

## Sudan Interior Mission (Sim): An Evangelical Operation for a Unique Task in Northern Nigeria to 1960

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### ABSTRACT

Many factors contributed to the uniqueness of the Christian Missionary endeavors in northern Nigeria above other areas in West African Sub-region. The level of entrenchment of Islamic institutions, founded by the Sokoto Caliphate, (through the emirates), the civilization and state craft, cultural refinement and civility, and encouraging societal development trends were the hallmark of the northern Nigerian areas since the fifteenth century Hausa States. Further, the emergence of an egalitarian Caliphate of Sokoto 1804-1903, which spread its influence and powers in West Africa had its main headquarters in Sokoto, one of the established city states of Hausaland founded in 1809 as a consequence of the Usmanu Danfodiyo led *tajdeed*, reform movement. In this regard therefore, any Christian Missionary who wanted to successfully operate and succeed in the region must have some basic knowledge of dealing with challenge and peculiar nature of Islam's response to other religions. The education system, the ability to read and write (indigenous writing system, Ajami, especially among the Hausa, Nupe and Kanuri) were some of the salient and distinguishing factors of the Muslim regions of northern Nigeria from non-Muslim societies, which in turn demanded for a specialized and unique set of Missionary forces. That was to be able appeal to a people with a distinct world view and sense of universality in their faith.

The Church, consequently, therefore, especially the Sudan Interior Mission (SIM) adopted some exceptional measures in their method of conversion (use of Hausa Arabic script translation of the Bible(Ajami), emphasis on use of Hausa language even among non-Hausa speakers, etc), missionary personnel were trained (in basic knowledge of Islam, and adoption of Hausa language and also European missionaries especially women adopted Hausa names and attires with a view to appeal positively to the Muslims of Northern Nigeria. The article therefore intends to study such uniqueness of Hausaland and the central Sudan in general in terms of its culture and religion vis a vis the approach of the Christian evangelists in the region and the implication of the exercise in making or failure to make converts in the region, and the future of inter-religious harmony as well as state-religion relations and other similar questions will be addressed by the research.

**Keywords:** Sudan Interior Mission, Northern Nigeria, Missionary activities

### BACKGROUND

The widespread history of Islamic growth and development in the Northern parts of Nigeria (Hausaland) in the 19<sup>th</sup> century particularly in European accounts (Hugh Clapperton's expedition in 1820s, Heinrich Barth in 1850s) led to an unprecedented missionary enthusiasm among the youth in Europe to carry the message of the Gospel to the region. Similarly, an exaggerated and most cases fabricated and despicable reports of slavery and its inhuman devastating consequences, also aroused the humanitarian sympathy of many individuals and organizations to join hands in the 'rescue' of the helpless subjects of Northern Nigeria.

Northern Nigeria therefore, from the 1840s started receiving varying waves of missionary attempts to evangelize and win souls for the Christ. The first attempt was led by Samuel Ajayi Crowther (an ex-slave of Nigerian descent who acquired Church training) under the Church Missionary Society (CMS) in 1841, known as the Upper Niger Mission. The main targets of the mission were to make converts in the Muslim emirates and ultimately establish Christianity at Sokoto and Gwandu, the two centers of Islamic culture and tradition in Nigeria. Though, not much success was recorded in the Crowther's expedition in the heartland of Islamic emirates, yet he opened the gates for subsequent missionary works in the

region. Due to his well disposed nature to the Muslim rulers he was willfully given permission to establish mission stations in the Muslim domains. He opened missionary stations at Bida, Kabba and Nassarawa. The ultimate aim of reaching the Sultan of Sokoto and the Emir of Gwandu was not achieved, however, Crowther succeeded in sending them (the Sultan of Sokoto and Emir of Gwandu) an Arabic version of the New Testament Bible from Salisbury Square.<sup>1</sup> The message was a herald to the advent of missionary activities, into the Caliphate.<sup>2</sup>

