

Utenga Wambone—the “Good News”: An Exploration of Historical Ciyawo Bible Translations and Linguistic Texts

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Abstract

The Yawo people of Malawi, Mozambique, and Tanzania first had linguistic texts produced about their language in the latter half of the nineteenth century. At around the same time, and often by the same individuals, Bible translations into Ciyawo also first surfaced. Some of the earliest translations of the four Gospels were known as *Utenga Wambone*—the “Good News.” This article explores the historical context of Christian mission among the Yawo, before then shifting to a historical overview of linguistic texts that dealt with Ciyawo as a language. Following this, an account of the history of Ciyawo Bible translation is offered, with particular focus on the early translations. This study concludes with a mention of the most recent Ciyawo Bible translations and suggestions for future research. These suggestions include a recommendation to focus on comparisons between the various Ciyawo Bible translations, both those which are older and the more recent publications. Comparing these translations will be valuable for understanding the impact of Bible translation among the Yawo people, and how language has changed. It will also provide an opportunity to determine which translation strategy would be best suited for future Ciyawo Bible translation efforts.

Keywords: Yawo people; Yao people; Bible translation; Ciyawo language; Chiyao language; Universities’ Mission to Central Africa; Blantyre Mission; Bible in Africa; Chauncy Maples; Alexander Hetherwick

Introduction

The Yawo are a homogeneous Bantu people group residing in Malawi, northern Mozambique and southern Tanzania. The language of the Yawo people is called Ciyawo, and fits into Guthrie’s P.21 group of languages (Guthrie 1948; Maho 2009). The majority of Yawo people identify as Muslims, while also holding to many



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traditional beliefs and customs in parallel with Islam. This article begins with an overview of the earliest Christian missionary efforts among the Yawo people during the latter half of the nineteenth century. It then includes a summary of the first linguistic publications regarding the Ciyawo language. Following this, the study traces the history of Ciyawo Bible translation during that same period up to the present day. The Ciyawo phrase in the title of this article, *Utenga Wambone*, means “good news” and was a title historically given to translations of the four Gospels in Ciyawo.

Setting the Scene: Early Christian Mission among the Yawo

The Yawo people are not a group who have benefited from centuries of interaction with the Christian “Good News” nor the primary vehicle of that news—the Bible. Instead, significant Christian contact with the Yawo appears to have first taken place in the nineteenth century when explorer missionaries such as David Livingstone first encountered the people he called the “Ajawa” in the second half of the nineteenth century (D. Livingstone and C. Livingstone 1865, 355). This term is in use today to refer to the Yawo by speakers of other languages such as Portuguese and by the Makhuwa people of Mozambique. The Yawo refer to themselves as *Ŵayawo*, with the *Ŵa* prefix indicating the people class of nouns. It is theoretically possible that the Yawo were exposed to Christian theology earlier than the nineteenth century by virtue of their contact through slave trading with other peoples on the east African coast. However, conceptions of Abrahamic monotheism among the Yawo are more likely to have come by way of their Muslim business partners—the Swahili Arabs along the east coast of Africa. This mention of monotheism does not downplay the significance of the many African religious traditions, including those of the Yawo, that speak of a single supreme being conceptualised independently of Christian or Islamic influence (Lugira 2009, 39).

The two Christian missions that worked most closely among the Yawo during the relatively early days of the nineteenth century were the Church of Scotland’s Blantyre Mission and the Anglican Universities’ Mission to Central Africa (UMCA). Although others, such as the Free Church of Scotland’s Livingstonia Mission, had also established themselves on Lake Malawi around the same time, the Blantyre Mission and the UMCA are the two groups that had significant early input into Ciyawo Bible translation. Both missions worked among Yawo communities and used the Ciyawo language in their work and interactions.

