in Moshi was placed on the shoulders of Charles Dundas and his assistant Joseph Merinyo. Dundas and Merinyo began to convince the Chagga to grow coffee as a cash crop, instead of leaving coffee cultivation to the white settlers. Prior to that coffee was planted only at Kilema Mission where it had been

introduced by Roman Catholic priests in the early 1890s, most probably in 1892. Coffee growing elevated the Chagga to great heights of economic progress and education. As John Baur says, the Roman Catholic priests who had also worked in Bagamoyo introduced the Chagga "to the art of coffee growing, thus fostering the spirit of enterprise that later became the hallmark of the Wachagga and the major reason for their great desire for education" (Baur 2005:228). Convincing the Chagga peasants to grow coffee was a setback to the settlers who had hitherto dominated the business. Another setback was caused by the fact that if the Chagga would begin growing coffee as Charles Dundas and Joseph Merinyo urged them to do, the white settlers would no longer get cheap labor from the Africans.

#### q) *Fighting against Fraud and Embezzlement Allegations*

Joseph Merinyo's imprisonment in connection with the saga of Chagga local chiefs was not the last episode in his life. He was later on jailed for matters related to his involvement in coffee growing activities. When he was very active in the KNPA, the white people were dissatisfied by this union because it empowered the local coffee farmers. It was a union which even the Chagga chiefs lacked power to put under their control and furthermore it put these chiefs at logger heads with the settler community in *Kilimanjaro*. Isaria Kimambo paints the scenario succinctly when he gives the following account about KNPA:

It was a peasant organization controlled by mission-educated coffee producers and the chiefs had no way of controlling it. It was in conflict with settlers, who by 1927 were loud in wanting government to prevent African coffee production. It was in 1927 that Governor Cameron 'issued a circular ordering agricultural staff to discourage the growing of coffee by Africans'. From 1928 onwards, the colonial officials in Moshi were looking for ways of controlling the KNPA and the opportunity came in 1931 when, because of the depression, the organization was in financial crisis. Joseph Merinyo, its President, was arrested together with some of the members of his committee on charges of fraud. Although the main charge was not proved, Merinyo was eventually imprisoned for 'embezzling' KNPA funds. While he was in prison, the colonial state introduced the *Kilimanjaro* Native Cooperative Union (KNCU) to replace KNPA. While this solved a political problem in *Kilimanjaro*, it created a practical problem for Pare coffee growers (Kimambo 1991:78–79).

Narrating about this false embezzlement saga, Arnold Temu and Bonaventure Swai say that through an investigation it was alleged that Joseph Merinyo, KNPA's president, had embezzled 21 British Pounds and that he had used pretext to get 120 British Pounds from a firm known as Sharif Jiwa and Company based in

Moshi town, something which resulted into his immediate prosecution and imprisonment. KNPA set up a committee to protest against the way the case of Joseph Merinyo had been handled but the committee's protest was fruitless because the colonial government had really decided to give Merinyo a stern punishment. When Joseph Merinyo was in prison, the colonial government got a chance of attacking KNPA and if "the government had originally been of the opinion that KNPA was useful, it was no longer so after the Merinyo case" (Temu and Swai 1981:139).

An overriding reality is that the British masters in Moshi put Joseph Merinyo behind bars by fabricating a case that he had misused the money of KNPA, a cooperative society that Sir Donald Cameron and Sir Charles Dundas encouraged Chagga farmers to start in 1924/25. It happened that the British officers in Moshi exercised indirect rule through cooperatives like KNPA and when Cameron left Tanganyika in 1931 the British masters sought a scapegoat with which to dissolve KNPA and form something else. An audit group was formed, to audit the accounts of buying and exporting coffee. The first task of auditing came up with the discovery that for a period of two years (1929-1931) only 50% of the expected amount of income was collected from KNPA members for subscriptions (Temu and Swai 1981; 138-139). Another accusation leveled at KNPA was that its officials

gave loans to one another freely. All this convinced Griffith [an accountant appointed by the British government to investigate allegations of money embezzlement within the KNPA in the 1930s] that the Chagga were 'not competent to control such large interests as are involved, and . . . that a reliable European Firm [should] be requested to take over this work, subject to the direction and supervision of the Administration and that the Books and Accounts be written up by the same Firm (subject to Audit) at an agreed rate Commission on coffee sales and a definite fee for keeping the said books of Accounts' (Temu and Swai 1981:139).

The mistrust of the colonial masters during the time of Joseph Merinyo, which made them assert that the Chagga were incapable of handling huge sums of money, reminds us of the critique made by the patriotic writers in the Africanist Discourse. The writers in this particular discourse disclosed how the arrogant stalwarts from the western hemisphere treated Africa with shocking ambivalence – one of the facets of this particular ambivalence being the convention of binary oppositions, i.e. "a manifestation of the West's ambivalence towards Africa. . . . [That] the West is one thing – good, reasonable, bright – while Africa is its opposite – evil, irrational, dark" (Killam and Rowe 2000:15). Joseph Merinyo opposed the racist claim that Africa was bad, senseless, and dark. Nor was Africa a

platform where the white masters could do anything they wanted.