Crowther's led expedition was followed by an ambitious Missionary organization with more specific target to convert the Muslim areas of northern Nigeria, known as the Hausa/Sudan Party in the 1880s. The Sudan Party was led by Rev. Graham Wilmot Brook under the auspices of the Church Missionary Society. The party consisted of eleven graduates from Cambridge and Oxford Universities. Boer noted that:

No set of missionaries had been given greater publicity, no Exeter Hall meeting had been more largely attended than the one in which the missionaries were dispatched, no missionaries had excited so much hope (than the Sudan Party).<sup>3</sup>

Brook expected a very quick result that, 'within six months the cross will oust the crescent in Hausaland'. He advocated for the method of 'cultural surrender' in their evangelization of the Muslims.<sup>4</sup>

It was his belief that the Muslim Hausa should have been more susceptible to conversion to Christianity due to their civilization attainment and high level of cultural disposition. In that regard therefore, the messengers of the Gospel must become as much as possible like the Hausa, eating their food, wearing their dress and dwelling in their types of houses.<sup>5</sup> That was in sharp contrast with the nature of missionary

operation in 'pagan' or 'heathen' people who were rated by the European as at very low ebb of civilization and understanding.

In order to complement the effort of this and other missionary organizations in the area, another party sprang up in Canada, under the leadership of Dr Rowland Victor Bingham, called the Sudan Interior Mission (SIM) in 1893. This missionary body, more than any other missionary society pioneered the evangelization of both the Muslims and pockets of non-Muslims in many parts of northern Nigeria where earlier attempts failed.<sup>6</sup>

More than any other Christian Missionary organization, the SIM recorded more successes in terms of establishment of churches, schools, dispensaries and number of converts among the indigenous people in its evangelical campaigns and endeavors among the Muslims in Northern Nigeria. Thus, the Sudan Interior Mission serves as the main focus of this research due to its special methods and unique approach in proselytization in Hausaland.

### **THE SIM AND THE GOVERNMENT IN NORTHERN NIGERIA**

The Colonial Government in appreciation of the zeal and enthusiasm of Missionary organizations and their tendency to collaborate in the success of colonial administration with a view to give to opportunities and accessibilities of reaching their targets, worked and in hand in the region. However, the notoriety of the Muslims in renouncing their religion for another was the point, which was strongly emphasized by the Higher Commissioner, Lord Lugard to the Missionary organizations generally, operating in the area. He specifically warned them not to exhaust too much of their resources in the quest for Muslim converts to Christianity. The uniqueness of the Muslims therefore, demands for a special and careful disposition in the evangelization process of the region. Lugard thus, presages the zealot missions that:

- And remember that in these Muhammadan countries you are not dealing with men who are wholly evil
- You will not convert them. I do not say that you will never do so-God knows
- But dealing with events of the moment, I think that your chances of the conversion of

<sup>1</sup> E. A. Ayandele, "The Missionary Factor in Northern Nigeria," *Journal of Historical Society of Nigeria*, Vol.III, NO. 3, December, 1966, p. 506

<sup>2</sup> T. Hodgkins, *Nigerian Perspective: An Historical Anthology*, Oxford University Press, 1975, p. 184

<sup>3</sup> J. H. Boer, *Missionary Messengers of Liberation in a Colonial Context: A Case Study of Sudan United Mission*, Amsterdam: 1979. P. 85

<sup>4</sup> E. A. Ayandele, *The Missionary Impact on Modern Nigeria 1842-1914: A Political and Social Analysis*, London: Longman, 1991, P. 121

<sup>5</sup> W.O. Ajayi, "Aspects of Protestants Missionary work in Northern Nigeria, 1887-1910" *ODU Ife Journal of African Studies*, Vol.3 July 1996, P. 43

<sup>6</sup> W. O. Ajayi "Aspects of Protestants Missionary work in Northern Nigeria...", P. 43

them as proved by our experiences are infinitely small.<sup>7</sup>

Some of the reasons which made Lugard to be categorical in this matter included the fact that Muslims perceived and entertained the superiority of their religion in higher esteem. That made them to feel the missionaries had got nothing to preach to and appeal for them to it. The questions of salvation, Jesus Christ as a Messiah, the virgin Mary are all part and parcel of their religious narratives.