The UMCA was uniquely situated in prime Yawo territory. Inspired in part by Livingstone’s call to establish mission work in Central Africa during his visits to universities in the United Kingdom in 1857, the Universities’ Mission to Central Africa was formed soon after. By 1861, its leader, Bishop Charles Mackenzie, had already led an expedition up the Zambezi River. Under the guidance of Mackenzie’s successor, Bishop William Tozer, the UMCA established itself at Zanzibar in 1864 (Anderson-Morshead 1897, 47–50). In subsequent years, the mission expanded to the interior of Central Africa, with settlements established at Masasi in 1876 (Anderson-Morshead 1897, 128) and Newala in 1878 (Anderson-Morshead 1897, 132), both in present-day

Tanzania. Masasi itself became a colony of freed slaves founded by the UMCA missionaries. The UMCA also established a presence at Likoma Island on Lake Malawi by 1886 (Anderson-Morshead 1897, 322; Maples 1889, 60), a site that became an important hub for the mission's work on the lake. The significant investment and building of the immense St Peter's Cathedral on the island, completed in 1909 yet still in use, highlights Likoma Island's importance for the mission (Bremner 2009, 516).

In the heart of Yawo territory in Mozambique, William Percival Johnson of the UMCA attempted to establish himself at Muembe in 1880. The UMCA later established other mission stations in Mozambique at Unangu in 1893 (Hine 1924, 131) and Mtonya in 1905 (Winspear 1956, 31). Like Muembe, these locations were far closer to the Yawo heartland than Blantyre. The impact of the two stations of Unangu and Mtonya on Yawo society is significant. The minority Anglican Yawo Church that still exists today in Mozambique is traceable to the efforts of the UMCA work at Unangu and Mtonya. There is an active Anglican fellowship in present-day Machemba, situated close to the now-abandoned Mtonya mission site, and congregations at other places in Niassa, including, most prominently, at Lichinga, Marrupa, and Messumba on the lakeshore near Metangula. A prominent church building in Lichinga is named after Yohanna Abdallah, an important Yawo Anglican figure of the early twentieth century. Despite the ongoing existence of this Anglican community at present, the proportion of Yawo Anglicans to other Yawo (Muslims) is tiny indeed. The Muslim Yawo are by far the majority of Yawo people today, and in fact, most members of the Anglican church in Niassa are people from other people groups such as the Nyanja. This current reality is likely because UMCA efforts shifted to Likoma Island, where the Nyanja were dominant.

As mentioned briefly above, one of the UMCA's missionaries, William Johnson, settled at Chief Mataka II's village, Muembe, in November 1880 to establish mission work (Barnes 1933, 34–36; Johnson 1924, 57). Although Mataka welcomed these early efforts at Muembe, this positivity unravelled after Captain Foote of the British Royal Navy attempted to intercept a caravan of Mataka's slaves (Anderson-Morshead 1897, 147; Johnson 1924, 69; Winspear 1956, 19). Once Mataka received news of this interference in his business, the chief looted and burnt Johnson's hut at Muembe in Johnson's absence (Anderson-Morshead 1897, 147; Johnson 1924, 71). Chief Mataka apparently believed that Johnson must have cooperated with the British authorities against the slave trade. It is undoubtedly partly due to incidents like this that Mataka and other Yawo chiefs eventually chose to embrace the Islamic religion of their coastal business partners and rejected the Christian message brought by the European missionaries (see Bone 1982, 128; Thorold 1995, 123–125). Indeed, by his death in the 1880s, Mataka II appears to have become a Muslim. He was remembered as "Mataka of the Mosque" (Abdallah 1919, 56) and buried beneath the veranda of the mosque at Muembe (Abdallah 1919, 56; Alpers 1969, 420).

It is noteworthy in Yawo history that the European, mainly British, colonial efforts to abolish the slave trade likely thwarted the widespread acceptance of the Christian *utenga wambone* (good news) of justice and love. Mataka's economic ties to the slave trade were too valuable for him to accept the message missionaries such as Johnson brought to him. After all, it was Christians such as William Wilberforce in England who were associated with campaigning for Britain's abolishment of this trade in the first place. These economic and political realities do not rule out the possibility that the religious truths offered by Islam convinced Mataka and other Yawo chiefs. However, they reinforce the idea that the initial conversion of the Yawo to Islam may have had more to do with the economic and political conditions associated with Islam at the time than with other factors, such as being convinced by religious truth. Certainly, with the acceptance of Christianity, Mataka and other chiefs would have been risking the loss of significant influence and wealth.

