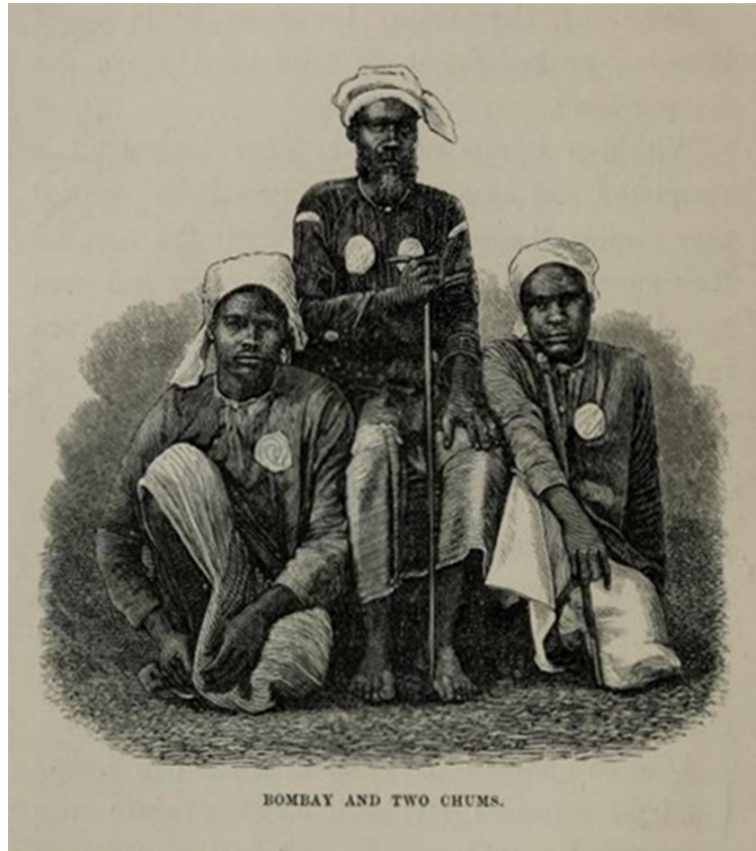


# Sidi Mubarak Bombay

1820 – 1885



## ***Early Life***

Sid Mubarak Bombay was borne in a remote village in Yao territory, in East Africa, which today would be on the border of Tanzania and Mozambique and in the Ruvuma region of the former. His mother died in childbirth so he was raised by his father and family. Part of the Bantu nation, the waYao were sophisticated agriculturalists, skilled iron-smiths and experienced traders. Nevertheless, the remoteness of the village left the people vulnerable to slave traders. The Yao worked with the Arabs, selling them ivory and slaves. They became indebted to the traders, who, in 1832, demanded settlement of the debts. Without means to pay the debts and without firearms for defence, all they could do was flee. However, Bombay was captured along with other villagers and forced to walk to the coast, from where he was taken to Zanzibar, sold and put on a ship to Gujarat, India. He never saw any of his family again.

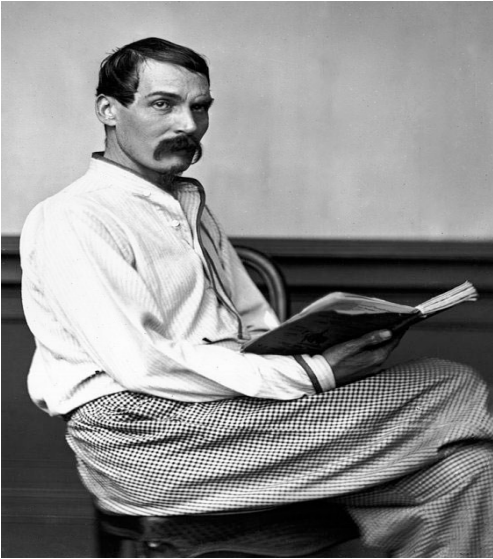
In India, he acquired his Indian name, was enslaved for twenty years, until his owner died and he was freed. He returned to East Africa in 1855.