Similarly, the issue of cultural and civilizational development, they were not in comparison with pagan communities. These factors were very important determinants for evangelization in the Muslim areas of northern Nigeria.

In most reports of the European travelers such as Clapperton and Heinrich Barth, Hausa people and their civilization were presented as highly sophisticated and comparable even with the European civilization at the time. Thus, given a picture of the region in a highly appreciable form, and that Islam was later imposed upon this 'fine' race of Africa.

He further described Hausa as 'highly civilized people, industrious, prosperous, of large population, eager for the manufacturers and religion of Europe.'<sup>8</sup> This highly receptive people for the European goods and religion were denied this opportunity by the 'Fulani' alien conquerors. In the same vein, Rev. Walter Miller also argued that:

- For many centuries, the Hausa had ruled their own people. Their system of taxation was just and was largely taken over by the Fulani when they conquered the Hausa. They were devoted and learned (but not as bigoted as the Fulani) Muslims
- No hope can exist for these Hausa people until either our government deposes this alien rule or there become enough educated ones

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<sup>7</sup> L. Lugard, *The Dual Mandate in British Tropical Africa*. London: Frank Cass, 1922, P. 78.

<sup>8</sup> E. A. Ayandele, *The Missionary Impact on Modern Nigeria:...*, P. 120, see also Clapperton and Dudley, *Narrative of Travels*. London: Oxford University Press, 1824, CLAPPERTON, H., *Journal of a Second Expedition into the Interior of Africa*. London: 1829, 206. and Heinrich Barth, *Travels and Discoveries in North and Central Africa, 1890, Vols I and II*

among them (through western education and Christianity) too strong for such rule to be perpetuated.<sup>9</sup>

To achieve the aim of 'liberating' the oppressed Hausa from the Fulani misrule required a lot from different missionary bodies and governments intervention. Perhaps that was why most of the missionary organizations of this nature were inter-denominational in their response and activities in Hausaland. According to Miller, 'what in addition made Sokoto so spectacular in this regard was that, 'the Sultan of Sokoto, retains until today the temporal and spiritual leadership of the northern region and ranks as one of the powerful heads of Islam in the world.

If not because of his rule supported by the emirs, non-fanatical Hausa Muslims could willingly accept Christianity.<sup>10</sup> This misconception of the Hausa Muslims, stemmed from the missionaries non consideration of the fact that, Islam preceded Fulani in Hausaland and tribal barriers between Hausa and Fulani has been neutralized through intermarriages, and the non racial foundation of the jihad of Usman Danfodiyo was ignored. That became one of the causes of missionary failure in the region. Moreover, some distorted accounts about the region recorded by some mission leaders contributed to the over zealotness of other missions to swarm it in clusters. The Muslim emirates were considered as the worst slaving center in Hausaland. referred to this saying that, 'the slavery and raiding in all the seven big Hausa states is terrible and will have to be put down. So the missions joined hand in the 'heroic salvation' of humanity. Another false impression which Miller himself said he collected from Hausa pilgrims in Tripoli was the distorted prophecy attributed to Shehu Danfodiyo and reads thus:

*The end is drawing near. The kings of Hausa cities are renouncing their allegiance to the Sultan of Sokoto. The people prophesy the advent of the white man with Christian religion, which all the world will accept for a short space of forty months.*<sup>11</sup>

From this fake prophecy, one can easily understand the reason behind the missionary rush and high expectations for quick conversion to Christianity in the area than in any other

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<sup>9</sup> Miller, W. R. *Have we Failed in Nigeria?*, London, 1948, pp: 74-76

<sup>10</sup> Miller, W. R. *Have we Failed in Nigeria?*, p. 123

<sup>11</sup> Miller, W. R. *Have we Failed in Nigeria?* p. 127

region. Some missionaries like Robinson Cannon who visited Kano in early 1900 reported that, 'only one of the entire population were Muslims, but nine tenth of these know nothing about their religion. There were very few mosques in the territory, one in Kano and one in Sokoto'. He added that learned Islamic scholars showed their willingness to accept Christianity and to translate the Bible. Thus, nothing stands their way of becoming Christians save missionary endeavors of determined evangelists.<sup>12</sup>