Another significant figure of Protestant Christian mission to the Yawo in this early period was Duff MacDonald, a Scottish missionary based in Blantyre, Nyasaland (now Malawi), from 1878 until 1881. MacDonald evidently managed to acquire considerable knowledge of the Yawo and their language in a relatively brief period. Although he served in Blantyre only for a few years until his controversial dismissal for his handling of the so-called "Blantyre Scandal" of 1879 (Chirnside 1880; Hinchliff 1984), he was able to gain sufficient knowledge of the Yawo people and language to produce the two-volume *Africana, or the Heart of Heathen Africa* (1882a&b). This work is a significant contribution that describes the Yawo people at considerable length, in the fashion of an ethnographical and anthropological study. The second volume was devoted primarily to mission life issues and contained an appendix of "native tales" in English (MacDonald 1882b, 319). An expansion on this theme was published as *Yao and Nyanja Tales* in *Bantu Studies* in 1938 after a manuscript by Duff MacDonald was discovered among the papers of Alice Werner (MacDonald and Doke 1938, 251). This manuscript was "evidently [intended] as a supplement to [MacDonald's] well-known publication in *Africana*" (MacDonald and Doke 1938, 251). After this early work, the most famous figure of the Blantyre Mission was Alexander Hetherwick, another Scotsman who arrived on the scene in 1883 after the scandal mentioned above and later went on to have a significant and well-recognised impact on Malawi's Christian history. Hetherwick became a leading figure in linguistic and Bible translation efforts in both the Chichewa and Ciyawo languages and was the head of the Blantyre Mission from 1898 (see W. P. Livingstone 1931, 95; Ross 2018, 224) until he retired in the 1920s.

Many of these nineteenth-century missionaries seemed to believe that as a language, Ciyawo was more challenging to learn than the other languages used within the geographical areas where the respective missions worked. The other languages used among the UMCA and Blantyre Mission included predominantly Kiswahili and Chichewa/Nyanja, but also Emakhuwa. Individuals such as Bishop John Edward Hine (1924, 128) and Bishop Edward Steere (1871, iii) of the UMCA claimed this difficulty with Ciyawo to indeed be the case. Hine wrote that after he began learning Ciyawo, he

found it to be “quite different from the ChiNyanja of the Lake, and of all the many languages used in the mission, I think the hardest for an Englishman to acquire. The grammar is more complicated and the accent is peculiar, and not many can speak it correctly” (Hine 1924, 128). Although the assertion about Ciyawo’s difficulty for foreigners is not unfounded, the UMCA’s Chauncy Maples found his portions of the Emakhuwa Gospel of Matthew more challenging to work on than the Ciyawo translation (E. Maples 1897, 134). Regardless of these perceived difficulties in learning Ciyawo, many early missionaries made historic contributions to the linguistic study and development of Ciyawo as a written language.

A Sketch of Linguistic Works about the Ciyawo Language

The earliest linguistic work including Ciyawo appears in the writing of the English traveller Henry Salt who assembled a short vocabulary list of Emakhuwa and Ciyawo words alongside their English equivalents in *A Voyage to Abyssinia* (Salt 1814). Salt also included a few corresponding terms from an unidentified “native dialect” (Salt 1814 appendix: i–ii), but probably from a language in Mozambique’s Zambezi Valley area. These few words came from those mentioned by João dos Santos at the beginning of the seventeenth century in his *Ethiopia Oriental* (Dos Santos 1609). Some of the corresponding words of this “dialect” are cognates of the representative Ciyawo terms in Salt’s list and indeed remain cognates of the words used today in Ciyawo for the same referents. For example, Dos Santos (1609, 15) mentions the words *inhama* as “carne” (flesh, meat) and *molungo* (1609, 14) as “Deos grande” (the term for “God” or the supreme being); these terms still exist today in Ciyawo as *nyama* and *Mlungu*, with the same meanings described by Dos Santos.

