

BRITISH COLONIAL POLICIES TOWARDS MISSION IN NORTHERN NIGERIA: SUDAN INTERIOR MISSION/SUDAN UNITED MISSION

By

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Abstract

Sudan Pioneer Mission (SPM) was initially founded on 13th November, 1902 in quick response to the great concern of the Christian world over the fast expansion of Islam in the Sudan. In 1904, a new name was suggested known as Sudan United Mission (SUM) in order to emphasize the internationally interdenominational nature of the organization. SUM took its name from the concept of Greater Sudan. The main aim of the SUM was to halt the advance of Islam across this huge region. As it were at the beginning of the twentieth century, many of the colonial boundaries were in a state of flux and Greater Sudan comprised a vast area of Africa stretching from the coasts of Nigeria and other African countries. Employing historical and analytical approaches, this paper carefully examined British colonial policies towards mission in Northern Nigeria with a view to determining the effects of such policies on missionary endeavour. The study unraveled that to be able to evangelize and capture Sudan against Islam encroachment in the region the colonial missionaries introduced activities like education, hospital and entrepreneurship among others. The study submitted that were it not for the indirect rule employed by the colonial administrator which engendered the restriction of missionary activities in Northern Nigeria, Christianity would have spread faster and gained much ground than it did in the north.

Keywords: Christianity, Missionary, Nigeria, Northern, Sudan, SUM/SIM policies-mission

Introduction

The SUM in Nigeria, The Cameroons, Chad, Sudan and Other African Territories Part 1: Manuscript Papers from the Centre for the Study of Christianity in the Non-Western World,

New College, University of Edinburgh, 1898-1960. The Archive of the Sudan United Mission (SUM), held at the Centre for the Study of Christianity in the Non-Western World, New College, University of Edinburgh, is an important resource for the study of missionary work, educational work, medical work, evangelism, the emergence of indigenous churches and the growth of nationalist sentiment in Africa in the twentieth century.

Initially founded as the Sudan Pioneer Mission, SUM took its name from the concept of Greater Sudan. At the beginning of the twentieth century many of the colonial boundaries were in a state of flux and Greater Sudan comprised a vast area of Africa stretching from the coasts of Nigeria and the Cameroons in the west, to Chad and Anglo-Egyptian Sudan further east. The main aim of the SUM was to halt the advance of Islam across this huge swathe of territory. Initial efforts focused on the Benue region in Nigeria.

The SUM archival material spans the period 1904-1991 and allows researchers to consider the following:

- The founders of the mission, Karl and Lucy Kumm among the Mbula people.
- The activities of J Lowry Maxwell amongst the Hausa speaking and Jukun tribes and his insights into African language, culture and customs.
- SUM activities in Northern Nigeria and in the Middle Belt area.
- The role of the hospitals and leprosy settlements in Nigeria, bringing medical advances to the region and providing worthwhile training and jobs for Africans in Nigeria.
- The importance of education, new schools and training colleges in both Nigeria.
- Reports from the range of different mission stations.
- The tremendous political and social changes in Africa which gathered momentum
- after 1920,

The opportunity afforded by the 1922 constitution to elect a handful of representatives to the Legislative Council gave politically conscious Nigerians something concrete to work on.

The principal figure in the political activity that ensued was Herbert Macauley, often referred to as the father of Nigerian nationalism. His political platform called for economic and educational development, Africanization of the civil service, and self-government for Lagos. He aroused political awareness through his newspaper, the Lagos Daily News, while leading the Nigerian National Democratic Party (NNDP) founded in 1922. It dominated elections in Lagos from this time until the ascendancy of the National Youth Movement (NYM) in 1938, with its call for dominion status for Nigeria and economic selfdetermination. Many participants in the movement were graduates of mission schools. However, the nationalists

were often critical of the missions because of their links with colonial agencies, so the missionaries had to distance themselves from imperial policy or face rejection.

In the post-war period, party lines were sharply drawn on the basis of ethnicity and regionalism. The nationalist movement splintered into the Muslim Hausa and Fulani backed Northern People's Congress (NPC), the Yoruba-supported Action Group, and the Igbodominated National Council of Nigeria and the Cameroons (NCNC, later the National Council of Nigerian Citizens).