## ***African Explorations***

By the Mid-nineteenth Century, many European countries were showing great interest in Africa and there was great competition between them to discover, and ultimately, to colonise the continent.

In 1856, the Royal Geographical Society sponsored the East African Expedition, led by Richard Francis Burton, and it arrived in Zanzibar that December, where it was joined by its second in command, John Hanning Speke, in 1857. Their mission was to find the source of the White Nile,

the source of the Blue Nile having been discovered in 1618 by a Spanish Jesuit, Pedro Paez.



Richard Frances Burton, 1821 – 1890.

Looking for help in their expedition, Burton and Speke travelled to the mainland coast, where they met Bombay, who was then working for the Sultan of Zanzibar, at a small military station. Here they hired some of the Sultan's soldiers, as well as the services of Bombay. They felt that he was most impressive, describing him as the “gem of the party”. Bombay was smart and strong (despite being small and thin) and his “good conduct and honesty of purpose” were “without parallel”.

He was kind, generous, eager to help and showed no bitterness in spite of his early life. His knowledge of Hindi and English were a great help in their expeditions, greatly easing communication.

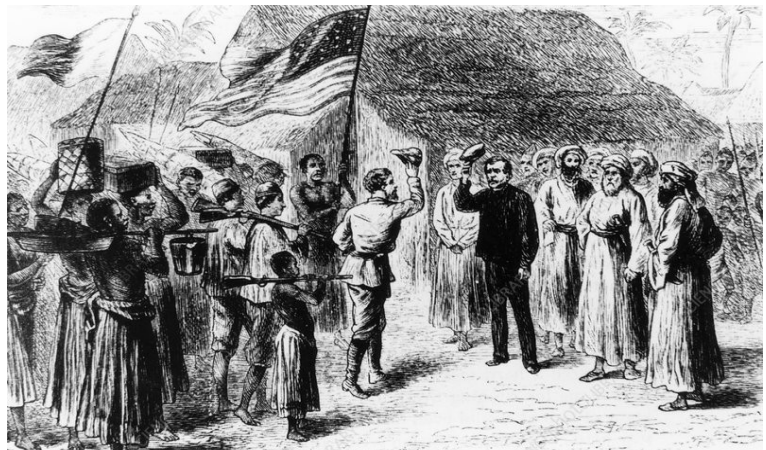
Over the next thirty years, Bombay worked as Caravan Leader, Translator, Guard, Guide, Porter and Nurse on further expeditions. He crossed more than 1000 miles of the Interior with Burton and Speke, and helped them become the first Europeans to see Lake Tanganyika in 1858. On their way back to the coast, Speke and Bombay left the main expedition and Burton, who was too sick at the time to accompany them, and took a smaller group to another lake Nyanza (the largest body of fresh water in Africa, better known as Victoria). Speke was convinced this was the source of the White Nile, but, when told this, Burton was sceptical.

Later, in 1860, Speke led his own expedition, again with Bombay, and returned to Nyanza (which he renamed “Victoria”), but was unable to circumnavigate it.



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Sir Henry Moreton Stanley, 1841 – 1904



Stanley meeting Livingstone

Ten years later, in 1870, Bombay helped lead Henry Moreton Stanley to Lake Tanganyika, where he found Dr. David Livingstone (who had been missing for four years). Stanley was later to successfully circumnavigate Lake Nyanza and confirmed it as the principle source of the White Nile (poor Speke!).

In 1875, Bombay made his last European expedition, again with a British explorer, this time a Verney Lovett Cameron. They were the first party to cross Equatorial Africa from the Indian Ocean to the Atlantic.

## Aftermath

In his time as guide and explorer, Bombay travelled 9500km (6000miles), mostly on foot. His role in exploration was recognised by the Royal Geographical Society of London, which presented Bombay a silver medal and a pension in 1876 for his assistance to Speke as they strove to find the source of the Nile River. However, he was never invited to England, despite his important role in this and other expeditions. He was never commemorated as the British explorers were.

After that last expedition, Bombay worked for the Church Missionary Society until his death on August 12<sup>th</sup>, 1885.