The next work of literature after Salt that dealt with Ciyawo on a linguistic level was by German missionary and influential early scholar of Bantu linguistics, Johann Ludwig Krapf (1850) in *A Vocabulary of Six East-African Languages*. Other works of this period that dealt with Ciyawo in some way included Koelle’s (1854) *Polyglotta Africana*, Bleek’s (1862) *A Comparative Grammar of South African Languages*, and Tomlin’s (1865) *A Comparative Vocabulary of Forty-Eight Languages*. In Italian, Waldemaro Ferrua (1871) published *Delle Lingue Africane*, a comparative study on the vocabularies of 30 African languages, of which Ciyawo was one. Following these early efforts, Ciyawo vocabularies, however incomplete, also appeared in the works of famous explorers such as Henry Morton Stanley (1878) in *Through the Dark Continent*. Stanley is often known for his search for David Livingstone and the memorable “Dr Livingstone, I presume?” quotation. Comparative studies such as Torrend’s (1891) *A Comparative Grammar of the South African Bantu Languages* also continued to include Ciyawo. By 1897, the British colonial administrator and explorer Henry Johnston (1897) also wrote about the Yawo people and provided samples of their language in *British Central Africa*. Johnston (1919) also later featured Ciyawo in *A Comparative Study of the Bantu and Semi-Bantu Languages*.

During this period, but following the very early days of Salt, Krapf and others, Edward Steere of the Universities' Mission to Central Africa produced the first work dedicated solely to the study of Ciyawo, *Collections for a Handbook of the Yao Language* (Steere 1871). Then, following on from and utilising Steere's contribution, who benefited from Krapf's earlier work (Steere 1871, vi), fellow UMCA missionary Chauncy Maples published a Yao-English vocabulary in 1888. In the introduction to that work, Maples claims that the 1888 edition was "an enlargement" (Maples 1888, 1) of a piece he had produced 10 years prior by compiling words from Steere's 1871 *Collections*. Alexander Hetherwick had also been labouring on Ciyawo around this time, although independently of the UMCA work. Duff MacDonald, of the same mission as Hetherwick, had earlier published a chapter on Ciyawo "philology" in *Africana* (MacDonald 1882a). Hetherwick was a contemporary of Maples and produced important linguistic works on the Ciyawo language, including *Introductory Handbook of the Yao Language* (1889a) and an updated second edition published as *A Handbook of the Yao Language* (1902).

Hetherwick was also an accomplished scholar of Chichewa/Nyanja. Besides his linguistic achievements, he chaired the committee that produced the Nyanja Bible. However, before Hetherwick published his works, Maples suggested that his own *Yao-English Vocabulary* (1888) included many words from Hetherwick's independent research after they met each other in 1886 and compared notes. Maples held Hetherwick in quite a high regard, suggesting in his introduction to the *Yao-English Vocabulary* that Hetherwick's ability to translate Scripture into Ciyawo was superior to his own. In this same introduction, Maples states that his own linguistic and translation works in Ciyawo "are probably now set aside forever" (Maples 1888, 3) due to taking up residence on Likoma Island, where Ciyawo is not spoken. Maples's decision to forsake translation and linguistic work in Ciyawo was probably emboldened because of his geographical status away from Yawo territory and his confidence in Hetherwick, given that he suggested that the UMCA would benefit from any work that Hetherwick undertook in Ciyawo (Maples 1888, 2). It is also worth noting that Hetherwick himself also benefited from others, such as John Buchanan, who gave Hetherwick "copious additions to the vocabulary" (Hetherwick 1889a, vii). Buchanan was a Scottish lay member of the Blantyre Mission and early settler and prominent landowner at Zomba during the second half of the nineteenth century. Chauncy Maples of the UMCA also spoke of Buchanan as an "industrious Yao scholar" (Maples 1888, 7). This assertion might come as a surprise to those familiar with Buchanan as a land and estate owner.

In the 1890s, Hynde produced *First Yao-English Primer* (1892) and *Second Yao-English Primer* (1894). Later, George Meredith Sanderson produced significant contributions in *A Yao Grammar* (Sanderson 1917, 1922) and *A Dictionary of the Yao Language* (Sanderson 1954). Sanderson also published an English translation of *Chiikala cha Wayao—The Yaos* (1919) alongside the original Ciyawo text. This volume on Yawo history and culture was written by the native Ciyawo speaker and ordained Anglican clergyman, Yohanna Abdallah (1919). He also served for over 20 years at the