The latter was the result of a fusion between the NNDP and NYM, with Macauley as president and Azikiwe as secretary general. It was the first political party to have nationwide appeal. Rapid moves towards decolonisation started in 1948 with many Nigerians tired of being excluded from the higher posts in society. They believed that even more emphasis should be put on education and over the next years much more money was spent in this area. The trade unions were improved, together with water supplies, sanitation, housing, electricity, roads and other aspects of the infrastructure. Nationalism now had a much wider audience and was promoted across Africa by Kwame Nkrumah of Ghana and the PanAfrican Congress.

A new federal constitution for an independent Nigeria was prepared at the Lancaster House Conferences in London in 1957 and 1958 presided over by the British Colonial Secretary. Nigerian delegates were selected to represent each region and to reflect various shades of opinion. The delegation was led by Balewa of the NPC and included party leaders Awolowo of the Action Group, Azikiwe of the NCNC, and Bello of the NPC; they were also the premiers of the Western, Eastern, and Northern regions, respectively. Nigeria became an independent country within the Commonwealth on 1 October 1960. Azikiwe was installed as Governor General of the Federation of Nigeria and Balewa continued to serve as head of a democratically elected parliamentary, but now completely sovereign, government.

Post-Independence Politics and Civil War in Nigeria

- SUM's commitment from 1904 to the establishment of indigenous African Churches and its changing role once this had been achieved.
- SUM's activities in Nigeria, Chad, the Cameroons and Anglo-Egyptian Sudan.

In 1989 the SUM Fellowship in the UK changed its name to Action Partners. Bawtry Hall in Doncaster, South Yorkshire was purchased to be a headquarters and training centre for World Mission. Over the last century, language usage has changed considerably. Certain terms were used at the beginning of the twentieth century, which, in the twenty-first century, are quite unacceptable.

Therefore, readers of the earlier part of the archives should be aware of the need to interpret this language in modern terms. For example, by the twenty-first century the general practice would be to use 'indigenous' or 'indigene' instead of 'native'. Other alternatives are 'leprosy

patient' rather than 'leper', 'African Traditional Religion' rather than 'pagan' or 'animist', and 'ethnic group' rather than 'tribe'. The spelling of some of the names of ethnic groups has changed and, in some cases, a very different, often older, name is used for such groups eg 'Mwaghavul' is used in the twenty-first century instead of 'Sura', which is sometimes found in the archival material.

Early Developments of the Sudan United Mission

The Sudan United Mission was founded by Hermann Karl Wilhelm Kumm (1875-1930) from Osterode, Germany and his wife Lucy Evangeline Guinness (1865-1906). Kumm, as a young man, felt a calling to missionary work among the Muslims in Africa and during a visit to England he heard Mr Glenn of the North Africa Mission talk of his work. He decided to study Arabic in Egypt and work among the Muslims there. In a letter written in Alexandria, Egypt, in November 1898, Dr Kumm explains his call to work with people in Africa:

...Even while I was still in England a voice seemed to say to me, 'I have prepared the people of the desert for my Gospel, go and preach it to them'. Now at last I have had a look upon those dear people and upon the vast desert Sahara, which is for me the Promised Land. Yet it was only a short look and I had to come away again to abide the Lord's time...

Lucy Guinness, before meeting and marrying Karl in Cairo, had worked in an East End factory, edited a magazine for the Regions Beyond Missionary Union (which had been founded by the Guinness family) and visited mission stations in Africa. Kumm and his wife decided that the evangelisation of the Sudan was imperative. It had a population of over fifty million, Islam was growing and none of the Free Churches of Great Britain were doing any work there. In 1900 they decided to form the German Sudan Pioneer Mission, although after a short time back in England they decided to sever their connection with the German mission, forming the Sudan Pioneer Mission. Its first meeting was held in Sheffield in 1902. Not satisfied with the scale of the mission, a meeting was held in Edinburgh 15 June 1904 to which interested men of all denominations were invited, and the name changed to Sudan United Mission (SUM).

The target area for the mission was enlarged to encompass Greater Sudan, a far more ambitious project. Kumm and his wife travelled all over the UK calling on volunteers to join the society. One of the first to step forward was John Lowry Maxwell from Belfast, followed by Dr Ambrose Bateman and John Burt.