Moreover, in a conflicting but enthusiastic report about Islam, it was again shown that Islam was making a lot of progress. The tide of which it spreads to the south if not halted by missionary works the whole area will fall under the control of Islam which makes the spread of western civilization and Christianity difficult. Dr. Karl Kumm, the founder of the Sudan United Mission, SUM, warned that:

*For the magnificent works they are doing in Africa. If missionaries today cannot be leaders of government's representative, they might at least, be assistants and by carrying Christian civilization to the pagans before these became Mohammedans to prevent the unification of various divergent elements of the Sudan under the crescent, and with it the possibility seeing raised at any time the green flag of the holy Muslim war against our representatives of Christian Europe.*<sup>13</sup>

This point might explain why there were about eleven missionary organizations working in Hausaland in only five years of the commencement of their activities. Major missionary bodies in the region included the Church Missionary Society, (CMS), Roman Catholic Mission, (RCM), United Africa Church, (UAC), American Baptist Church, (ABM), United Missionary Society, (UMS), Sudan Missionary Society, (SMS), Sudan United Mission, (SUM), and the Sudan Interior Mission, (SIM). Indeed the SIM endeavored among the indigenous people of the Muslim emirates than all other missionary societies. These missionary bodies were to remain active up to the time of Nigerian independence and even beyond. It is also important to note that up to 1900 no single mission station existed in any of the Muslim emirates of Northern Nigeria. It

<sup>12</sup> See detail discussion on this subject in Bunza, M. U., *Christian Missions among Muslims...*, especially chapters 2 & 3

<sup>13</sup> J. H. Boer, *Missionary Messengers of Liberation in a Colonial Context...* P. 137

was only in 1902 that the first station was established in Zaria by the Anglican CMS.<sup>14</sup>

### **THE SIM MISSIONARY ACTIVITIES IN THE MUSLIM EMIRATES**

A Canadian, Rowland Bingham founded Sudan Interior Mission in 1893. Its prime aim was to evangelize among the Muslims in northern Nigeria. Bingham pressurized the British Government to allow the Missions to enter the emirates of Hausaland, especially Kano, Katsina and Sokoto.<sup>15</sup> He was assisted by Walter Gowars, Thomas Kent, Dr. Andrew Park and Mr. Guy W. Play fair in spreading and developing the organization in the Muslim North.

In order to address the specific nature of the Muslim Hausa in terms of evangelization, the mission devised three main focal points to meet its target and actualize its objective. The major operational strategies were: the Medical Mission, Education, and Religious section. Though all other sections aimed at religion but the religious section was specifically responsible for given spiritual services among the people.<sup>16</sup> These three units were fully put into action in the emirates for proselytization purposes. The SIM first established stations in Kano and Zaria before advancing to the emirates of Sokoto and Katsina. As seen earlier, their main aim was to convert the Muslims not the pagans. Thus they focused attention in making the emirs to cooperate and tolerate their presence.<sup>17</sup> Dr. Helser one of the founding members of the SIM says:

*The decision was that most of the progressive emirs would be taught religious tolerance, and this decision was faithfully carried out with the happy result of a bridgehead at Garko as a regular mission station in Kano (then to other Muslim emirates).*<sup>18</sup>

The SIM started its activities in Pategi in Ilorin Province when it opened a Mission station in 1902. The party consisted of A.W. Banfield, E. Anthony, A. Taylor and C. Robinson. The station became the center of missionary

<sup>14</sup> D. Rabe, , " *The Impact of Christian Missionary Activities on Katsina Emirate, 1903-1973 A.D.,*" *Unpublished M.A. Thesis (History), Ahmadu Bello University, Zaria, 2010, P. 78*

<sup>15</sup> D. Rabe, " *The Impact of Christian Missionary Activities on Katsina Emirate...*" p. 81

<sup>16</sup> S.A. Oshotoba, , *SIM/ECWA In Nigeria: The Story of the Beginnings, Ilorin: Gbele Press, 1985, p. 1-8*

<sup>17</sup> Oral Interview, Yohanna Katsina : 2014).