UMCA's Unangu mission station in present-day Mozambique. In the Portuguese language, the Catholic missionary Pedro Dupeyron published *Pequeno Vademecum da Língua Bantu na Província de Moçambique ou Breve Estudo da Língua Chi-Yao* [Small Handbook of the Bantu Language in the Mozambique Province or Brief Study of the Ciyawo Language] (Dupeyron 1909), a guide to the Ciyawo language similar to the works of Steere and Hetherwick with a relatively large vocabulary included. Following this, António Cabral published a vocabulary and grammatical notes of a number of Mozambican languages, of which Ciyawo was one of those included, with comparisons in Portuguese (Cabral 1924). Miguel Viana later published *Dicionário de português-chi-yao e chi-yao-português: elementos de gramática* [Portuguese-Ciyawo and Ciyawo-Portuguese Dictionary: Elements of grammar] (Viana 1961). Sometime in the middle of the twentieth century, the founder of the Massangulo Catholic mission in Mozambique, Pedro Calandri, collected and wrote his own Ciyawo vocabulary and grammar in Portuguese (see Antunes 2017, 2). Unfortunately, this contribution was not formally published and only exists as type-written manuscripts in storage at the Catholic church at Massangulo (as sighted by the author of this article).

In more recent times, several scholars have studied Ciyawo in an academic setting, including Africans and even Yawo people themselves. One of the more significant studies during the second half of the twentieth century is Whiteley's (1966) *A Study of Yao Sentences*. The most well-known African scholar of Ciyawo is the Mozambican Armindo Ngunga, himself a Yawo, who has also held posts as Mozambique's Deputy Minister of Education and Human Development and as State Secretary of Mozambique's north-eastern Cabo Delgado province. Ngunga was involved in producing Mozambique's official Ciyawo orthography (Ngunga and Faquir 1989) in *Relatório do I Seminário sobre a Padronização da Ortografia de Línguas Moçambicanas*—Report of the first Seminar on the Standardisation of the Orthography of Mozambican Languages, now in its third published edition (Ngunga and Faquir 2012).

Ngunga's other notable contributions include *Class 5 Allomorphy in Ciyao* (Ngunga 1997), *Phonology and Morphology of the Ciyao Verb* (2000), *Elementos de gramática da língua Yao* [Elements of grammar of the Yawo language] (2002), *Introdução à linguística Bantu* [Introduction to Bantu linguistics] (2004), and *Linguistic Practices in Mozambique: An Assessment of Language Vitality in six Districts* (Ngunga and Bavo 2011). The American linguist, Larry Hyman, also collaborated with Ngunga to publish articles such as "On the Non-Universality of Tonal Association 'Conventions': Evidence from Ciyao" (Hyman and Ngunga 1994) and "Two kinds of Moraic Nasal in Ciyao" (Hyman and Ngunga 1997). Julius Taji is a contemporary Tanzanian Yawo scholar working on the linguistic study of Ciyawo. Across the border in Malawi, Malawians such as Pascal Kishindo of the Centre for Language Studies at the University of Malawi have also studied Ciyawo and were instrumental in producing the official Ciyawo orthography for Malawi (Center for Language Studies 2005). Expatriate scholars such as the Australian Ian Dicks and the American Shawn Dollar published a

relatively recent guide to learning Ciyawo (Dicks and Dollar 2010) aimed at English-speaking students of the language. This resource is, in some ways, a continuation and update of the earliest grammars and primers of Steere, Hynde, Sanderson, and company.

In recent years, SIL International has also produced a Portuguese-Ciyawo vocabulary list (N’suenene, Ausse, and Marcelo 2009). Shortly after this, Ngunga published a small Ciyawo-Portuguese dictionary to supplement bilingual education materials for Mozambicans (Ngunga 2011), and Julius Taji of the Languages of Tanzania Project published an English-Ciyawo-Kiswahili dictionary (Taji 2017). Malawi’s Centre for Language Studies published a monolingual Ciyawo dictionary in 2013 (*Mgopolela malowe jwa Ciyawo = Ciyawo dictionary*). As recently as 2018, Ian Dicks edited an English to Ciyawo dictionary aimed at Malawian Ciyawo-speaking primary level school students (Dicks 2018). Furthermore, Dicks continues to serve as the editor of the accompanying volume of that dictionary that will provide Ciyawo to English equivalents, which is still forthcoming but due to be published in 2022.