The first four SUM missionaries, Karl Kumm, Maxwell, Burt and Bateman sailed on the "Akabo" For Nigeria on 23 July 1904. They travelled inland and were advised by the High Commissioner, Sir Frederick Lugard, that they should start work with the hill tribes around the town of Wase.

They travelled up the River Benue to Ibi, and then headed north to Wase, eighty miles from the river. Bateman developed appendicitis and had to return to England. Later, Maxwell and Burt trekked 23 miles south of the River Benue to the town of Wukari, the centre of the Jukun people, and set up a mission station there. Kumm argued: “The whole *raison d’être* of the...Mission is to counteract the Moslem advance among the Pagan tribes in the Benue region. This cannot be done by going to the Mohammedans and therefore our work will lie among the Pagan tribes.”

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SUM Missionaries

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SUM appealed to the public for at least 150 missionaries to be placed at 50 stations along a perceived border line where Islam and African Traditional Religions met. It was hoped that for each ethnic group "at least three white missionaries, a medical man, an ordained educationalist and a horticulturalist" could be secured. Kumm returned to Britain in May 1905 to continue the recruitment of additional missionaries and to appeal for extra funding. He travelled to Australia, New Zealand, Tasmania, South Africa, Denmark, Canada and the United States in an effort to rouse further interest in this broad, non-denominational missionary movement.

The missionaries who came from different countries worked together until, gradually, they took over specific regions, and ultimately, this led to the growth of different church groups. For that reason, these archives of the SUM British Branch increasingly concentrate on the work of that branch and the church, namely the Church of Christ in Nigeria (COCIN), which developed in the areas where the British Branch had worked.

The UK branch of SUM focused on the Benue River region in Nigeria and established bases at Rock Station in September 1904, at Wukari and at Ibi by 1906. John Mackenzie Young, W C Hoover and Rev C W Ginter plus Dr J S Derr worked at Wukari. There were four missionaries at Rock Station – J G Burt, Frank Aust, W Ghey and Arthur Emlyn. Rev Joseph Baker and Rev Wilfred Lawson Broadbent worked at Ibi.

The Canadian branch established three bases in Nigeria; A E Ball and Rev F Komlosy opened a mission station at Bida in May 1903; Miss Marian Wuthrick, Miss Schofield, Fred Merryweather and Mr Lang were active at Patagi from January 1902 and E F Rice and F E Hein set up a mission at Wushishi in December 1906.

The early missionary work progressed well and in 1907 expanded to Langtang among the Tarok (formerly called Yergum) people. At Rumasha, the first convert, Tom Aliyana, was baptised in 1908. A year later the first female workers arrived. Further expansion in later years led to work among other tribes such as the Berom people round the town of Foron (Forum) and the Mwaghavul (Sura) and 'Ngas (Angas) ethnic groups. SUM recruits from Australia and New Zealand began work in the Sudan in 1913. In 1917 the first church was established at Donga in Nigeria.

In later years the various branches of SUM set up additional mission stations in Northern Nigeria at Donga, Lupwe, Kona, Gandoile, Numan, Shillem, Pella, Lamurde, Bambur, Lantang, Tutung, Badung, Forum, Du, Vom, Randa, Lezin Lafiya and Keana. In Sudan, the codified 'Missionary Regulations' of 1905 initially forbade missionary activity north of the 10th parallel. All missionary societies therefore focused their efforts in the South. Each

missionary organization was allocated a 'sphere' of influence for their work. SUM concentrated their activities in the eastern Nuba Mountains in the Kordofan region. This work was all carried out by the Australian branch of SUM and from 1920 onwards they had established 6 mission stations at Abri, Heiban, Kauda, Moro, Talodi and Tabanya.

Rev D N MacDiarmid and his wife worked at Heiban and he relates details of their missionary activities before and after 1920, with reference to the mission's own printing press, school and medical work, local tribes and their languages, in 'Life and Work in the Nuba Mountains' and in 'Tales of the Sudan'.