<sup>18</sup> S. A., Oshotoba, *SIM/ECWA In Nigeria...*, p. 40



activities in the Field. From this station, the Missions evangelized and founded other stations such as Bida in 1903, Wushishi in 1904, and Paiko in 1909. The Kwoi and Karu Mission stations in the then Nassarawa Province were opened in 1910. Similar Mission stations were also opened in Bauchi Province in places like Gelengu Tula Wange in 1924, Tiffi in 1927 and Zambuk in 1930.<sup>19</sup>

In 1935 SIM started its activities in Tsafe in Sokoto emirate. The CMS first opened a station earlier, which both of them used as concurrently for evangelization in villages like Dayi, Kawari, Yankuzo and other places in the District. The pioneer mission leaders in the area included people like Dr. Norman E. Cook, Rev. Cannon and Miss W. H. Knowles popularly known as *Maijinya* (in Hausa meaning a Nurse).<sup>20</sup> In the case of Katsina emirate, the SIM also used the opportunity to open mission stations in various parts of the emirate with a view to extending its mission activities. In Malumfashi, a clinic and a school were established in 1936 with Mr. and Mrs. Ireland as instructors. The Matazu mission was established in 1939 by Mr. and Mrs. H.L. Cox purposely for proselytisation. While the Wagini mission station was opened by Mr. and Mrs. F.F. Vander Schic in 1945. In all these stations evangelization was carried out in the clinics, schools as well as going to villages preaching to people.<sup>21</sup> Thus between 1901 and 1959, the SIM had established not less than one hundred and ten (110) Mission stations in various parts of the Muslim emirates.<sup>22</sup> The achievement not recorded by any other missionary body in the region at the time.

As part of the activities, the SIM carried out medical practices in the Muslim emirates that involved primary health care and treatment of various diseases and physical ailments. By 1937 the SIM established very popular mission leprosarium centres at Amanawa in Sokoto Province, Babbar Ruga in Katsina Province,

Ilorin, Kabba, Bauchi, Niger and Kano. The activities of these hospitals more than any other means accelerated the conversion programs of the SIM. Many leprosy patients were introduced into Christian religion through the medical treatment. Most of the converts in this region remained as strong protectors of Christianity in the midst of the Muslim populace. Dispensaries and out-patient clinics were also established in areas such as Wushishi in 1904, Jos in 1928, Kufana in 1936, Kano Eye Hospital in 1943, African Hospital Jos in 1959 and Kaltungo Hospital in 1955.<sup>23</sup>

On the other hand, SIM activities were getting momentum in other emirates of the Sokoto Province receiving batches of missionary teams of experts. In 1952 another set of missions consisted of Mr. Raid and Mr. Crown from Canada and also two sisters, one each from America and Canada started their evangelical works among the Arawa in Argungu Emirate. The center was one of the biggest in the province with Mission station, hospital and even air field for helicopters and small air craft landing to facilitate the missionary activities. According to Mallam Kaka Kangiwa who was the mission guide in the area, the medical services rendered in the mission station though with very low charges attracted the attention of the people to the missions' activities as far as Niger republic.<sup>24</sup>

The third main activity of the SIM in proselytization was the establishment of schools attached to the mission stations. The establishment of these two said, Pastor Ibrahim Aliyu contributed in the development and spread of information about the missions activities far and wide in the villages. Through the school, children particularly of converts to Christianity were trained and brought up in a Christian manner and thus served as the custodian of Christianity where non-existed before.<sup>25</sup>

Through these methods Muslims were taken by surprise by the evangelists, as many attended the clinic and dispensaries on their volition in search of cure for their ailments, and eventually got contact with Gospel.