Ciyawo Bible Translations and other Works in the Ciyawo Language

In terms of language development and published literature, Ciyawo is quite limited, particularly if we consider actual use by Yawo people. Orthographies exist (Center for Language Studies 2005; Ngunga and Faquir 2012), and some materials have been published in Ciyawo, including even the United Nations’ Universal Declaration of Human Rights (United Nations 2000, *Mkamulano Wa Ilambo Yosope Pa Ufulu Wa Chipago Wa Wandu*). Still, most Yawo people cannot interact with these materials due to high levels of illiteracy and lack of accessibility and availability. The inconsistency between the orthographies of Mozambique, Tanzania, and Malawi is also a challenge. The vast majority of Yawo people, in kind with many other African contexts, are functionally non-literate and rely on oral means of communication. The reasons for this are complex and are traceable to many factors, including the lack of suitable materials in schools, a lack of funding for education, and a wide range of other historical and cultural issues.

Early Bible Translation Efforts

The most significant works of literature in the Ciyawo language that exist to date are undoubtedly translations of the Bible. The very first published portion of the Bible and indeed of Ciyawo written literature, in general, was *Anjili ja Ambuje wetu na Mkulamya Isa Masiya kwa Mattayo* (Maples 1880a) [“Gospel of Our Lord and Saviour Jesus the Messiah by Matthew”] translated by Chauncy Maples of the Universities’ Mission to Central Africa and printed in 1880. Early in his time in Africa, Maples believed that he and his friend and fellow missionary, William Johnson, would be the most likely candidates within the Universities’ Mission to pursue translation work in Ciyawo (C. Maples 1877a; E. Maples 1897, 84). This expectation came to fruition with Maples’s publication of *Matthew*. Then, despite a later focus on Chinyanja and Mpoto work (Mojola 2020, 211), Johnson also engaged in Ciyawo Bible translation in a small

capacity (Barnes 1933, 210; Maples 1877b). Even though Johnson had made early attempts at translating portions of Ciyawo Scriptures (Maples 1877c), it is also possible that he worked again on translating Scripture portions into Ciyawo due to an immediate evangelistic need during his stint at Muembe living among Yawo people. However, it seems that these efforts were never published. Given William Johnson's close relationship with Chauncy Maples, he also undoubtedly would have benefited from Maples's translation of *Matthew*, which was published in the same year that Johnson arrived at Chief Mataka's Muembe for his time of residence.

Following Maples's foundational work on *Matthew* in 1880, but independent from it, Alexander Hetherwick translated and published other parts of the Bible. He published the four Gospels (*Utenga Wambone wa Luka*, 1889c; *Utenga Wambone wa Marko*, 1889d; *Utenga Wambone wa Matayo*, 1889e; *Utenga Wambone wa Yohana*, 1889f) and the book of Acts (*Masengo ga Wandumitume* 1889b) in 1889, with Paul's letter to the Romans (*Kalata jua Paolo jua Ndumitume kwa wa Rumi*, 1891b) and the letters to the Corinthians (*Achikalata jua Paolo jua Ndumitume kwa wa Korinti*, 1891a) following in 1891 and others in subsequent years. By 1898, Hetherwick had completed a translation of the entire New Testament in Ciyawo, and by 1902, he had already revised his translation of the Gospels and *Acts*. Even earlier than Hetherwick's formal publications and around the time Chauncy Maples published his translation of *Matthew*, Duff MacDonald in Blantyre was working on translating some Ciyawo portions of the Bible. His *Africana* (MacDonald 1882b, 127) mentions that he had some parts ready for printing by 1879. He wrote in 1881 that "[w]e knew the time required to translate the whole Bible was about fifteen years, and Buchanan and I were anxious to try whether we might not, by working as for a wager, complete the task in a much shorter time" (MacDonald 1882b, 234). According to Chauncy Maples, John Buchanan completed a translation of the Gospel of Luke in Ciyawo, claiming that "Mr Buchanan of Zomba, whose translation of St Luke, though certainly inferior to the St Mark [of Hetherwick], is still an excellent specimen of what good work in this line may be done by one who has had no special training in linguistics" (Maples 1888, 7).