By the mid 1930s SUM had 28 mission stations in Nigeria, plus some additional out-stations, 3 stations in the Northern French Cameroons, 2 missions in French Equatorial Africa, and 6 stations in the Anglo-Egyptian Sudan, reaching over 40 different ethnic groups. In addition, 2 stations in Nigeria, with several missionaries, had been handed over to the Dutch Reformed Church of South Africa in 1916. Total European field staff of SUM had reached 130 and the concept of a chain of mission stations across 'Greater Sudan' was becoming an accomplished fact.

J Lowry Maxwell spent 30 years in Africa until ill health forced his return to Britain in 1934. He showed a great appreciation of African culture and was an accomplished linguist. He spent much of his time studying the Hausa language, writing a handbook for students of the language and translating hymns into Hausa. He became the mission's Hausa teacher and taught both missionaries and government officials. He could also speak the Jukun language and translated parts of the scripture into that language. He wrote a history of the SUM called "Half a Century of Grace".

Northern Nigeria

The Benue River in West Africa, the longest tributary of the Niger, dominated the area first explored by SUM missionaries. They focussed on evangelism, using education and medicine as handmaids of the gospel. At the beginning of the twentieth century slavery still existed in Nigeria and the colonial government was determined to stop it. The government suggested that the SUM should establish a home for the freed and when this was done, it was named in honour of Kumm's wife, Lucy, who had died in 1906. The Freed Slaves Home in Rumasha was set up in 1909 and women missionaries arrived to help run the home – Mary McNaught and Clara Haigh from Britain and the Stewart sisters from South Africa. David Forbes and others began educating blind boys and girls.

In 1909 Hans Vischer, an ex-Cpdsbsum@gmail.com schools, compared with eleven in the south. This was a significant imbalance, which the SUM later helped to redress as part of their work in building up the church. The ability to read was absolutely necessary for the process of evangelisation and CRIs (Centres of Religious Instruction) were set up from the outset by each mission station. It was also thought imperative that Nigerians themselves should be trained for

evangelistic work and a school was set up for this purpose in Gindiri in 1934. Classes for farmer evangelists were started and a small group of indigenous teachers were trained. The first Nigerian pastors began their training in 1937. They were Toma Tok Bot of Forum, Bali of Langtang and David Lot of Panyam. In 1953 the first Nigerian missionary was sent by Panyam Church to the Gwoza Hills area. Meanwhile, a Middle School for boys was opened which developed into a Boys' Secondary School. A Girls' Senior Primary Boarding School was run for many years until there was sufficient provision for girls in the schools in the area of each ethnic group. A Girls' High School for secondary education for girls was established in 1958.

Medical work was seen as a tool in the spread of the gospel. Simple clinics were set up at mission centres and led to the establishment by Dr Barnden of Vom Hospital in the village of Vwang in 1923. This hospital developed extensively with medical, surgical and maternity wards, followed by a Child Welfare Centre in 1945. Meanwhile a leprosy centre had been set up in Vom, and also in Molai near Maiduguri in the North East. The Vom centre was later transferred to Mangu, also on the Plateau. A joint government/mission hospital was built and run jointly at Nguru and in 1958, a hospital was founded in the North East in Gwoza. The training of midwives and nurses became an important part of Vom Christian Hospital's contribution to the development of Nigeria. Barely seventy years after Kumm's arrival in Nigeria, nearly every hospital in Nigeria had nurses and paramedics trained in Vom by Kumm's successors. Local dispensaries were staffed by paramedics trained at Vom and Alushi, the latter centre staffed at first by workers from South Africa.

Thus, the Mission played an important role in medical training and education, giving an opportunity for Nigerians to go on to full training as doctors, teachers at all levels, and university lecturers. From the very beginning in 1904, the SUM was committed to the creation of indigenous African Churches which would be self-supporting, self-governing and self-propagating. Ultimately, the growth of several different church groups as a result of the diverse groups from overseas did not mean that the churches lost contact with one another. The churches emerging from the SUM branches and another mission, the CBM, united as the Fellowship of Churches of Christ in Nigeria, a central fellowship which shared common aims. The activities of the Middle Belt Movement (representing the multi-ethnic and multireligious region of Central Nigeria which often played a crucial role in Nigerian politics) interacted with this new Fellowship of Churches. Education, nationalism and missionary activity were inextricably linked in Nigeria.