<sup>19</sup> Y. Turaki, *Theory and Practice of Christian Missions in Africa: A Century of SIM/ECWA, A History Legacy in Nigeria 1893-1993, Vol., 1, Kenya: International Bible Society Africa., 1999, PP. :177-179 and 186-187.*

<sup>20</sup> Oral Interview, Aliyu: Tsamaye, at Tsafe, 2000

<sup>21</sup> B.B., Kofar Bai, "Christian Missionary Stations in Katsina Province: A Case Study of Babbar Ruga," Unpublished B.A. Dissertation, (History), Usmanu Danfodiyo University, Sokoto, 1988, p. 135

<sup>22</sup> Y. Turaki, *Theory and Practice of Christian Missions in Africa: A Century of SIM/ECWA..., p. 201*

<sup>23</sup> Y. Turaki, *Theory and Practice of Christian Missions in Africa: A Century of SIM/ECWA..., p. 186-187*

<sup>24</sup> Malam Kaka Knagiwa oral interview, 2000

<sup>25</sup> Oral Interview, Pastor Ibrahim Aliyu:2000

The use of these methods did not yield the expected results, this is due to the fact that after hospital or dispensary contacts most patients abandoned the teaching of the Gospel they were exposed to, while receiving medication. Further, not majority of the people go to the missionary health centers, thus the need for wider scale approach. The European missionary personnel therefore, started to adopt the culture and tradition of the people, especially traditional names and the use of Hausa costumes and language in order to like the indigenous people for evangelization.

The pioneer missionary workforce that championed this course at a different period and platforms included, Dr. Rev. Walter Miller, Rev. Dudley Ryder, Rev. A. E. Richardson, Mr. J. R. Burgin and Bishop Tugwell in the 1890s. They were often referred as Pioneer Hausa Mission. According to Rev. Miller, Bishop Tugwell was the leader of the Hausa Party, who was respected, loved and followed by his members.<sup>26</sup>

Beyond the missionary frontline, study of the Hausa language was made compulsory for all colonial administrators serving in Northern Nigeria, and was a prerequisite for promotions and other benefits from the colonial government. The missionary organizations also borrowed the use of this pattern and encouraged use of Hausa language in their schools and other evangelical works and missionary officials ought to be proficient in Hausa. Almost all early Christian converts were taught the Scripture in the Hausa language.<sup>27</sup> A study of the Arabic language and Islamic culture was also recommended to missionaries. Early Hausa missionaries, like Lewis Nott, Rev. Miller, and Rev. J. C. Ryder, spent some time in Tripoli learning Arabic, Islam, and the Hausa language, before they commenced missionary propaganda in the Muslim Emirates. In today's missions, a distinction remains between a missionary who has a command of Arabic and Islamic Studies and those who know only the Gospel. Professor Robinson added, on Hausa literacy, that apart

from the Hausa, there is no race north of the equator and Abyssinia, which has reduced its language to writing and produced literature in a modified Arabic character.<sup>28</sup> These factors contributed to the increasing interest of missionaries for the Hausa Muslim people to come to Christ. In this light, the reason for the widespread study of Hausa language by white missionaries is better understood. As early as 1907, most parts of the New Testament Bible were translated into Hausa. For instance, St. Mark and the Acts of the Apostles, followed by St. Matthew, 1st Corinthians, St. Luke, and Epistle of St. James were translated by Rev. Miller into the Hausa language.<sup>29</sup>

In Argungu Emirate for instance as early as 1937, missionaries were operating through different aspects of use of culture and tradition of the natives in order to please them and therefore win their minds for Christianity. Missionaries like Mr. Veenker from the United States of America, Mr. London from England, and Mr. Wright and Mr. Sturdy from Canada, were pioneers in the area under the auspices of the Sudan Interior Mission.. There were also two Canadian women, Miss Kande and Amina( with Muslim Hausa/Hausa names), in the team. It is interesting to note that these female missionaries used traditional Muslim/Hausa names, such that my informants could not remember their Euro-Christian names. Around 1950, these missionaries left for their home countries. Later, in 1952, the second and last European missionary team arrived at Kangiwa.