For Duff MacDonald, however, any further endeavours he may have had to continue with Ciyawo Bible translation were unfortunately cut short by his enforced absence due to the fallout of the so-called "Blantyre scandal." During his brief time, MacDonald managed to make some progress in translating the historical parts of the Old Testament and the Gospels (MacDonald 1882b, 95), whether or not these were ever formally published. According to MacDonald, in 1881, "[b]esides having [the Gospels of] Matthew and Mark ready for the printer, I had translated the historical parts of the Old Testament, and hoped to get these printed and illustrated" (MacDonald 1882b, 260). Even though it is unclear as to whether any of MacDonald's Ciyawo translation efforts ever saw the light of day, Hetherwick notes that "before his [MacDonald's] retirement in 1881, he was enabled to publish a selection of Scripture passages in Yao, together with a small collection of native stories for use in the mission schools" (Hetherwick 1889a, vi). It is possible that copies of these works no longer exist, but at the least,

MacDonald achieved a remarkable amount of Ciyawo translation work in his short time on the mission field among the Yawo. Indeed, perhaps some of Hetherwick's translations were helped by the earlier efforts of MacDonald.

As mentioned, following on from the first Bible translation efforts in Ciyawo by Chauncy Maples of the UMCA and then also MacDonald and Buchanan of the Blantyre Mission, Alexander Hetherwick began translating parts of the Bible into Ciyawo. Then, after Maples met him in 1886 (Maples 1888, 2), Maples himself seems to have abandoned any further efforts, allowing Hetherwick to establish himself as the principal and most prolific translator of Ciyawo Scriptures during this period. Regarding the translation of Mark's Gospel by Hetherwick, Maples writes that "this is a genuine triumph of translation, and I cannot refrain here from expressing my admiration for this splendid achievement" (Maples 1888, 7). Johnson also appreciated Hetherwick's "well-known work in Yao translations" (Johnson 1911, 105).

Following Hetherwick's completion of the entire New Testament by 1898, and over the next two decades, the Old Testament books were translated by several different missionaries and others, many from the UMCA. Parts were also translated by the Yawo Anglican priest Yohanna Abdallah, with the Old Testament completed by 1920 after the publication of the books of Job, Ecclesiastes, and Song of Solomon. At least two different versions of the book of Genesis were translated during this period, appearing in 1904 and 1906. The 1904 version was published with only the first 25 chapters, for unknown reasons. A Swahili teacher apparently translated the 1906 version with revisions by W. B. Suter of the UMCA. An edition of the first five books of the Bible, the Pentateuch, was published at Likoma Island by the UMCA in 1913 or 1914. Throughout this period and up to the 1930s, individuals such as Edith How of the UMCA, and others, conducted revisions and new translation work. These efforts were likely sometimes done in committee until the final approval of a completed New Testament in 1936, but actual publication as a whole book was delayed until 1952 for uncertain reasons. This delay may have been due to existing stocks but perhaps the situation was also impacted by the global geopolitical situation at the time and the breakout of the Second World War in 1939. It is also worth noting that Christian communities throughout Yawo lands, such as the Anglican church, have produced some of their own texts in Ciyawo, such as hymnals and prayer books, ever since the first missionaries began the practice of translating "mattins, litany, and evensong" (Maples 1880b, 2). Still, these are not widely published or circulated.

Sadly, these early Ciyawo texts are not readily available anywhere except in archives, despite all this work and outstanding achievements. The National Archives of Malawi at Zomba hold an incomplete collection of biblical books in Ciyawo, as do a few other libraries worldwide. The British and Foreign Bible Society archives at Cambridge University in England hold the most complete early Ciyawo Bible translations collection. It is lamentable that there are no extant copies of any Ciyawo literature at Likoma Island's Anglican cathedral, where a UMCA printing press was once active.

Many of their texts, including translations of biblical books into Ciyawo, were transferred to the archives at Zomba.

