The first Muslims arrived in East Africa little more than a century after the founding of Islam 1). Since then successive additions to the Muslim population have taken place by migration from Arabia and India, and at the same time an indigenous Muslim population has developed. But until the nineteenth century Muslims had penetrated scarcely twenty kilometres inland. The first Christians reached East Africa in 1408. These Portuguese Roman Catholics also confined their activities to the coast, and although some progress was made in propagating their faith amongst the indigenous population, nothing permanent remained after they finally withdrew to the south of Cape Delgado in 1729. Apart from the Portuguese interlude Muslims have had twelve hundred years of unrivalled opportunity for spreading Islam amongst the people of East Africa.

This Muslim monopoly of the religious field ended in 1844 when Johann Ludwig Krapf arrived at Mombasa as a missionary of the Anglican Church Missionary Society (CMS). With his arrival Islam once again faced Christianity, and the modern history of Christian missions in East Africa began. But by 1844 Muslim traders had already begun to penetrate the interior of the continent, and if Christianity was to make any headway inland, reinforcements were surely necessary without delay in order to compete with Islam for the allegiance of the pagan people. The reinforcements were slow to arrive. The next mission to come was a French Roman Catholic Mission which was set up in Zanzibar in 1860, sixteen years later 2). It was followed in quick succession by the United Methodist Free Church Mission, which Krapf helped to establish at Ribe near Mombasa in

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1862), and then the Anglican Universities Mission to Central Africa (UMCA) arrived in Zanzibar in 1864 from its disasters on the Zambesi.

By this time twenty valuable years had passed. The four missions were slow to expand their operations. After a further ten years, in 1874, there were still no more than five mission stations in the whole of East Africa. Meanwhile Muslim traders were carrying their religion into the heart of the continent. When Krapf arrived at Mombasa the first visit was being made by an Arab trader to the court of the Kabaka of Buganda, travelling via Ruanda and Bunyoro. By 1875 Muslim influence was extensive all round the circumference of East Africa, and was beginning to develop strategic growing points within the region. It was during the middle 1870's that the Muslim strategic advantage over Christianity was at its greatest, and had the Muslims possessed the missionary organization and resources of Christian missions, East Africa would by now undoubtedly be a province of the Muslim world.

But in 1875 Christianity began to make a forward move. The UMCA established its first mainland station at Magila, the CMS set up Frere Town near Mombasa as a settlement for freed slaves, and it was in November of that year that a letter from the explorer Henry Stanley appeared in the London Daily Telegraph and aroused English interest in the possible evangelization of Buganda. Christianity was getting off to a late start in East Africa, but all might not yet be lost. It had been the policy of the early missionaries to avoid confrontation with Islam. Krapf quickly moved his residence out of Mombasa to Rabai, several kilometres beyond the Muslim coastal belt. He advised the Methodist mission to do the same and helped them to choose Ribe as their base, not far from Rabai. And although William Tozer had chosen Zanzibar as the place from which the UMCA would make a new beginning, it was towards Central Africa that he looked, rather than to the inhabitants of the islands of Zanzibar and Pemba. Magila was the first step in his intended direction, leaping over any possible Muslim influence at the coast and being sited in a pagan area. In the

6) Daily Telegraph, 15 November 1875.