The team comprised two men and two women. They were Mr. Raid and Mr. Crown from Canada, Ige from America, and Saratu from Canada(also bearing the Hausa/Muslim female names). The main aim of adopting and using the traditional names by the women missionary was ally the fears of their prospective converts and come to the best of ability like them in terms of dressing and name so that they listen and accept the missionary campaigns.<sup>30</sup>

<sup>26</sup> W. Miller, *An Autobiography*, Zaria: 1945, pp. 9-14

<sup>27</sup> See details in Edward Philips, J., "The Origins of Northern Nigerian Language policy: Lugard and Hausa, 1900-1906". Paper for international conference on the Sokoto and Europeans, UDUS,1994, p. 19, and Bunza, M. U., "The Hausa Factor in Christian Proselytization in Northern Nigeria" *Hausa Studies: Journal of the Department of Nigerian Languages*, Vol.1, no.1 1999, pp. 262-270.

<sup>28</sup> See details in Bunza, M. U., *Christian Missions Among Muslims Sokoto Province, Nigeria 1935-1990*, Africa World Press, NJ, USA, 2007. *The Book is generally relevant on most of the issues raised in this section.*

<sup>29</sup> Edward Philips, J., "The Origins of Northern Nigerian Language policy..." P. 9-11.

<sup>30</sup> See details of this and other peculiar methods of proselytization among the Muslims of Northern Nigeria in Bunza M. U., *Christian Missions Among Muslims...*, PP. 35-73

## THE GOVERNMENT, MUSLIM RULERS AND SIM MISSIONS

The relative success of the SIM in its missionary activities, in spite of its strategies of proselytization could be counted through the support of the colonial administration and tolerance of the Muslim rulers. This goes contrary to the alleged conservatism of the nature of the modern rulers to resist any external influence in their domains. At Tsafe in Sokoto Province for instance, the missions were tolerated as a result of their friendliness to the Yandoton Tsafe (District Head of Tsafe area). To illustrate this further the Yandoto confirmed that one of his children was nicknamed – *Dan Maijinya* –son of Nurse/ Midwife(in Hausa language). That was Miss Knowles of the Tsafe mission station, because of her assistance to his mother before and after her delivery to the child.<sup>31</sup>

With the exception of the case of Mr. Playfair in 1940s who the Sultan reported to the Resident due to his notorious public preaching among the Muslims, there were no records at our disposal to show any sign of inhospitality to the missions from the Muslim rulers. Befriending the Muslims rulers and working in harmony as much as possible to ensure the success of the missionary activities was the unique strategy that guaranteed sound atmosphere for the evangelist to carry out their mission safely even with fewer converts.

The Sultan of Sokoto in appreciation of that posture in order to safe guard the right of minors specified that children under eighteen years and women yet unmarried must not be converted. But any adult who wanted to convert can do so at his own volition.<sup>32</sup>

In Katsina Emirate, the Muslim rulers did not only favored the missionary entry into their areas but also encouraged and united them to come and start work there. For instance, in his attempt to show tolerance to missionary activities in the emirate, the emir of Katsina Muhammadu Dikko (1907-1944) invited one Christian convert from Zaria Mallam Fati to come to Katsina and preach to the people. Also, when leprosy centres were established in the Muslim north, the emirs and the missions worked in cooperative approaches. It was the

<sup>31</sup> Oral interview with District Head of Tsafe, Zamfara State, late Alhaji Habibu Aliyu at his Palace, Tsafe on 27/02/ 200.

<sup>32</sup> M. U. Bunza, *Christian Missions Among Muslims...*, PP. 35-73

emir of Katsina Dikko that introduced the red fez cap (*hular Dara*) mode of dressing which the leper patients put as their identity. This idea was widely accepted in the Northern Provinces.<sup>33</sup>

Crampton buttressed this point further saying that', on the whole, Christian missionaries preferred to deal directly with Muslim authorities rather than through British administrator. Over the years the emirs had become accustomed to missionaries and realized that their presence was leading neither to mass conversion from Islam nor to collapse of their traditional structure.<sup>34</sup> In spite of the other side of the Muslim emirs encounters with missionaries amplified, the dispositions of the two parties, Muslim emirs and the Missionaries was encouraging. When Christian boys started to attend the Sokoto Native Authority School, the Sultan of Sokoto Alhaji Abubakar III, paid for Bible for them. In Katsina, Emir Muhammadu Dikko appreciated the introduction of a Mission bookshop where books including Christian religious books were sold.<sup>35</sup>