Later Bible Translation Efforts

Since the delayed 1950s publication of the New Testament text that was approved in 1936, there appears to have been no fresh Bible translation work conducted in Ciyawo until the 1981 publication of the Gospel of Luke by the Malawian Bible Society and the later 1992 publication of selections from the New Testament, such as the Gospel of Mark (as held in the archives of the British and Foreign Bible Society at Cambridge in the United Kingdom). This gap in translation work is not altogether unsurprising, given that the socio-political context of the period saw many African nations struggling for independence during the political instability of the Cold War period. Mozambique suffered through a lengthy civil war during this time, which significantly impacted that country's ability to engage in Bible translation work. Indeed, it is only now, after around 20 years since the end of the civil war in 1992, that the Mozambican Bible Society has been able to begin thinking about its own Ciyawo Bible translation endeavours. After the 1990s, the recent Malawian Bible Society's *Buku Jeswela* ("Holy Book" 2014) appeared, which was translated in the urban centre of Mangochi and published in its entirety in 2014. This publication came about due to the rejection that the 1992 version experienced among Yawo communities. This rejection was due, in part, to the use of difficult and archaic words, inadequate interpretations, Chichewa "mixing," incorrect orthography, stylistic problems, and "expressions that do not convey the meaning properly" (Bister, Floor, and Pettersen 1996). *Injil Jeswela* (2011), or the "Holy Gospel," containing the books of Luke and Acts, from a project based in the village of Chiutula in rural Malawi aimed at the majority Muslim Yawo audience, was published in 2011, a few years before *Buku Jeswela*.

Most recently, The Seed Company has been operating a Bible translation project for Yawo churches in Tanzania, and a revision of *Buku Jeswela* that is funded by Baptist Mission Australia is near completion at Namwera in Malawi. This revision aims to bring the Bible more in line with the "majority Yawo," who are Muslim. The Bible Society of Mozambique also began a translation at Lichinga in 2019 to be used by Yawo churches in Mozambique. To date, the entire New Testament is complete, and work has already started on the Old Testament. One of the first publications by the Tanzanian project was the Gospel of Luke in 2012 (*Ngani Jambone Mpela Ijitite Pakulemba Ni Che Luka: Gospel of Luke in Kiyao*). So far, the Namwera revision in Malawi has printed only the books of Genesis and Exodus in a combined volume (*Jenesesi Ni Ekisodo: Genesis and Exodus in Ciyawo*, 2020), although several books have been completed with further publication imminent. The translation by the Bible Society of Mozambique is in its early stages. The most recent work on the Bible into Ciyawo is an oral Bible translation of the book of Genesis under the auspices of Baptist Mission Australia in partnership with the Baptist Convention of Mozambique. This project began in 2021 in Lichinga, and audio portions have already been released to the public. Although that project is oral in nature, the intention exists to print a written version of

that translation alongside the audio. This translation is aimed at the majority Yawo population, who are Muslim, even though Christian Yawo should also find the translation valuable to them. The oral nature of the translation is explainable by the reality that most Yawo people are unable to read and, therefore, unable to engage in written translations of the Bible. Finally, although it may seem strange that Malawi, Tanzania, and Mozambique each has Ciyawo Bible translations underway in one regard or another, Houston (2020, 220–221), demonstrates that there are sufficient differences between Ciyawo variants to warrant their own versions (notwithstanding differences between orthographies anyway).

When the latest translations into Ciyawo are released and disseminated to the public in the coming months and years, it will be valuable to analyse their impact. There has been a varied history of Ciyawo Bible translation since the nineteenth century, yet most Yawo remain Muslim. Despite the various attempts over the years to translate the Bible into Ciyawo, it is arguable whether these were successful when measured by ongoing use and availability. Whether the oral Bible translation (currently underway in Mozambique) and the latest Malawian translations successfully respond to the Islamic context of the Yawo according to their respective briefs, will be worth investigating in the future as portions of these translations are published.

Conclusion and Areas for Future Research

The core focus of this article was to provide a historical overview of early texts dealing with Ciyawo as a language and to highlight initial efforts at Bible translation. Beginning with a synopsis of the first Christian missionary efforts among the Yawo people, this article then gave a sketch of linguistic works relating to the Ciyawo language. Many of the linguists who wrote about Ciyawo were also Bible translators and members of the Christian missions discussed in this article. Following the summary of linguistic works, this study narrated the story of the first Ciyawo Bible translations in the late nineteenth century up until the present day. In future research, it would be valuable to focus on comparing the older Ciyawo translations to more recent efforts and to explore how the style of Ciyawo translations may be similar or different to those of other languages that have influenced Ciyawo, such as Kiswahili and Chichewa. Furthermore, comparing the various Ciyawo translations (Malawi, Mozambique, or Tanzania) based on where and when they were produced, would be valuable for understanding the impact of Bible translation among the Yawo people and how language has changed. We can also learn which translation strategy will have a more significant effect on Yawo societies in the future by performing such analyses.

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