Joseph Merinyo went on fighting against the charges of fraud fabricated against him and finally he was released from prison, this time emerging as a more militant champion and politically more organized campaigner. His malicious accusers and jailers had made him stronger at heart and in his person they molded a fearless fighter for the rights of his fellow countrymen. The prison spell did not instill in him any kind of cowardice. Instead, the prison experience was a great advantage on the side of Joseph Merinyo because, as Nelson Mandela says, a person's "goodness is a flame that can be hidden but never extinguished" (Mandela 1994:615). Joseph Merinyo's goodness was hidden in prison for some time but it was not extinguished. When he came out of prison he perpetuated his campaigns against white domination and oppression on the black peasants. As a Chagga hero he walked around the Old Moshi villages and in *Kilimanjaro* Region at large, campaigning for human dignity and fair crop prices. He continued opposing all sorts of discrimination and injustice, showing that the prison spell could not bend his determination to keep on fighting for his people. He resembled Mandela who, during a court trial in South Africa, uttered very memorable words: "I will still be moved . . . by my dislike of the race discrimination against my people when I come out from serving my sentence, to take up again, as best I can, the struggle for the removal of those injustices until they are finally abolished once and for all" (Mandela 1996:160). Julius Nyerere supports the views of Mandela when he says that due to the fact that we are not animals, grown-ups should "fight against what seems to them gross social injustice – things like apartheid, or colonialism, or religious oppression" (Nyerere 1994:18). That is exactly what Joseph Merinyo stood for, wherever he went. He was not ready to bow even to the colonialists who wrapped themselves in the blanket of religion.

#### *r) Displaying Patriotism and Opposing Racial Discrimination*

Joseph Merinyo did what he did because he was motivated by the psyche of both internal and outer freedom. As it is correctly asserted by Julius K. Nyerere, "every individual really wants two things: freedom to pursue his own interests and his own inclinations. At the same time he wants the freedoms which can be obtained only through life in the society – freedom from fear of personal attack, freedom from the effects of natural dangers . . ." (Nyerere 1966:7).

The clash between Joseph Merinyo and Missionary Georg Fritze was an image of African patriotism in the midst of racial discrimination. The circumstances that shoved Merinyo into the conflict with a foreigner, at the end of the day, marked a great

politico-cultural paradigm shift in the sense that things never remained the same. In the course of the case lodged against him, it was finally realized that the white pastor had made a mistake but because a white man working in Tanganyika at that time could never err, the truth was concealed, to give the impression that it was Merinyo who was wrong. To settle the dust, Merinyo was secretly allowed to partake of all things which a 'clean' Christian deserves and his excommunication scenario came to an end.

One of the enemies Merinyo fought against to the end of his life was superiority complex which affected Africans too. In deeds and speech, superiority complex was witnessed even among some missionaries. For instance, talking about dress fashions, Joseph Parsalaw says that there "were a few conservative missionaries who did not accept it as good manners to see native Christians dressed in the European fashions. The congregation in Arusha was one of the congregations which suffered during the quarrels between Lazaros Laiser and Blumer simply because Lazaro's wife, Tabea wore shoes which to Blumer's eyes was an insult to wear shoes like Europeans" (Parsalaw 1997:282). Elsewhere, for example in the apartheid South Africa, blacks could not share anything with whites – buses, schools, prisons, social clubs, markets, and hospitals. The apartheid minority rulers, as Nelson Mandela describes them, glorified and promoted 'pro-Nazi and anti-Semitic' tendencies, claiming to be defenders of 'western Christian civilization' against the nuisance of black people. Believing that they had been chosen by God to rule the blacks, they were reluctant to listen to anything from outside their socio-political cocoon and they were totally opposed to important things like freedom, justice, and equality (Benson 1994:22). Nail and tooth Merinyo opposed such tendencies in his home country. For him, segregation, racial discrimination and superiority complex were deadly enemies which should be opposed at any cost.

#### s) *Death and Funeral*

Brother Joseph Merinyo, as he frequently called himself, died on 19th April 1973. Like a great baobab tree, he succumbed to death – the inevitable fate of every human being. His demise marked the end of a physical presence on earth but his contribution to culture and politics is there to stay. He was buried at his home in Kolila and his funeral service was led by the late Bishop Dr Stefano Reuben Moshi, in collaboration with many pastors from inside and outside Old Moshi. The impact of his funeral was so great that many people realized that a man of the people had really passed away.

Joseph Merinyo rested with his forefathers, in peace and honor. His wonderful and captivating personality still loom large in people's memories, and

his tomb at Kolila is reminiscent of a great man who was indeed a defiant fighter, a bold hero, an articulate campaigner, a visionary farmer and an icon for peace and justice. He finally left the world, shining like a buoy on a hilltop, and indeed depicted as an exemplary figure for the past, present and future generations.

## II. CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Joseph Merinyo will remain in the annals of history as one of the greatest sons Chaggaland should be proud of because he was a person in whom a blend of nationalism and patriotism was quite inherent. He was a tireless freedom fighter, fighting for the rights of the numerous underdogs around him. He stood firm to fight against various forms of economic exploitation, political oppression, cultural disregard, religious marginalization, and racial discrimination. He was a man of great vision, possessing unequalled boldness and the prowess of a lion when it comes to fighting for the socio-cultural and economic-political rights of the common people. Bravo, Joseph Merinyo! Tanzania and Africa at large need people of his type – people who do not shrink back with fear and cowardice in front of threats and persecution. The society is in great need of more Merinyos, people who never compromise in the task of defending the dignity of the despised and exploited people, particularly the poor and the marginalized.

At this juncture, two recommendations can be made. First, it is incumbent to study important persons like Joseph Merinyo because such studies put Africa on the world map; and second, African heroes and heroines should be studied widely and deeply – not merely to entertain or meet the demands of a historical adventure but also to benefit from the immense and valuable knowledge packed in their life accounts.

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