On the side of the government also, the SIM had a cordial relationship. Since the time the organization was founded, the founder Rowland Bingham with some of his lieutenants met Lugard at England when he was made the High Commissioner for Northern Nigeria. At the meeting he promised them his support and assistance. As a result of which a trustee of the SIM, the first station was opened at Pategi in 1905, and the organization enjoyed his cooperation throughout his reign.<sup>36</sup> From the available correspondences between the SIM missionaries and colonial government it will suggest a strong working relation between the two units in Muslim emirates. The government specially invited and supported the SIM medical missions especially the leprosy works. The government provided structure and fund while the SIM provided the facilities and personnel.<sup>37</sup>

<sup>33</sup> S. Shankar, *Medical Missionaries and Modernising Emirs in Colonial Hausaland: Leprosy Control and Native Authority in the 1930s* Retrieved from <http://www.journals.cambridge.org>, 21/414, 2014

<sup>34</sup> E. P. T. Crampton, *Christianity in Northern Nigeria, Zaria: Gaskiya.Coperation, Ltd, 1975, P. 87*

<sup>35</sup> (NNAK/Katprof, 2217, Vol. 1 *Lepers Camp Taking Over by SIM*).

<sup>36</sup> E.P.T. Crampton, *Christianity in Northern Nigeria*, p. 87

<sup>37</sup> S. A., *Oshotoba, SIM/ECWA In Nigeria...*, p. 18

## Sudan Interior Mission (Sim): An Evangelical Operation for a Unique Task in Northern Nigeria to 1960

The Muslim rulers in northern Nigeria had been playing reconciliatory roles in order to smoothen and eased the Mission's ways in dealing with local administration.

The District officer of Gwandu Division also assisted in distributing missionary works in his area to avert conflicts between competing evangelists.<sup>38</sup> Sudan Interior Mission continued its programs, but towards the time of self rule in Nigeria, in the 1950s the organization under the leadership of Mr. Playfair and Dr. Albert Helser applied for change of name from SIM to Evangelical Churches of West Africa (ECWA).

The change it was argued will make the organization functions unhindered during independence era, as running its affairs would be handed over to the indigenous converts in Nigeria.

A section of its constitution reads: "The original members of the association of Evangelical Churches of West Africa were converts to the Gospel preached by the Sudan Interior Mission, and the Churches were formally known as the SIM Churches".

A certificate of incorporation and approval of the change was officially granted by the Governor General of Nigeria, Sir James Robertson in June 1956.<sup>39</sup> Thus, the SIM is now known as the ECWA with established Churches mainly populated by Hausa speaking Christians of northern Nigeria.

### CONCLUSION

In the paper attempt has been made to give a synopsis and a general survey of the activities of the Sudan Interior Mission in the Muslim emirates of northern Nigeria from 1893 to 1960 when it changed to Evangelical Church of West Africa, ECWA.

From the study it could be understood that, the SIM which mainly intended to derive its converts from the Muslims of northern Nigeria had committed a great deal of resources to achieve this goal. However, the success recorded was far below expectation.

They tried to maintain a good working relation with the government as well as the Muslim emirs in the region. In order to respond to the

peculiar challenge of Islam against the penetration of Christianity in the region unique methods and strategies were adopted and executed by the missions unlike their experience in the non-Muslim areas. '

They used of Hausa language, adopted the Hausa traditional names and attires and as much as possible behaved like the Hausa people. In the beginning of 1960 most of the stations were closed down particularly in the rural areas and that of urban centers expanded, perhaps to accommodate the increasing migrant communities who were members of the Church. In spite of all these, the efforts of the SIM made churches well spread in the region, at times even without worshippers or attendants, at least to indicate the cross's encounter with the crescent in the heartland of Islam, the Sokoto Caliphate. The Sudan Interior Mission officially ceased to exist in 1959, in its place the Evangelical Church of West Africa (ECWA) emerged and most European missionaries returned back to Europe and indigenous evangelists assumed the control of the Church in the beginning of 1960.

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