The different tribes, or ethnic groups, of Northern Nigeria. The best known of the northern peoples, often spoken of as coterminous with the north, are the Maguzawa (Hausa). The term refers also to a language spoken indigenously by savanna peoples spread across the far north from Nigeria's western boundary eastward to Borno State and into much of the territory of southern Niger. It also refers to a common set of cultural practices and a people once governed through a series of Islamic emirates and their surrounding subject towns and villages. These

pre-colonial emirates were still major features of local government as late as 1990. Each had a central citadel town that housed its ruling group of nobles and royalty served as the administrative, judicial, and military organization of these states. Traditionally, the major towns were also trading centres; some such as Kano, Zaria, or Katsina were urban conglomerations with populations of 25,000 to 100,000 in the nineteenth century. They had central markets, special wards for foreign traders, complex organizations of craft specialists, and religious leaders and organizations. They administered a hinterland of subject settlements through a hierarchy of officials, and they interacted with other states and ethnic groups in the region through a history of warfare, raiding, trade, tribute and alliances.

Throughout the north, but especially in the Hausa areas, over the past several centuries Fulani cattle raising nomads migrated westward, sometimes settling into semi sedentary villages. Fulani leaders took power over the Hausa states, intermarried with the ruling families and settled into the ruling households of Hausaland and many adjacent societies. By the twentieth century, the ruling elements of Hausaland were often referred to as Hausa-Fulani. The nomadic cultivated local fields and, although most groups seemed to believe in a Supreme Being, they prayed to local spirits and the ghosts of departed lineage elders. Descendants of founders were often village heads or priests of the village shrine, whereas leading members of the other lineages formed an eldership that governed the place and a few outlying areas, consisting of those who were moving toward open lands as the population increased. Other areas, particularly those of the Nupe, organised themselves as Islamic emirates. Missionaries and party politics influenced, but did not obliterate, these older units. Missionaries arrived in the 1910s and 1920s and were allowed into non-Muslim areas. They set up schools using United States or British staff to teach and helped to create a sense of separateness and educational disparity between the Christianized groups and Muslim ones. From the 1920s to current times both religions competed for adherents.

Hausa language, dress, residential arrangements, and other cultural features became more widespread towards the end of the twentieth century. Over the years, the name 'Hausa' came to have a religious connotation.

Nationalism in Nigeria

The nationalism that emerged in Nigeria during the interwar period was prompted by individual tribal aspirations and broad Pan-African sentiments rather than from any sense of a common Nigerian nationality. Its goal initially was not self-determination, but rather increased participation in the governmental process on a regional level. Political opposition to colonial rule often assumed religious dimensions. Many Europeans were surprised and shocked that Nigerians wanted to develop new denominations independent of European control. However, the SUM actively encouraged the formation of an indigenous African Church from the outset. The pulpits of the independent congregations provided one of the few available avenues for the free expression of attitudes critical of colonial rule.

In the south, the voice of the indigenous church was complemented by those of other organisations that arose in the 1920s, such as the Nigerian Union of Teachers, the Nigerian Law Association, the Nigerian Produce Traders' Association (led by Obafemi Awolowo) ethnic and kinship organizations (eg the Igbo Federal Union and the Egbe Omo Oduduwa, a Yoruba cultural movement) and youth or student groups. Most were ostensibly non-political, but nonetheless allowed for the expression of nationalist sentiment and criticisms of government policy.

The opportunity afforded by the 1922 constitution to elect a handful of representatives to the Legislative Council gave politically conscious Nigerians something concrete to work on. The principal figure in the political activity that ensued was Herbert Macauley, often referred to as the father of Nigerian nationalism. His political platform called for economic and educational development, Africanization of the civil service, and self-government for Lagos. He aroused political awareness through his newspaper, the Lagos Daily News, while leading the Nigerian National Democratic Party (NNDP) founded in 1922. It dominated elections in Lagos from this time until the ascendancy of the National Youth Movement (NYM) in 1938, with its call for dominion status for Nigeria and economic self-determination. Many participants in the movement were graduates of mission schools. However, the nationalists were often critical of the missions because of their links with colonial agencies, so the missionaries had to distance themselves from imperial policy or face rejection.

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Post-Independence Politics and Civil War in Nigeria

During the first three years after independence, the Federal Government was an NPC-NCNC coalition. However, the conflicting natures of the two partners remained a major problem. The former was regionalist, Muslim, and aristocratic; the latter was nationalist, Christian, and populist. In May 1962 bloody rioting in the Western Region brought effective government to an end as rival legislators, following the example in the streets, introduced violence to the floor of the Regional Legislature.

Civil War in 1966-1967 presented many challenges for the local churches and SUM workers in Nigeria, as documented in SUM newsletters and publications. The Federal Military Government sought to revise the constitution so as to enable an early return to civilian rule. Alas, the tempo of violence increased. In September attacks on Igbo in the north were renewed with unprecedented ferocity, stirred up by Muslim traditionalists with the connivance of northern political leaders. The army was sharply divided along regional lines. Reports circulated that troops from the Northern Region had participated in the mayhem. The estimated number of deaths ranged as high as 30,000, although the figure was probably closer to 8,000 to 10,000.

The first elections under the 1979 constitution were held on schedule in July and August 1979, and the Federal Military Government handed over power to a new civilian government under President Shehu Shagari on 1 October 1979. Nigeria's Second Republic was born amid great expectations. Oil prices were high and revenues were increasing. Unfortunately, the euphoria was short-lived, and on 31 December 1983 the military seized power once again.

A new constitution was promulgated in 1989 and preparations were made for a transition back to civilian rule in January 1993. By 1994 events had turned full circle as Action Partners welcomed Nigerian missionaries to serve in UK inner cities, alongside British staff. During the first three years after independence, the Federal Government was an NPC-NCNC coalition. However, the conflicting natures of the two partners remained a major problem.

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Other branches and related papers

The Sudan United Mission not only consisted of missionaries from Britain, but also developed other branches with missionaries from South Africa, the United States, Australia and New Zealand, Denmark, Norway, Switzerland and France.

The South African Branch of the mission was set up after Kumm visited South Africa in 1907. Rev J G Botha and V H Hosking were initially assigned to Mbula, an area 200 miles from Ibi, and later moved to Salatu to work among the Tiv tribe. Many of the later South African missionaries came from the Dutch Reformed Church and they concentrated on the development of Bible Schools and Sunday Schools.

A branch of the mission was founded in the United States and missionaries recruited included Rev C W Guinter, who was to become one of the outstanding missionary leaders of the SUM. At first the Sudan United Mission worked together with the American Sudan Interior Mission (SIM), which had missions in Nigeria, but after a short time they decided to continue separately. There are two American branches: the EUB – The Evangelical United Brethren (later called United Methodists) and the CRC – The Christian Reformed Church.

The Danish (Lutheran) Branch began work in Numan among the tribe of the Bwatiy people. A Boarding School for Girls was opened and in 1946 thirteen new missionaries were sent out. Its activities are well documented in the Danish archives also include hospitals and leprosy centers where formed.

References

The microfilm publication of the SUM Archive has been divided into the following parts:

Part 1: Manuscript Papers, 1898-1960 from the Centre for the Study of Christianity in the Nonwestern World, New College, University of Edinburgh

Part 2: The Light bearer, 1905-1991

Part 3: Newsletters, 1940-1989, Publications and Annual Reports, 1908-1979

Part 4: Lantern Slides, Slides and Photographs

Part 5: Publications in Hausa Part 1:

Manuscript Papers 1898-1960 These

Papers comprise:

- General Correspondence of the Sudan United Mission, 1898-1959.
- Correspondence of the General Secretary in the UK, including letters from the SUM Field Secretary, Nigeria, 1940-1969.
- Correspondence with SUM Branches. These letters cover the Australia and New Zealand Branch, 1950-1960; the Canadian Branch, 1950-1960; the CRC Branch, 1930-1960;

The Danish Branch, 1950-1960; the South Africa Branch, 1950-1960; the Swiss Branch, 1940-1960; and the United Methodist Branch (EUB), 1940-1960.

- Minutes of the Executive Committee and agenda notes.
- Reports on the work and behaviour of the missionaries.